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Citation: Hardwick, Joseph (2017) Special days of worship and national religion in the Australian colonies, 1790-c.1914. *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 45 (3). pp. 365-390. ISSN 0308-6534

Published by: Taylor & Francis

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2017.1294241>
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2017.1294241>>

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Special days of worship and national religion in the Australian colonies, 1790-c. 1914

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Abstract

Throughout the period between 1790 and 1914 the governments of the Australian colonies asked their populations to suspend work and amusements and join in collective acts of prayer. Australia's special days of prayer have much historical significance and deserve more scholarly attention: they had an enduring popularity, and they were rare moments when a multi-faith and multi-ethnic community joined together to worship for a common cause.

This article builds on recent work on state prayers in Britain by considering what the colonial tradition of special worship can tell us about community attachments in nineteenth-century Australia. 'Fast days' and 'days of thanksgiving' had both an imperial and regional character. A small number of the Australian days were for imperial events (notably wars and royal occasions) that were observed on an empire-wide scale. The great majority, such as the numerous days of fasting and humiliation that were called during periods of drought, were for regional happenings and were appointed by colonial authorities. The article argues that the different types of prayer day map on to the various ways that contemporaries envisaged 'Greater Britain' and the 'British world'. Prayer days for royal events helped the empire's inhabitants to regard themselves as imperial Britons. Meanwhile, days appointed locally by colonial governments point to the strength of regional attachments. Colonists developed a sense that providence treated them differently from British communities elsewhere, and this sense of 'national providence' could underpin a sense of colonial difference – even a colonial nationalism. Days of prayer suggested that Greater Britain was a composite of separate communities and nationalities, but the regional feelings they encouraged could still sit comfortably with attachments to an imperial community defined by commonalities of race, religion and interest.

Keywords

Community; prayer; special worship; providence; nation; monarchy; civil religion, Greater Britain.

Word Count

Special days of worship and national religion in the Australian colonies, 1790-c. 1914*

For nearly everyone who lived in the nineteenth-century British Empire, moments of crisis and celebration were marked by an order or an invitation to observe a day of special worship. On ‘fast’ or ‘humiliation’ days communities responded to some distant or local calamity—perhaps a war or a natural disaster—by collective repentance of their sins. On a second type of occasion, the ‘thanksgiving day’, populations were asked to give thanks to God for some providential blessing—perhaps a good harvest, timely rains or a military victory. These days—like the days of humiliation—sometimes featured specially prepared forms of prayer. In both cases people were expected to suspend work and amusements and attend religious services before going home to pray by themselves or as a family.¹

Special days of worship persisted even after traditional anniversary religious commemorations died out. Thanksgiving services for the failure of the Gunpowder Plot (5 November) and the Restoration (29 May), as well as the form of prayer and fast day for Charles I’s execution (30 January), were all discontinued in Britain in 1859. The only people who seemed to have kept up religious observances of the Fifth of November in Britain and the colonies were Orangemen and other advocates of Protestant ascendancy. By contrast, special days of prayer, like the holidays that commemorated royal birthdays and the origins of European settlement, reached out to the whole colonial public.² Newspapers gave optimistic accounts of the public responses: days of prayer, even those late in the nineteenth century, were said to have worn ‘the aspect of a Sabbath’. Reports of prayer day observances—like those for royal celebrations—may seem repetitious and formulaic, but they should not be taken lightly. There is evidence that a range of denominations and ethnicities participated. In July 1859 the *Bombay Times* recorded that in India, ‘East Indians, Portuguese,

Parsees, Hindoos, Jews' vied with Europeans 'in loyal emulation' at a thanksgiving day called by the governor-general for the end of the so-called Indian 'Mutiny'.³

Special days of worship have, in recent years, become familiar to historians. The 'State Prayers' project at Durham University has identified nearly 900 special acts of worship called by state and church authorities in the British Isles from the Reformation to the present day.⁴ The project concentrated primarily on the British Isles and on British events that were observed overseas, and while research has been undertaken on special worship in colonial America and on some imperial events that were marked by days in Britain (the Indian revolt is one example), days of prayer that were called by nineteenth-century colonial governments have received little attention.⁵

There is value in identifying and categorising moments of special worship in the nineteenth-century empire, as these occasions can shed light on many of the core issues that have engaged scholars of imperial history in recent times: issues relating to imperial authority, colonial loyalty, attitudes to the natural world, secularisation, ecclesiastical authority, the circulation of news, and the place of religion and churches in the empire, can all be explored through days of prayer. Days of prayer can also help us to make sense of the nature of communal and national sentiment in the British settler colonies: these were moments when colonists were asked to reflect on their attachments to local environments and communities, as well as to larger entities, such as the British monarchy and empire. That contemporaries talked about the 'national sins' or 'national blessings' of their colony during these occasions is also significant, as such language raises questions about whether colonists thought in terms of colonial nations, and, if they did, whether this 'colonial nationalism' was something more than an attachment to a government or territory.⁶

This article considers the religious and colonial communities that came together in the Australian colonies during days of prayer. Special worship is an under-explored aspect of Australian popular and religious culture.⁷ It is not surprising that historians of the 1960s and 1970s overlooked days of prayer, because such old-world survivals did not provide the kind of 'new narratives of nationhood' that they were searching for. The historiographical climate of the late twentieth century was also unwelcoming for research of this sort. Days of prayer were unlikely to receive much

coverage when other special days of commemoration, such as Australia Day and Federation Day, were being challenged by indigenous communities who considered them to be illegitimate colonial impositions.⁸ But days of special worship, many of which had a multi-faith and multi-ethnic appeal, were not like other centenaries and celebrations. Historical consideration of these days is crucial if we are to understand how communities were formed from populations that were divided by religion and ethnicity.⁹

This article argues that days of prayer prompted Australian colonists to regard themselves as members of different kinds of ‘British world’ community.¹⁰ Days of thanksgiving for royal events connected colonists to empire; they also helped create a ‘loyalist civic culture’ that promised to draw loyal Australians, of all religions and ethnicities, closer together.¹¹ But special worship did not always encourage colonists to think expansively or imperially. The article develops these points through three sections. The first, which surveys the Australian tradition of special worship, argues that Australian state prayers were community-wide events that were attuned to the religious diversity that characterised colonial settlements. Section two shows that most days called by the colonial authorities were to mark such regional events as droughts. Days of this sort could strengthen attachments to particular colonies, and the use of the language of ‘colonial nationalism’ in prayer day texts indicates that popular identification with colonial nations pre-dates the late nineteenth century.¹² This regionalism does not mean that colonists did not empathise with, or pray for, distant British communities; nor does it mean that they did not see themselves as members of a ‘Greater Britain’. Special worship shows that colonists could express multiple and overlapping loyalties to communities that were imperial, colonial, regional and local.

The concluding section suggests that prayer days can open up new understandings of the importance of old world legacies in the Australian colonies. The Australian days, like their British cousins, were not anachronistic survivals; instead they remind us that matters that were once cast as alien to the Australian experience—such as monarchies, governors and the old established churches—played vital roles in Australia’s journey to modernity.¹³

The Australian tradition of days of prayer

Australia's first thanksgiving day was called on Wednesday, 9 June 1790, after the small European community in Port Jackson received news of George III's recovery from illness.¹⁴ It is difficult to quantify the number of days of special worship appointed after then, as newspaper coverage for the early period is patchy, some days may not have been recorded in newspapers, and the searchability of newspapers in internet collections is not wholly reliable.¹⁵ Nonetheless, an analysis of online newspapers has identified sixty-eight occasions of special worship appointed by the governments of the six Australian colonies from 1790 and 1914 (no evidence has been found that the Northern Territory, which was formed in 1911, called any days before 1914). These days were ordered by the colonial state, but they were of different types and were appointed for different reasons. Some explanations are therefore necessary.

The events considered in this article (see the appendix for a chronological list) were, in most cases, days set apart by the state authorities for a religious purpose. We cannot cover the numerous occasions that religious leaders appointed for their particular denominations in times of drought, economic depression and supposed religious apathy. The article focuses on days ordered by states, as these were moments when we can expect to find the greatest number of colonists praying together for the same purposes. All were ordered by proclamations issued by the governor. Evidently, governors were assumed to exercise a colonial version of the royal supremacy in ecclesiastical matters (indeed elsewhere in the empire orders for special worship were sometimes referred to as 'royal proclamations'),¹⁶ and for this reason these orders should be regarded as important expressions of monarchical authority in the colonial world (though the mutinous military officers who overthrew Governor Bligh in 1808 were challenging crown authority when they marked their success with thanksgiving prayers, as their regime was not recognised by the British government).

