The English Church revisited: issues of expansion and identity in a settler church: a thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History at Massey University

Abstract
This thesis surveys the growth of the ‘settler church’ in the dioceses of the Anglican Church in New Zealand and, in particular, the development of the Church at local parish level. It examines the formation of parishes, the appointment of clergy, the construction of church buildings and the provision of finance – in other words, all that was required for the provision of ministry in local communities. It is less concerned with the administration of dioceses, the accomplishments of bishops, the activities of General Synod, and constitutional issues, except where these had a bearing on the core issue. Similarly, it does not concern itself with the development of social services, the establishment of schools, and the building of cathedrals. In the same way, it does not give attention to the issue of provision of ministry to and by Maori. That history is too important to be absorbed into this topic. It demands serious treatment from someone with the necessary skills and background. The present writer lacks that competence.

Settler Anglicanism ministered to 40 per cent of the population and did so in every town and suburb, and virtually every rural area in the land. No other social institution had such wide coverage. It is not a story of triumph but of dedication and difficulty, of frustration and exasperation, and of challenges and lost opportunities. There was never enough money to meet every need, there were never enough clergy to provide adequate staffing, and often never enough adequate buildings. External forces (including two world wars, a major economic depression and natural disasters) upset carefully laid plans. It was a Church that was ‘in the midst’. It rarely sought to escape from the world; more often its endeavour was to be there with its people, sharing their sorrows and joys, providing the ministrations for the big events of their lives, and nurturing them in regular worship, Sunday schools and women’s groups, and building a sense of community. This was the church of an important section of the community, a community that was at the same time at the heart of New Zealand society and yet aware of its English origins and residual loyalties. On the whole, church members acquiesced in this dilemma for no strong revolutionary spirit was alive in them. The call for a distinctive New Zealand version of Anglicanism was a muted one. They were no less loyal to New Zealand; it was simply that it was a New Zealand that was proud to be part of the British Empire, and a Church that was proud to be part of a Church of England. If any common thread emerges, it is the continuing plea to the members of this Church to raise up from among themselves men who would minister to their own people in their own land – 'sound, adaptable, missionary-hearted men, who are not afraid to tackle hard problems and difficulties of many kinds'.

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