These proclamations were not always explicitly religious orders. Early proclamations did directly order special worship, as the Church of England was regarded as the established church, and the governor had authority over all ecclesiastical matters in the colony. When the governor of New South Wales ordered a thanksgiving for Trafalgar on 20 April 1806, he noted that 'all persons' were

‘expected to attend’ divine worship.¹⁷ Matters changed in the mid-1830s, when the old model of a privileged Anglican Church was replaced by a system of multiple Christian establishments that was more suited to what was increasingly a free, settler, society. Subsequent proclamations followed the practice that had developed in colonial America before the Revolution: days were set aside but the clergy were invited, not ordered, to deliver services.¹⁸ The proclamations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were really civil orders, as all they did was order the closure of public offices for the day. This was, however, in expectation that people would then attend special church services, arranged by the local religious leaders, often after consultation with the civil authorities.¹⁹

Included in the list are the Queen’s jubilees of 1887 and 1897. The colonial states called public holidays in both years, but in all but two cases these were not explicitly religious days (the two exceptions were Queensland and Victoria, which did call days of thanksgiving in 1887). The 1887 events were, however, rare occasions when governors issued instructions for special worship. Governors recommended that ministers—both Anglican and non-Anglican—introduce a thanksgiving prayer in their ordinary church services. Special prayers had been added to the services in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer to mark notable events before 1887 (such as for the birth of royal children), but this had always been directed by the Anglican bishops. The 1897 events were different again. The secretary of the state for the colonies circulated the special form of prayer prepared by the archbishop of Canterbury to the colonial governors for their ‘information’, and some governors then published the form in their gazettes. Nobody was instructed to use them, and no invitation or exhortation was sent to the ministers of other religions. Our final type of occasion were the days of mourning called for the funerals of Queen Victoria in 1901, and Edward VII in 1910. These were new developments. Governors had set aside public holidays after the deaths of royal figures during the nineteenth century, but 1901 and 1910 were the first times when proclamations were issued that invited ministers to hold special religious services on days of mourning.²⁰

The Australian tradition of state prayers had four main characteristics. First, days of prayer reflected the localism of colonial life. Governments in the Australian colonies rarely coordinated their days of prayer, and some imitated metropolitan orders when others did not. The tendency of colonial

governors to imitate British days of prayer, coupled with the fact that days were not coordinated between Australian colonies, bears out the view, expressed by one historian, that ‘the colonies were primarily linked with London rather than each other’. Other types of day were very local indeed: town mayors often called days of prayer for their communities, and small settlements observed weekday days of humiliation for drought as late as the mid-1930s.²¹

Though copies of English forms of prayer for special worship were occasionally sent to colonial churchmen, there is no evidence that colonial observances were directed by the imperial authorities.²² In fact, most of the religious days that were appointed in Australia were for regional or colonial happenings. The twenty-six days that were set aside to pray or give thanks for rain reflect the hardships faced by small farmers in regions with exhausted soils and unstable ecologies.²³ Good harvests (Western Australia, February 1855) and bubonic plague (New South Wales, April 1900) also prompted days of prayer, though not every catastrophe was marked. The bushfires that tore through Victoria in February 1851 were described as a providential visitation, but nobody suggested a day of humiliation: perhaps corporate prayers were not deemed necessary when disasters were sudden and fleeting. One reason why Victoria did not mark the drought of the early 1880s was because Bishop Moorhouse, Melbourne’s senior Anglican, trusted more in irrigation than days of prayer.²⁴

Second, state prayers persisted and even seem to have revived in the late nineteenth century. The proliferation of days after 1850 was partly the result of the creation of new colonies (for example, Victoria in 1851 and Queensland in 1859), but it is notable that ten days were appointed between federation in 1901 and 1914. Opposition to days of prayer is not hard to find,²⁵ but these occasions show that governments, as well as a good proportion of the colonial public, continued to acknowledge God’s divine superintendence over human affairs. Nineteenth-century Australia, like other parts of the English-speaking world, may well have seen a move away from a belief in ‘special providences’ – the term commonly given to direct and unpredictable divine interventions in the affairs of communities and individuals. The concept of ‘general providence’, or the idea that God ruled through fixed laws, sat better with scientific developments, and in the late nineteenth century we can find preachers arguing that catastrophes came about because mankind had failed to understand and work with God’s

laws.²⁶ The belief that scarcity was God's judgment on mankind's 'ignorance and slothfulness' explains why missionaries and clergy played such prominent roles in irrigation schemes in Australia and South Africa.²⁷ An analysis of sermons may well reveal that denominations interpreted providence and natural phenomena differently, but an analysis of the vast sermon archive—some were printed, others were reported in the press—cannot be undertaken here. Still, belief in special providence did not die away—believers in a perpetually intervening God were writing into Australian newspapers in the 1860s—and, as several scholars have pointed out, general providence did not rule out divine interventions, however rare.²⁸ Certainly there is little evidence that the urge to call days of prayer fell away as climatic phenomena became better understood and more predictable: indeed in 1897 a newspaper correspondent said he wanted a 'fixed day of humiliation' every year because droughts had become so frequent.²⁹

The important point is that in the colonies, providentialism enjoyed a level of official recognition not seen in Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century. Philip Williamson has shown that between 1859 and 1919 the British government ceased to set apart holy days, and if prayers for royal occasions are discounted, only four state orders for special prayers were issued, all during the 1860s (though the crown did sanction special prayers during wartime in 1900 and 1914).³⁰ State prayers persisted in settler colonies for a number of reasons. Colonies with large agricultural sectors and extreme climates were liable to experience natural calamities, such as droughts, that in past centuries had led to special prayers in the United Kingdom. The government of New South Wales set aside four prayer days for drought from 1866 to 1878, and eight more during the three El Nino periods that struck between 1895 and 1904 (Victoria, which had a longer tradition of state-sponsored irrigation, only called four days across the same periods).³¹ New South Wales urged its citizens to pray for rain as late as March 1923. In many ways colonial states had little reason *not* to call prayer days. A vocal religious public could be quietened by setting aside a day, and once the colonies had abandoned established churches there was little chance that prayer days would be misinterpreted as an effort to re-establish Anglicanism (though some did think this).³² It is also the case that the day of prayer was

only one of the colonial state's responses to natural disaster. Australian colonies, as we have seen, introduced irrigation schemes in times of drought.

The third characteristic of the Australian days is that they had a broad-based appeal – indeed the community-wide character of colonial occasions marked them out from the British events. The days that were called in the British Isles in the first half of the nineteenth century were national in the sense that they were addressed to everybody, and the Durham project has found widespread observance among Roman Catholics, dissenters and Jews from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. But in other ways the national credentials of British days were problematic, as these were, officially at least, events for the national churches. Proclamations only contained instructions to establishment clergy.³³ Early Australian proclamations followed this metropolitan pattern of specifying one church, but after 1829 proclamations were addressed to all communities and all churches, regardless of whether they received financial aid from the state.³⁴ Later commentators said colonial days had none of the 'objectionable significance' of English days; instead, colonial events were said to have a truly 'national character' as they were all about voluntary action.³⁵

Fourthly, Australian days of special worship can be described as popular. There is little evidence that they were imposed on reluctant populations; indeed, governments were sometimes criticised for failing to call religious holidays.³⁶ Communities petitioned governors to appoint days, multi-Christian deputations made appeals, and Anglican bishops persuaded governors to set aside days for the whole community (such as in Western Australia in November 1868, when the governor called a fast day in response to crop disease on the advice of the Bishop of Perth).³⁷ Governors appear to have ordered days without much hesitation—they were confident enough to call midweek days in the early twentieth century—though most only acted when requests came from a cross section of the religious public.³⁸ The public clamour was such that governors might ignore reluctant representative assemblies. During the drought of 1876, for instance, the governor of New South Wales called a day of humiliation after the colony's legislature had voted down such a proposal from one of its members. The governor's actions generated little press comment, and while some non-Anglican (and some

Anglican) politicians wanted to strip governors of their powers to call holy days, most colonists regarded the day of prayer as a legitimate expression of gubernatorial authority.³⁹

It is difficult to judge the extent of popular observances, as Australian newspapers—many had proprietors with church backgrounds—created a hyperbolic prayer day discourse that emphasised loyalism and community-wide observances.⁴⁰ Yet newspapers only occasionally mention non-observances among the religious groups that, in the United Kingdom, were hostile to days of prayer called by civil authorities.⁴¹ These groups also formed a small proportion of the religious public. Congregationalists formed only 2% of New South Wales' population in 1891, and while other groups, such as Primitive Methodists (2.2% in 1891) and Baptists (1.2%), grew in strength after 1850, they were insignificant compared to the Anglicans (who were always around 45% of the population) and the Methodists (around 7.5% from 1861 to 1891).⁴² Baptists and Congregationalists were stronger in South Australia (6% and 3.6% respectively in 1901). But across the continent the strongest Protestant denominations were those, such as the Anglicans and Methodists, who traditionally observed state prayers.⁴³ Roman Catholics and Presbyterians did, on occasion, call alternative days to those ordered by the state, but complete rejection seems to have been rare, particularly in the Presbyterian case, and ministers who ordinarily rejected civil interference in spiritual matters said they were happy to observe state days because they were 'invited' rather than 'enjoined' to do so.⁴⁴ Take-up even seems to have been good in the early, 'confessional state', phase. Convicts may have relished the day of thanksgiving called for rain on Thursday, 12 November 1829, as they got a holiday out of it. In 1838, 3,000 copies of the Anglican form of prayer for a day of humiliation were sold—not an inconsiderable number in a population that totalled 118,918 in 1841.⁴⁵

Special days of worship suggested that the empire was—as its advocates liked to think—an empire of voluntary action and religious liberty. The Australian governors were, knowingly or unknowingly, continuing a tradition of colonial special worship that had evolved in colonial America, and which had always been more inclusive and general than the British events.⁴⁶ The next section shows that colonial orders cultivated a sense of community among a diverse and disparate colonial

public. But different kinds of day engendered attachments to different sorts of regional, colonial and imperial community.

Days of prayer and community

For providentialists, nations were like individuals: they were ‘spiritual bodies’ with consciences, and while they could be rewarded for their piety, they could also be punished for their sins. The difference was that while individuals were punished after death, nations were judged here on earth. Jews, Protestants and Catholics all talked in terms of national sins, and by acknowledging their share in the national responsibility for calamities, religious groups that did not receive financial aid from Australian states, were placing themselves at the centre of national life. However, as Nicholas Guyatt notes, ‘national providentialism’ was complicated because it was not always clear what the nation was that was being rewarded or punished: was the nation an ethnic community, a religious group, or a political entity bounded by geographical boundaries?⁴⁷ Here we shall see that different kinds of prayer days, and different kinds of prayer-day text—these could be proclamations, forms of prayer or sermons—invited colonists to regard themselves as inhabitants of a variety of spiritual and national communities.

The days observed on an imperial scale, such as those called during the Crimean War, presented the British nation as a transoceanic entity—similar to the ‘Greater Britain’ that contemporaries talked about in the late nineteenth century. During major conflicts—the Crimean, South African and Great Wars—colonists were asked to consider how their sins had contributed to a national crisis. An Independent clergyman in Melbourne made this clear in August 1854 when he told his congregation that they should see themselves as ‘an integral part of the British people’, and that they should recognise ‘their own share of the guilt which had led the Almighty to unsheathe his Terrible Sword’.⁴⁸

Two more state-ordered days of thanksgiving achieved an imperial coverage later in the century, and thanksgiving prayers were offered for royal jubilees and days of mourning. Both of the

state thanksgivings were for royal events. The first came in 1868 after the assassination attempt on Prince Alfred in Sydney (Australian colonies led the way here, as it was not until June—some two months after the Australian thanksgivings—that prayers were said in England, Wales and Ireland). The other was in 1872, for the recovery of the Prince of Wales from illness. Before Empire Day appeared in the early 1900s, these royal events were a key way in which attachments to concepts like Greater Britain or an imperial Britishness were promoted. An Anglican clergyman in Brisbane noted that the thanksgiving services for the Queen's 1887 jubilee embraced 'the magnificent service in Westminster Abbey, the cheerful gatherings in the village chapels at home, and the Australian bush meetings'.⁴⁹ Jubilee services expatiated on the British tradition of freedom and liberty, that, in the view of one Jewish prayer leader, was 'now the common privilege of every British subject'.⁵⁰ Days of prayer also imparted a feeling of imperial belonging in the sense that they told colonists what a good citizen of empire was. Membership of empire brought responsibilities as well as rewards: prosperous colonists had a duty to contribute to benevolent funds and to protect those communities lower down the civilizational ladder.⁵¹

Alison Clarke has described New Zealand's royal celebrations as 'community-building events' because they united populations that were ethnically and religiously diverse.⁵² In the Australian colonies a varied public became involved in these celebrations because they gave marginal and politically-suspect groups the chance to give public expression to their loyalty to abstract ideas like crown and empire. Roman Catholic participation was not always assured, as Catholics had to wait for an order from their bishop before they could observe days called by Protestant monarchs, states or churches. Multi-denominational prayer days, like the system of non-denominational education that was rolled out in Victoria in the 1870s and New South Wales in the 1880s, threatened to dilute the distinctiveness of Roman Catholic forms and rituals.⁵³ Nevertheless, Catholics were provided with a special thanksgiving prayer for the fall of Sebastopol in 1855, and in April 1868 New South Wales Catholics were directed by John Polding, the English Benedictine archbishop, to observe the day that the Protestant governor had called after the assassination attempt on Prince Alfred.⁵⁴ Catholics stayed away from the services and parades that Protestants organised for Victoria's jubilees, but large

numbers attended Catholic thanksgiving services on these days—3,000 Catholics, for instance, reportedly attended a service in Brisbane in 1887. Colonial Catholics could celebrate British liberty, and their loyalty to monarchical rule, as they benefited from British rule in a way that Catholics back in Ireland did not.⁵⁵

Such occasions were also moments when non-white and non-Christian populations signalled their desire to be accepted as members of colonial communities and Greater Britain. Chinese communities responded to Christian prayer days for much the same reason as they participated in town parades and public celebrations: these were ways to communicate a sense of belonging. Settlers in Bendigo, Victoria, temporarily recognised these claims when they invited the Chinese community to pray for rain in the mid-1860s.⁵⁶ But here, as elsewhere, loyalty was conditional. When indigenous Australians at New South Wales' Maloga mission station petitioned the governor in July 1887 they stated that a promised land grant would be 'in accord with the wishes of Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria in this the jubilee year of her reign'.⁵⁷

The fact that the empire-wide days were for royal events is important, as it shows that monarchy was an 'integrative symbol' for a far-flung imperial nation.⁵⁸ These royal events also suggested that there could be such a thing as an inclusive 'civil religion' in the settler colonies, one that would accompany a sense of loyal citizenship.⁵⁹ The thanksgiving service held in St Paul's cathedral in 1872 for the Prince of Wales' recovery was a model, as representatives of the nonconformist, orthodox and Scottish churches, the Jewish community and Indian princes were invited to what was presented as a genuinely national and imperial event.⁶⁰ Colonial Protestants met in united services in town halls and mechanics institutes for royal thanksgivings and other kinds of prayer day. Indeed the united services held in 1887 and for Australia's 1888 centenary led some to draw up plans for a 'National Church of Australasia'.⁶¹ Admittedly when an imperial national church was talked about, it was usually assumed that it would be a union of the Protestant churches. Most Protestant churchmen could not entertain the idea of an ecumenical colonial national church that included Roman Catholics, but some contemporaries did look forward to Catholic involvement in some kind of imperial church union.⁶²

Royal days of prayer were not universally popular, but they softened ethnic and religious differences, and marginal groups knew they had to participate in the 'loyalty play' if they were to win concessions from colonial states.⁶³ Participation did not, however, bring with it full membership of colonial and imperial communities. Catholics found that their loyalty was tested when prayer days came around, particularly after the 'papal aggression' of the early 1850s, and the Fenian activities of the later 1860s. When Roman Catholics set aside their own fast day for the war with Russia, the *Sydney Morning Herald* complained that it was a 'wanton and uncalled for affront to the community'.⁶⁴ Aboriginal communities might attend services at mission stations, but nobody thought that this would incorporate them in an imperial or colonial community on the same terms as whites. Indigenous Australians were supposed to play the role of dependents and to receive charitable hand-outs of blankets and food.⁶⁵ The events that led to special days were important for the white community: droughts and epidemics only resulted in days of prayer if they devastated settler populations. Only occasionally did clergy describe calamities as divine punishments for the oppressive treatment of indigenous communities.⁶⁶

Days of prayer, then, sometimes did more to expose the differences between colonists than their commonalities. These occasions also suggest that imperial institutions—and the empire itself—might not have been as accommodating to non-Anglicans as recent scholarship has led us to believe. If prayer days nourished a civil religion, then it was one defined by the kind of 'generalised Protestant identity' that fed sectarian animosity across Australia.⁶⁷ The other key point is that prayer days could encourage a sense of exceptionalism among colonial communities; this was partly because there were not many events that elicited a sense of corporate responsibility or celebration that was imperial in scope. Distant disasters rarely prompted state prayers in Australian colonies, and while nineteenth-century colonists prayed for distant communities at other times, generally it seems they had narrow understandings of how providence worked – certainly much narrower than those held by the colonists of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century North America. The proclamations issued in the North American colonies suggest that early-modern colonists had a strikingly elastic sense of corporate responsibility.⁶⁸ For Tony Claydon, the supranational outlook of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century

English Protestants stemmed from their strong identification with concepts and communities that were imperial and international in scope—he calls them the ‘Protestant international’ and a ‘united Christendom’.⁶⁹

Australia’s days of prayer indicate that the old idea that imperial communities were ‘integral to Britain’s place in God’s providential scheme’ had largely disappeared by the mid-nineteenth century.⁷⁰ Proclamations for the 1847 fast day for the Irish Famine appeared in Australian newspapers three months after their publication in Britain, but there is no evidence that Australians, even Roman Catholics, publicly observed a version of this fast.⁷¹ Indeed 1857 – the year that communities in India, the Canadian colonies and Gibraltar observed a fast day for the Indian ‘Mutiny’ – was the last time in the nineteenth century that colonists observed an imperial calamity with a day of prayer, though some Australians did want to mark Indian famines with special prayers and special collections.⁷²

Two explanations can be offered for the seeming lack of spiritual empathy among nineteenth-century colonial communities. The first is simply that the British government had itself ceased to mark imperial disasters with special days or forms of worship (though the 1877 Indian famine was marked by special prayers in the Canterbury province of the Church of England). But to appreciate more fully why colonists were unwilling to share in the responsibility for distant catastrophes we need to understand changes in how providence was understood. Boyd Hilton’s comments on British reactions to the Irish Famine can help here. The Famine disturbed some churchmen because it suggested that God did not always punish directly or justly: the less sinful—in this case the Irish—were punished so that others—the English—could atone for their sins.⁷³ Later nineteenth-century colonists appear to have held different views: they had little reason to feel responsible for distant disasters, as they wanted to believe that divine retributions were administered perfectly or directly to sinful communities, not in an indirect fashion. Distant Australians, in other words, could not join in a sense of ‘shared national responsibility’, either in 1847, or on later occasions.⁷⁴

The majority of Australian days were, as we noted earlier, responses to local happenings, particularly drought. The days that remote settlements observed for drought were an early expression of the strong sense of community, united action and ‘communion’ that has been noted in modern

studies of rural Australia.⁷⁵ These regional identities could also map onto the geographic boundaries of Australian colonies. Indeed, days of prayer show that contemporaries used the language of nationalism to describe this sort of regional identification. Clergy talked in terms of the ‘national crimes’ and ‘national punishments’ of particular colonies in their sermons, and even when droughts were widespread, such as the one that struck New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland in 1865-6, preachers still thought in terms of regional environments and regional sins.⁷⁶ Australian historians have recently drawn attention to the strong pull of ‘national’ identities that were focused on particular colonies. But questions remain over what this ‘colonial’ or ‘regional nationalism’ amounted to, and whether it was something more than ‘local patriotism’ rooted in an attachment to a sovereign state or geographic territory.⁷⁷

Certainly fasts and thanksgivings made both the colonial state and its territory more visible to colonists. Recent Australian scholarship has argued that early colonial nationalism grew from the sense that settlers were sovereign, and that they had ‘control of national territory and destiny’. The proclamations appointing days of prayer reminded colonists of the reach of the colonial state, but they also symbolised popular sovereignty, as many came through public pressure.⁷⁸ Holy days also reminded colonists that they shared a common territory. During the drought of 1866 a southern New South Wales newspaper argued that a ‘national’ fast that encompassed the whole colony was appropriate, as ‘in a grain producing country’, all ‘other interests depend for prosperity upon the harvest’.⁷⁹ Holy days were hard to ignore, especially when shops and offices closed, and even sceptics would have been reminded of their place in a colonial community in some way. Rural newspapers warned colonists of coming prayer days by printing proclamations, and by copying reports of church services in colonial towns, country newspapers kept local readers informed of observances elsewhere.⁸⁰

These occasions also suggest that a stronger national identification, one founded on a sense of cultural identity and environment, existed in nineteenth-century Australia.⁸¹ It is plausible that the letters in newspapers that compiled historical catalogues of ‘national providences’ nourished a colonial national memory.⁸² The concept of national providence also drew attention to the ‘national

character' shared by the inhabitants of a particular colony. Even after the federation of the Australian Commonwealth in 1901, letters in newspapers referred to the 'national sins' and 'national character' of particular Australian states. During the drought of 1902 an Anglican clergyman remarked that days of prayer were a reminder that 'communities have a character', and that 'each member' of the community of New South Wales had a 'responsibility, smaller or greater, for that character, and an interest of a very intimate kind in what that character is'.⁸³ In Queensland the 1902 drought prompted editorial comment on the distinctive Christian character of the state's population.⁸⁴ Even early occasions held for imperial events could prompt clergy to speak about the characters of distinct communities. An Anglican clergyman in South Australia said during the Crimean War fast in 1854 that the gold diggings had encouraged an 'idolatry of wealth, a love of mammon, and a disposition to speculation' that was particularly intense among South Australians.⁸⁵

Of course not all colonists would have identified with the largely negative portrayal of colonial character that the clergy customarily trooped out at days of humiliation. Furthermore, the way clergy talked about national sins often did not do much to differentiate one group of colonists from another, as all were guilty of the same sins of drunkenness, materialism, profanity and godlessness.⁸⁶ Days of prayer also exposed the limitations of colonial nationality. Identifications with towns and local communities were strong enough that some colonists struggled to regard themselves as members of a colonial nation that was protected and punished by divine providence. A South Australian newspaper editor noted that colonial boundaries were arbitrary and artificial, and for this reason, they could not see how the acts of a state legislature, or the behaviour of a newly-defined colonial community, could 'change the entire current both of natural laws and of Divine Providence'.⁸⁷ Droughts also divided town from country. When town dwellers were criticised for not empathising with rural drought sufferers, urbanites replied that there was no reason for them to pray for rain, even when the drought was affecting their own colony. In 1869, for instance, the inhabitants of Sydney asked why they should 'humiliate themselves for the offences of those who are suffering from the drought' in other parts of New South Wales. Similar sentiments were voiced in 1876.⁸⁸

Undoubtedly, however, days of prayer called by colonial states asked lay people to think in terms of regional or colonial national communities. Indeed, national providence may have been easiest to imagine on the regional scale. But while days of prayer may have emphasised the kind of regional identities that Andrew Thompson has argued were so important in the late nineteenth-century empire, this did not mean that these occasions could not encourage the kind of emotions and sentiments that lay behind the federation of the Australian Commonwealth in 1901.⁸⁹ By the late nineteenth century, widespread drought and the calling of proximate days of prayer in different colonies, led to comment during special worship about an ‘Australian climate’.⁹⁰ The day of humiliation that the Victorian churches called for the banking crisis of 1893 led one preacher to comment that in the Australian ‘character’ there was ‘a want of reverence for authority, human and divine’.⁹¹ Prayer day services in the pre-Anzac era could also feed into more liberal and progressive readings of Australian identity. Preachers used the thanksgiving services that followed the 1868 assassination attempt to give thanks for the religious and civil liberty that was the hallmark of what was described as a distinctively Australian political culture.⁹²

We must, however, keep in mind that for all their attachment to colonial nations—whether these were regional or continental in scope—Australian colonists still retained a ‘dual identity’, one underpinned by an emotional loyalty to a Greater Britain.⁹³ New South Wales Protestants observed a thanksgiving for peace on 8 June 1902, and Australian governors marked the days of ‘prayer and intercession’ that Britain observed during Great War.⁹⁴ Meanwhile church-appointed days cultivated attachments to denominational communities that often stretched beyond empire. But to fully understand the extent to which Australians thought in terms of an ‘imagined community of Britishness’, we have to look beyond days of prayer.⁹⁵ Colonists donated funds to the victims of famine and war, and during the South African War, Australians, like many other imperial communities, offered prayers of intercession for British troops.⁹⁶

Special worship in the colonial world suggests that national attachments—whether these were to colonies or to a larger Greater Britain—were nourished by a sense of spiritual community, one defined by a broad and ecumenical Christianity. Events continued to be given a sacred meaning by the

clergy and the public, and diverse communities came together on the same days to worship for a common cause. This imperial spiritual community was most evident during days of prayer for royal occasions; indeed, the involvement of non-European communities in royal jubilees suggests that this spiritual community could, at points, admit non-Christian religions.⁹⁷ Other events in the civic calendar did not have the same kind of multi-faith and multi-ethnic appeal. There is no evidence that Australia's indigenous communities prayed during droughts alongside Christians; indeed, missionary testimony from southern Africa suggests that non-Christians showed little interest because they did not think the Christian God could make it rain.⁹⁸ Royal thanksgiving days were, by contrast, undemanding and fairly uncontroversial. Though we have focused on local attachments, the popularity of royal events, coupled with the growing frequency of multi-faith services, tells us that colonists created communities that transcended political geographies and denominational boundaries.

Days of prayer and old world legacies

This article has argued that days of prayer could perform an integrative function in colonial societies that were marked by ethnic and religious divisions. Holy days also show that Australian colonists possessed a range of distinct but overlapping identifications and attachments: some prayer days connected settlers to the 'immediacy of local Australian society, culture and environment'; others orientated them towards a 'global diaspora of an ethnic Anglo culture'.⁹⁹ Indeed some days—for instance the fasts called in 1854—encouraged congregations to think both imperially and locally: not only were colonists members of an extended British nation, they also belonged to colonies whose particular national sins had contributed to divine punishment on an imperial scale. Days of prayer, therefore, strengthened attachments to a Greater Britain, whether this entity was conceived as a globe-spanning nation based on a common race, or as a composite of colonial nations and peoples.¹⁰⁰

Ideas of providence and chosen peoples were undoubtedly crucial elements in British identity across the British world. What days of prayer show, however, is that Greater Britain was not underpinned by a single scheme of 'national providence': the empire was too big and too diverse for that.¹⁰¹ Nineteenth-century settler communities, much like their forebears in the seventeenth- and

eighteenth-century North American colonies, developed their own understandings of how God was rewarding or punishing their discrete communities.¹⁰² But providential thinking did not have the same kind of political significance in the nineteenth-century British world as it did in eighteenth century. After 1763 in colonial America, providentialism—more specifically the idea that God had a special plan for a particular community—came to underpin colonists’ demands for independence from Britain; nineteenth-century settlers, by contrast, did not think that God had privileged their colonial communities above others, or assigned their colony a special divine mission. The national providence we find in the Australian colonies was the kind Guyatt calls ‘modest’ and ‘judicial’: communities were rewarded and punished according to their behaviour, not because they had a privileged relationship with God. This kind of national providentialism did not generate political tensions, and could sit alongside an attachment to a Greater Britain.¹⁰³

While this article has emphasised the pull of colonial regionalism, days of prayer also fit into the story of Australian federation. Days of prayer might seem unimportant when placed alongside the other forces that were drawing the Australian colonies closer together, such as debates over tariff reform, developments in communication and the rise of a nativist movement.¹⁰⁴ But holy days were revealing moments in Australia’s national story. They show that institutions that seem foreign, such as monarchy, governors and the old ecclesiastical establishments, continued to order national life.¹⁰⁵ Days of prayer point to the reach of governors and the continuing relevance of state governments after federation.¹⁰⁶ In the late 1890s Christian communities petitioned federation conventions and demanded that governor-generals be given the power to appoint national days of humiliation and prayer (not just public holidays).¹⁰⁷ Governor-generals never exercised these powers, but state governors, as we have seen, continued to issue proclamations for days of prayer up to 1914.

The institution that profited most from days of prayer was, perhaps surprisingly, the Church of England. Historians have suggested that the Church in twentieth-century England was a national institution in the way its nineteenth-century forebear had never been: nonconformists looked to it for religious leadership, and the Church was regarded as the representative of a ‘common English Protestantism’.¹⁰⁸ Holy days tell us that Australians recognised the Anglican Church’s special status,

even though it had no political or legal privileges. It was not surprising that this was particularly evident during royal jubilees and imperial thanksgivings, as Anglicans had a special relationship with the monarch, and some politicians regarded the Church as the ‘state church’ of the British Empire.¹⁰⁹ More surprising is that Anglican leadership was recognised during events that had nothing to do with monarchy. Anglican bishops presided over united services for the 1893 banking crisis; they also headed the deputations that appealed to governments for holy days during dry periods. The interdenominational services that gathered in town halls were often conducted according to Anglican forms of prayer.¹¹⁰ And around the time of Victoria’s funeral we find non-Anglicans describing cathedrals as national institutions.¹¹¹

All these institutions—the monarchy, the governor and the national Church—had been key features of the empire that imperial administrators had imposed on the Australian colonies in the pre-1830 period.¹¹² It is sometimes assumed that these bodies, particularly the Church, had little public significance once self-government launched the colonies on a new democratic trajectory. But days of prayer—their survival from earlier centuries—show that these institutions not only persisted, their public relevance grew stronger as Australia headed towards federation.

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Appendix: Special days of worship and special prayers ordered by Australian state authorities, 1790-1914

| YEAR | DAY | DATE | AREA(s) | TYPE | CAUSE | METROPOLITAN EVENT |
|------|------|---------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|---|---|
| 1790 | Weds | 9 June | NSW | Thanksgiving day | Recovery of King from illness | 23 Apr 1789 (E, W, S, Ir), thanksgiving day for George III's recovery |
| 1806 | Sun | 20 Apr. | NSW | Thanksgiving day | Victory at Trafalgar | 5 Dec 1805, thanksgiving day for victory at Trafalgar (E, W,S and Ir) |
| 1806 | Fri | 22 Aug. | Van Diemen's Land [Tasmania] | Thanksgiving day | Victory at Trafalgar | Ibid. |
| 1808 | Sun | 31 Jan. | NSW | Thanksgiving prayers | Give thanks to Al- mighty God for their deliverance on 26 Jan. [the 'Rum Re- | |

bellion']

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|-------------|-------|---------|-----------------|-------------------------|---|--|
| 1829 | Thurs | 12 Nov. | NSW | Thanksgiving day | End of drought | |
| 1838 | Fri | 2 Nov. | NSW | Day of humilia- tion | Drought | |
| 1854 | Fri | 28 July | South Australia | Day of humilia- tion | Blessing and assis- tance on British arms | 26 April 1854, fast day for military campaigns (E, W, S, Ir) |
| 1854 | Fri | 4 Aug. | Victoria | Day of humilia- tion | Blessing and assis- tance on British arms | Ibid. |
| 1854 | Fri | 11 Aug. | Tasmania | Day of humilia- tion | Blessing and assis- tance on British arms | Ibid. |

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|-------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|--|--------------------------|-------|
| 1854 | Fri | 18 Aug. | NSW | Day of humiliation | Bless Her Majesty's arms | Ibid. |
| 1855 | Sun | 18 Feb. | Western Australia | Thanksgiving day | Abundant harvest | |
| 1856 | Weds / Sun | 9 and 13 July | Tasmania | Public holiday and instruction for thanksgiving services | Treaty of Paris | |
| 1866 | Fri | 5 Jan. | Victoria | Day of humiliation | Drought | |
| 1866 | Fri | 12 Jan. | NSW | Day of humiliation | Drought | |
| 1866 | Fri | 13 Apr. | Queensland | Day of humiliation | Drought | |

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|-------------|-------|---------|-------------------|-----------------------|--|---|
| 1868 | Sun | 22 Mar. | Victoria | Day of special prayer | Failure of attack on Duke of Edinburgh | 28 June 1868, Thanksgiving prayers for failure of attack (E, W, Ir), 5 July (S) |
| 1868 | Thurs | 2 Apr. | Tasmania | Thanksgiving day | Failure of attack on Duke of Edinburgh | Ibid. |
| 1868 | Tues | 28 Apr. | NSW; Queensland | Thanksgiving day | Failure of attack on Duke of Edinburgh | Ibid. |
| 1868 | Sun | 3 May | South Australia | Thanksgiving day | Failure of attack on Duke of Edinburgh | Ibid. |
| 1868 | Thurs | 19 Nov. | Western Australia | Day of humiliation | Crop disease | |
| 1869 | Sat | 13 Feb. | NSW | Day of humiliation | Drought | |
| 1869 | Fri | 2 Apr. | Victoria | Day of humiliation | Drought | |

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|-------------|-------|---------|------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| | | | | tion | | |
| 1872 | Tues | 20 Feb. | Victoria | Thanksgiving day | Recovery of Prince of Wales | 21 Jan thanksgiving prayers for recovery of Prince of Wales (E, W, S); thanksgiv- ing services on 27 Feb |
| 1872 | Thurs | 22 Feb. | Tasmania | Thanksgiving day | Recovery of Prince of Wales | Ibid. |
| 1872 | Tues | 27 Feb. | NSW | Thanksgiving day | Recovery of Prince of Wales | Ibid. |
| 1872 | Mon | 4 Mar. | Queensland | Thanksgiving day | Recovery of Prince of Wales | Ibid. |
| 1876 | Fri | 14 Apr. | NSW | Day of humilia- tion | Drought | |
| 1877 | Weds | 14 Nov. | Queensland | Day of prayer | Drought | |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|-----|--------------------------------|----------------------|--|--|---|
| 1878 | Fri | 1 Mar. | NSW | Thanksgiving day | For rain & end of drought | |
| 1887 | Sun | Not specified | NSW | Request for all clergy to observe jubilee in thanksgiving services | Queen's jubilee | 21 to 28 June (E & W), 21 to 26 June (S) thanksgiving services for golden jubilee of Queen Victoria |
| 1887 | Sun | 19 June and unspecified period | Victoria; Queensland | Day of thanksgiving (19 Jun.) / request for all clergy to observe jubilee in thanksgiving services | Queen's jubilee / Thanks for many mercies vouchsafed in reign to be given in thanksgiving services | Ibid. |
| 1887 | | June; not | Tasmania; South | Request for clergy to ob- | Queen's jubilee | Ibid. |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|------|-----------|-------------------|--|-----------------|-------|
| | | specified | Australia | serve jubilee in thanksgiving services | | |
| 1887 | Tues | 21 June | Western Australia | Request for clergy to ob- serve jubilee in thanksgiving services | Queen's jubilee | Ibid. |
| 1895 | Sun | 15 Sept. | NSW | Day of humilia- tion | Drought | |
| 1895 | Wed | 18 Sept. | Queensland | Day of humilia- tion | Drought | |
| 1895 | Sun | 6 Oct. | NSW | Thanksgiving day | For rain | |
| 1897 | Good | 16 Apr. | NSW | Day of humilia- tion | Drought | |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------|--------------------|---|---|-----------------|---|
| | Fri | | | tion | | |
| 1897 | Sun | 2 May | Victoria | Day of humilia- tion | Drought | |
| 1897 | Sun | 9 May | South Australia | Day of humilia- tion | Drought | |
| 1897 | | Not speci- fied | NSW; Victoria (and possibly other colo- nies) | Request for special form of prayer to be included in thanksgiving services | Queen's jubilee | 20 June thanksgiving services for Queen's diamond jubilee (E, W, S) |
| 1898 | Sun | 23 Oct. | NSW | Day of humilia- tion | Drought | |
| 1900 | Thurs | 12 Apr. | NSW | Day of humilia- tion | Bubonic plague | |

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|-------------|-------|---------|--|--|----------------|---|
| 1901 | Sat | 2 Feb. | South Australia; Queensland; NSW; Western Australia; Victoria; Tasmania | Public holiday / day of mourn- ing / special services | Death of Queen | 2 Feb to 9 Feb day of mourn- ing and services for death of Queen Victoria (E & W), 2 Feb in Scotland |
| 1902 | Weds | 26 Feb. | NSW | Day of humilia- tion and prayer | Drought | |
| 1902 | Thurs | 17 Apr. | Queensland | Day of humilia- tion and prayer | Drought | |
| 1902 | Sun | 8 Jun. | South Australia | Thanksgiving day | For peace | 8 June thanksgiving services for peace (E, W, S) |
| 1902 | Sun | 7 Sept. | Victoria; Queens- land | Day of humilia- tion and prayer | Drought | |
| 1902 | Sun | 7 Sept. | NSW | Day of humilia- tion and prayer for where | Drought | |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------|---------|--|---|------------------------|--|
| | | | | drought exists; thanksgiving for where rain has fallen | | |
| 1903 | Sun | 22 Mar. | NSW | Day of humilia- tion | Drought | |
| 1904 | Thurs | 4 Feb. | NSW | Thanksgiving day | For rain | |
| 1910 | Fri | 20 May | NSW; South Aus- tralia; Queensland, Tasmania; Victoria | Day of mourn- ing | Death of Edward VII | 20 May to 27 May, Day of mourning and services, for Edward VII (E, W); 20 May (S) |
| 1910 | Mon | 9 May | Western Australian | Day of mourn- ing | Death of Edward VII | Ibid. |
| 1912 | Sun | 16 June | NSW | Thanksgiving | For rain | |

day

| | | | | | |
|------|-----|--------|----------|--------------|----------|
| 1912 | Sun | 7 July | Victoria | Thanksgiving | For rain |
| | | | | day | |

Sources: Mears *et al*, *National Prayers*, vol. 1; Tench, *A Complete Account*, p. 47; *Sydney Gazette* [hereafter *SG*], 13 Apr. 1806; *Diary of the Rev. Robert Knopwood*, p. 109; *Historical Records of Australia*, vol. 6, pp. 272, 529; *SG*, 9 Nov. 1829; *Sydney Monitor*, 5 Nov. 1838; *South Australian Register* [hereafter *SAR*], 25 July 1854; *Geelong Advertiser*, 1 Aug. 1854; *Cornwall Chronicle*, 2 Aug. 1854; *Goulburn Herald*, 5 Aug. 1854; *Inquirer* [Perth], 14 Feb. 1855; *Colonial Times* [Hobart], 4 Jul. 1856; *Supplement to the Victoria Government Gazette*, 22 Dec. 1865; *Queanbeyan Age*, 11 Jan. 1866; *Maryborough Chronicle*, 7 Apr. 1866; *The Age* [Melbourne], 14 Mar. 1868; *Launceston Examiner*, 7 Apr. 1868; *Sydney Morning Herald* [hereafter *SMH*], 10 Apr. 1868; *Queenslander* [Brisbane], 25 Apr. 1868; *South Australian Advertiser*, 1 May 1868; *Inquirer and Commercial News* [Perth], 18 Nov. 1868; *Sydney Mail*, 6 Feb. 1869; *Victoria Government Gazette*, 25 Mar. 1869; *Supplement to the Victoria Government Gazette*, 16 Feb. 1872; *Mercury* [Hobart], 10 May 1872; *Newcastle Chronicle*, 24 Feb. 1872; *Queensland Times* [Brisbane], 29 Feb. 1872; *Riverine Grazier* [New South Wales, hereafter NSW], 12 Apr. 1876; *Queenslander*, 17 Nov. 1877; *Sydney Mail*, 23 Feb. 1878; *Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, 18 June 1887; *Victoria Government Gazette Extraordinary*, 15 June 1887; *Western Star and Roma Advertiser* [Queensland], 4 June 1887; *Daily Telegraph* [Launceston], 16 June 1887; *SAR*, 20 June 1887; *Western Mail* [Perth], 18 June 1887; *National Advocate* [NSW], 13 Sept. 1895; *Queensland Times*, 17 Sept. 1895; *Bathurst Free Press*, 3 Oct. 1895; *Australian Town and Country Journal* [NSW], 17 Apr. 1897; *Second Supplement to the Victoria Government Gazette*, 23 Apr. 1897; *Advertiser* [Adelaide], 10 May 1897; *Riverine Herald*, 18 June 1897; *Second Supplement to the Victoria Government Gazette*, 11 June 1897; *Queanbeyan Age*, 19 Oct. 1898; *SMH*, 13 Apr. 1900; *SAR*, 31 Jan. 1901; *Queenslander*, 2 Feb. 1901; *Evening News* [Sydney], 2 Feb. 1901; *West Australian* [Perth], 29 Jan. 1901; *Argus* [Melbourne], 2 Feb. 1901; *Northern Western Advocate* [Tas-

mania], 1 Feb. 1901; *Burrowa News* [NSW], 21 Feb. 1902; *Telegraph* [Brisbane], 15 Apr. 1902; *Register* [Adelaide], 9 June 1902; *Bendigo Advertiser*, 8 Sept. 1902; *Bathurst Free Press*, 5 Sept. 1902; *Telegraph*, 3 Sept. 1902; *Albury Banner*, 20 Mar. 1903; *Bowral Free Press*, 27 Jan. 1904; *Singleton Argus*, 14 May 1910; *Sunday Times* [Perth], 8 May 1910; *Chronicle* [Adelaide], 28 May 1910; *Brisbane Courier* [hereafter *BC*], 12 May 1910; *Mercury*, 12 May 1910; *Traralgon Record*, 13 May 1910; *Border Morning Mail* [NSW], 17 June 1912; *Argus*, 3 July 1912.

Notes

* I wish to thank seminar audiences at the Universities of Portsmouth, Ulster and Northumbria for giving feedback on the presentations on which this article is partly based. Thanks also to Gordon Pentland, Philip Williamson and the anonymous reviewers for their enormously helpful comments on earlier drafts.

¹ Williamson, 'State Prayers', pp. 126-32. For the British tradition, see the introduction to the first volume of Mears *et al*, *National Prayers*.

² The first official holiday for the foundation of New South Wales was appointed for 26 Jan. 1818: *Hobart Town Gazette*, 14 Feb. 1818.

³ *Bombay Times*, 30 July 1859.

⁴ https://www.dur.ac.uk/history/research/research_projects/british_state_prayers/, last accessed 2 Apr. 2015.

⁵ Gray, 'National Humiliation'; Stanley, 'Christian Responses to the Indian Mutiny'.

⁶ Cole, 'The Problem of "Nationalism" and "Imperialism"', pp. 164-5.

⁷ Brief mention is made in Inglis, *The Australian Colonists*, pp. 154-6.

⁸ McKenna, 'The History Anxiety', pp. 574, 576.

⁹ Clarke's comments on New Zealand days are applicable to Australia: Clarke, "'With One Accord'", pp.137-8.

¹⁰ Pietsch, 'Rethinking'.

¹¹ Pentland, 'Indignant Nation', p. 60; for 'loyalist civic culture', see O'Gorman, 'Origins and Trajectories', p. 37.

¹² Cole, in 'The Problem of "Nationalism" and "Imperialism"', timed the emergence of a sense of Australian ethnic unity to the federation era, and the contributors to Eddy and Schreuder (eds), *The Rise of Colonial Nationalism*, saw a 'sense of cultural identity' (p. 7) emerging in Australia from the

1880s. Recent scholarship has found popular identifications with colonial nations in the 1850s: Coote, 'Out from the Legend's Shadow', pp. 106-7.

¹³ Williamson, 'National Days', p. 327.

¹⁴ Trench, *A Complete Account*, p. 47.

¹⁵ This article used newspapers collected at <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper>.

¹⁶ *The Globe* [Toronto], 5 Dec. 1862.

¹⁷ *SG*, 13 Apr. 1806.

¹⁸ For this earlier tradition, see 'Introduction' in Williamson *et al*, *National Prayers*, vol. 2.

¹⁹ *Queanbeyan Age*, 11 Jan. 1866; *Argus*, 5 Jan. 1866; *Maryborough Chronicle*, 7 Apr. 1866; *Burrowa News*, 21 Feb. 1902.

²⁰ Here they followed the metropolitan example: Williamson, 'State Prayers', p. 122, n. 2.

²¹ Eddy, 'Nationalism and Nation-Making', p. 134; *Dungog Chronicle*, 20 Aug. 1935.

²² The annual accounts of King's printers in London for 1804 (The National Archives, Kew, T1/934) show that copies of the form of prayer for the British fast day in 1804 were sent to the bishops of Nova Scotia and Quebec, evidently in order to be reprinted for use in their dioceses on colonial fast days. This may have become an established practice. I am grateful to Philip Williamson for this information.

²³ Gaynor, 'Environmental Transformations', p. 284.

²⁴ *Argus*, 14 Feb. 1851; Bellanta, 'Irrigation Millennium'. For providence and settler understandings of drought elsewhere, see Beinart, *The Rise of Conservation*, p. 112-13.

²⁵ For an early example of opposition, see 'Common Sense' in *Argus*, 2 Apr. 1875.

²⁶ A Presbyterian minister said in 1895 that if the fruits of prosperity had been used wisely, New South Wales would not face drought: J. Ferguson reported in *Evening News* [Sydney], 16 Sept. 1895.

²⁷ Sermon of H. Handfield reported in *Argus*, 6 Jan. 1866. For the ‘religious and millennial imagery’ in Australian irrigation, see Bellanta, ‘Irrigation Millennium’.

²⁸ For special providence, see ‘F.’ in *Perth Gazette and West Australian Times*, 4 Dec. 1868, and ‘A Resident’, *Queenslander*, 9 Jan. 1869. For ‘general’ and ‘special’ providence, see Williamson, ‘State Prayers’, pp. 133-4 and note 40.

²⁹ ‘J.P.’ in *SMH*, 2 Dec. 1897.

³⁰ Williamson, ‘State Prayers’, p. 149; *idem.*, ‘National Days’, pp. 329-30.

³¹ Gaynor, ‘Environmental Transformations’, p. 289, 292.

³² *Portland Guardian*, 3 Aug. 1854.

³³ Williamson, ‘State Prayers’, p. 161.

³⁴ *SG*, 9 Nov. 1829.

³⁵ *BC*, 14 Apr. 1902.

³⁶ *Sydney Monitor*, 27 Sept. 1828; *Colonist* [Sydney], 19 June 1839; *Herald* [Fremantle], 27 Mar. 1872.

³⁷ For petitions, *Maitland Mercury*, 30 Mar. 1876; for deputations, *SMH*, 10 Apr. 1876; for the Western Australia day, *Perth Gazette*, 13 Nov. 1868.

³⁸ Government turned down an 1888 request because it came from Anglicans alone: *Goulburn Herald*, 29 Nov. 1888.

³⁹ See legislative debates in *SMH*, 30 Mar. 1876, and 1 Mar. 1878 for abolition demands. Opposition in the NSW assembly came from—amongst others—Angus Cameron, a Presbyterian, James Greenwood, a Baptist, and Edward Greville, an Anglican. *SAR*, 14 Nov. 1873 for the opposition of William Morgan, an Anglican member of the South Australian assembly.

⁴⁰ Macintyre and Scalmer, ‘Colonial States’, p. 212, for religion and the press.

⁴¹ Williamson, 'State Prayers', pp.161-2; *Empire* [NSW], 17 Aug. 1854; see *Argus*, 3 Apr. 1869 for the opposition of one Independent minister.

⁴² Phillips, 'Religious Profession', p. 381.

⁴³ Anglicans formed 29.5% of the South Australian population in 1901; Methodists 24.8%: *Statistical Register of South Australia*, Part VII, p. 5.

⁴⁴ In 1897 the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in New South Wales set aside a day of humiliation two days after the state for his denomination: *Advertiser* [South Australia], 10 Apr. 1897. For compliance, see *Argus*, 5 Aug. 1854.

⁴⁵ Some masters still punished convict workers for observing the day: *Australian*, 20 Nov. 1829; *SG*, 6 Nov. 1838.

⁴⁶ 'Introduction' in Williamson et al, *National Prayers*, vol. 2.

⁴⁷ Guyatt, *Providence and the Invention of the United States*, pp. 59, 16.

⁴⁸ *Argus*, 4 and 7 Aug. 1854.

⁴⁹ *BC*, 20 June 1887.

⁵⁰ *South Australian Advertiser*, 20 June 1887.

⁵¹ Withycombe, 'Australian Anglicans', p. 300.

⁵² Clarke, "'With One Accord'", pp. 140-5; also Pentland, 'Indignant Nation'.

⁵³ O'Brien, 'Religion', p. 431, on the 'oppositional' character of later nineteenth-century Australian Catholicism.

⁵⁴ Pentland, 'Indignant Nation', p. 75; *Illustrated Sydney News*, 20 Apr. 1868; *SMH*, 29 Apr. 1868.

⁵⁵ *Sydney Mail*, 25 June 1887; *Queenslander*, 25 June 1887; Clarke, "'With One Accord'", p. 148; Davis, 'Loyalism in Australasia', p. 239.

⁵⁶ *Evening News*, 6 and 12 Mar. 1902; 'Aqua Pura' in *Bendigo Advertiser*, 24 Oct. 1865; Rasmussen, 'Networks and Negotiations'.

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- ⁵⁷ Attwood and Markus, *Thinking Black*, p. 28.
- ⁵⁸ Pentland, 'Indignant Nation', p. 60; Lowry, 'The Crown', p. 99.
- ⁵⁹ Clarke, "'With One Accord'", p. 156. For the 'civil religion' concept, see Bellah, 'Civil Religion'.
- ⁶⁰ Williamson, 'State Prayers', p. 170.
- ⁶¹ Owen, *What the Colonies Need*.
- ⁶² Canadian imperialist George Grant's church union plans are discussed in Berger, *The Sense of Power*, pp. 28-32.
- ⁶³ Davis, 'Loyalism in Australasia', p. 240; Pentland, 'Indignant Nation', p. 65.
- ⁶⁴ *SMH*, 14 and 22 Aug. 1854; *Argus*, 24 Aug. 1854.
- ⁶⁵ Curthoys, 'Indigenous subjects', pp. 93-4.
- ⁶⁶ Sermon of Rev. Chaffers-Welsh reported in *Maitland Daily Mercury*, 27 Feb. 1902; O'Brien, 'Religion', p. 425; Cruikshank, 'The Sermon in the British Colonies', p. 525.
- ⁶⁷ Rafferty, 'The Catholic Church', pp. 308-9; O'Brien, 'Religion', p. 421.
- ⁶⁸ 'Introduction' in Williamson *et al*, *National Prayers*, vol. 2.
- ⁶⁹ Claydon, *Europe and the Making of England*, pp. 7, 168-71.
- ⁷⁰ 'Introduction' in Williamson *et al*, *National Prayers*, vol. 2.
- ⁷¹ *SMH*, 2 July 1847.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, 14 Apr. 1897. In 1877 a newspaper correspondent called for Victorians to raise money for Indian famine sufferers when the colony gave thanks for rain: see 'Gratitude', *Argus*, 24 Sept. 1877.
- ⁷³ Hilton, *Age of Atonement*, pp. 108-14.
- ⁷⁴ Gray, 'National Humiliation', p. 206.
- ⁷⁵ Gray *et al*, 'Community, Communion, and Drought', p. 25.
- ⁷⁶ See Bishop Perry on the 1866 drought: *Argus*, 6 Jan. 1866.

⁷⁷ Coote, 'Out from the Legend's Shadow'. For the 'local patriotism' phrase, see Cole, 'The Problem of "Nationalism" and "Imperialism"', p. 165.

⁷⁸ Coote, 'Out from the Legend's Shadow', p. 108; Macintyre and Scalmer, 'Colonial States', pp. 203-6.

⁷⁹ *Queanbeyan Age*, 11 Jan. 1866; *SMH*, 12 Feb. 1869.

⁸⁰ *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 11 Jan. 1866; *Maitland Mercury*, 16 Jan. 1866.

⁸¹ For the usage of 'local patriotism', see Cole, 'The Problem of "Nationalism" and "Imperialism"', p. 165; Eddy, 'Nationalism and Nation-Making', p. 134.

⁸² Clark, 'Providence, Predestination and Progress', p. 587; Coote, 'Out from the Legend's Shadow', pp. 110, 117.

⁸³ *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express*, 28 Feb. 1902.

⁸⁴ *BC*, 18 Apr. 1902; see R. Phillips in *Manning River Times*, 25 Feb. 1902; also co-authored letter from an Anglican and a Presbyterian minister in *Maryborough Chronicle*, 25 Apr. 1902.

⁸⁵ Rev. J. Bagshaw reported in *SAR*, 31 July 1854.

⁸⁶ See Cruikshank, 'The Sermon in the British Colonies', pp. 523-5 for an alternative view.

⁸⁷ *SAR*, 13 Apr. 1886.

⁸⁸ 'A Clergyman Who Cannot Keep the 13th', *SMH*, 11 Feb. 1869; *ibid.*, 12 Feb. 1869; *Australasian* [Melbourne], 22 Apr. 1876.

⁸⁹ Thompson, 'Languages of Loyalism', p. 647; Hirst, *Sentimental Nation*, p. 15.

⁹⁰ *Geelong Advertiser*, 1 Apr. 1869; *Muswellbrook Chronicle*, 26 Oct. 1898.

⁹¹ *Argus*, 18 May 1893.

⁹² Pentland, 'Indignant Nation', p. 74.

⁹³ Cole, 'The Problem of "Nationalism" and "Imperialism"', p. 175.

⁹⁴ *Watchman* [NSW], 14 June 1902; Williamson, 'National Days', p. 329.

⁹⁵ Damousi, 'War and Commemoration', pp. 290-3. The quotation comes from p. 289.

⁹⁶ Gill, 'Networks of Concern'.

⁹⁷ Bell, 'The Idea of a Patriot Queen?'.

⁹⁸ University of York Library, Archives of the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (microfilm), Diocese of Grahamstown Records, E Series, 96723/3, William Greenstock to Ernest Hawkins, Nov. 1856, f. 41.

⁹⁹ Schreuder, 'Empire', p. 532; Coote, 'Out from the Legend's Shadow', p. 118.

¹⁰⁰ Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, pp. 113-19 points out that Greater Britain was viewed as by some as 'one nation' and by others as a composite of 'multiple independent nations'.

¹⁰¹ For 'national providence' as a constitutive element in metropolitan Britishness, see Wolffe, 'Judging the Nation', p. 300.

¹⁰² Guyatt, *Providence and the Invention of the United States*, p. 4.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁰⁴ Hirst, *Sentimental Nation*, chs 1-3.

¹⁰⁵ McKenna, 'Monarchy', p. 266.

¹⁰⁶ Coote, 'Out from the Legend's Shadow', p. 121.

¹⁰⁷ The petitions can be found in National Archives of Australia, Canberra, Records of the Australasian Federal Convention, 1897-1898.

¹⁰⁸ Grimley, 'The Religion of Englishness'; Williamson, 'National Prayers', p. 341.

¹⁰⁹ For the imperial state church idea, see the legislative debates in *SAR*, 14 Nov. 1873.

¹¹⁰ For the 1893 Melbourne service, see *Argus*, 17 May 1893; for deputations, see *SMH*, 7 Mar. 1903; for the use of the Anglican liturgy at united services, see *Maitland Mercury*, 26 Oct. 1882.

¹¹¹ See letters from ‘German’ and ‘Member of the Wesleyan Church’ supporting plans for a national Anglican cathedral for Queensland: *BC*, 6 and 7 Feb. 1901.

¹¹² Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*.