CHAPTER TWO:
ANGLICANISM

Elkin was an Anglican as well as an Idealist. Anglicanism was, for Elkin and his mentor Ernest Burgmann, congruent with Idealist moral philosophy and, in their minds at least, enjoined the Idealists' secular universalist ethos. But in general (and as figured below by Lewis Radford), the Anglican tradition tended to contain these Idealist continuities within (admittedly soft) denominational dogmas and conservative corporate conventions. As a result, few Anglicans had the reformist courage of their Idealist convictions.

Following childhood tragedies, Elkin was especially concerned with non-rational, ritual religious forms that bound personal ontology, or existential belonging, into a formal and traditional kind of community. Elkin found that Anglicanism tolerated, in places encouraged, radical thinking; but during his youth, Church meant the display of social norms, and the achievement of respectability. Anglican Catholicism, particularly its Tractarian strand, supported this facet of Elkin's religious practice.

In later years, as Elkin built a spiritual mode of social critique upon this conservative base, Anglicanism facilitated Elkin's reformist activity. The Church provided the experiences and relations that motivated and sustained Elkin's career as a publicist: it was the key influence upon his adolescence; the provider of financial means, accommodation, and pastoral care during his university years; afterwards, it afforded an intellectual platform via its newspapers, journals, and associations; and, throughout, Anglican churches were the sites of his weekly religious rituals.

We will link personal with public dimensions of Anglican practice by comparing the part Elkin and his mentor, Ernest Burgmann, attributed to the Anglican Church in their autobiographies. For Elkin, the priestly role accommodated and transformed an impersonal religiosity that succoured his fear of *anomie*, and bound him into a long and enduring history. In Burgmann's case, the prophetic mode supported his evocation of an authentic, fully 'personal' being. Our interest is particularly in the priesthood, and (more broadly) what religious continuity meant to Elkin, but Burgmann's prophetic influence is an important part

of our story, as it multiplied Elkin's own inclination in that direction, helped him turn his urge for religious continuity outwards to other cultures, and in the *Morpeth Review*, provided a key national forum for his early publicity (Chs 5–8).

But our immediate concern in this and the next chapter is Elkin's struggle to reconcile an intellectual love of new vistas of understanding with a spiritual commitment to corporate religious loyalty. This chapter sets the scene for Elkin's religious maturation that occurred in two stages; the first we will explore next chapter, and the second in Chapter Seven.

Childhoods and autobiographies: the making of a prophet and a priest

Burgmann and Elkin walked the same road into an Idealist Anglican Catholicism. Each of them entered the Anglican ministry via a scholarship from the theologically broad and high Diocese of Newcastle to study a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Sydney. Each lived at St Paul's College – Burgmann from 1909 to 1911, Elkin from 1912 to 1915 – where the Warden, Lewis Radford, harboured a moderate and scholarly Catholicism within the aggressively Protestant Anglican Diocese of Sydney.[1] At the University, Burgmann and Elkin each majored in philosophy under Francis Anderson.

After graduating and being priested, Burgmann deepened his engagement with Anderson's Idealism. While working as a clergyman, he wrote a Masters of Arts thesis by correspondence under Anderson's supervision. A few years later, he became Warden of St John's Theological Seminary in Armidale. In 1919, he obtained for Elkin the position of Vice-Warden. Burgmann 'drove Elkin on', encouraging his new interest in Aboriginal religion.[2] In 1920, Elkin began a Masters of Arts thesis on 'The Religion of the Australian Aborigines' – like Burgmann's, by correspondence and under Anderson's supervision – most of which he completed while residing and teaching under Burgmann's leadership at St John's.[3] The thesis was Elkin's road into anthropology (Ch. 3). In their masters theses, both Burgmann and Elkin consciously followed Anderson's non-dogmatic affirmation of 'personality' as the key to historical Christianity (Ch. 1). But each sought in different ways to reconcile it with the Anglo-Catholic tradition and dogma.

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[1] Peter J Hempenstall, *The Meddlesome Priest: A Life of Ernest Burgmann* (1993), 47–48. Elkin gave St. Paul's College as his residence in July 1915 when he was admitted as Deacon. See EP 1/3/26.
[2] Ken Clements' first-hand recollection; cited in *ibid*., 93.
[3] AP Elkin, *The Religion of the Australian Aborigines*, presented February 1922, Honours MA Thesis in the School of Philosophy. Rare Books, Fisher Library, Elkin 006.

Burgmann was in turn mentor, partner, and rival to Elkin. In the late 1920s, after completing a PhD in London, Elkin published his first several anthropological articles in a Church review founded by Burgmann (Chs 4–6). At that time, Elkin had a power-base of his own in the church, as Rector of Morpeth, the Parish in which Burgmann's seminary was located. While co-editing Burgmann's journal, the *Morpeth Review*, Elkin became suspicious of Burgmann. Elkin feared that Burgmann's controversial socialism would detract from the social authority that the Church had won through two millennia of spiritual striving.[4]

The difference between the yields each gathered from such similar paths is easily explained by a comparison of their childhoods. Burgmann, in his autobiography, showed how his religious growth was a process of self-discovery.[5] He offered his story as one model for an intellectually free Christianity. By contrast, Elkin signalled his autobiographical preferences by entitling his history of a parish *Morpeth and I*.[6] He wanted to see his life as identical with religious community.[7] In unpublished papers, Elkin evaded and dissembled the most distinctive (and painful) aspects of his childhood, replacing an extraordinary story with a self-censor's normality.[8] These different kinds of autobiography were particular to these individuals, and I do not mean to imply a general correspondence with the figures of priest and prophet. But the distinction illumines Elkin's career: he escaped personal tragedy by entering deeply into the 'mysteries' administered by the priest. Thereafter, his intellectual and spiritual interest centred on the impersonal drives, rites, and structures that sustained the church. He remained troubled by the possibility that his faith revealed anything in particular about him; he preferred to demonstrate the legitimacy of religion in general (Chs. 3, 7).

Burgmann, in contrast, told how his religious life flowed easily from the different kinds of love he experienced for his father and mother. His mother was soft, loving, and the firm dispenser of moral standards. She conveyed these standards in a natural way, so that Burgmann ventured that her influence 'la[id] down the pantheistic foundation for a religious

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[4] Hempenstall, *Meddlesome Priest*, 127–128.
[5] Ernest Burgmann, *The Education of an Australian* (Canberra: St Mark's National Theological Centre, 1944, 1991).
[6] AP Elkin, *Morpeth and I* (Sydney: Australasian Medical Publishing Company, 1937).
[7] *Ibid*., 4.
[8] Unpublished manuscript, EP 5/1/9. Details of censorship follow.

life.' He generalised that the mother corresponded to the immanent aspect of spirit, the father to the transcendent, monotheistic, personal God.[9]

His father was easy-going and hard working. Father and son 'did things together'. The son loved nothing more than his father's company. Burgmann senior was 'a church warden and a loyal Anglican'. When the Rector visited the remote farms amongst the tall timber by the Manning River on the northern coast of New South Wales, he made the Burgmann's cottage his headquarters. The father introduced the son to a common sense, fair go religion:

> He revolted against the idea of hell, very prevalent in my childhood, and swept away passages of scripture and supposed dogmas, with the reply, 'God wouldn't do it.' And what my Dad said 'God wouldn't do' greatly impressed me. I was thus given the thought of a moral personality as the fundamental thing in my thought of God. … I can see now that as my God took on character, in my mind it was the character of my father that fashioned it.[10]

Nature and solitude, and no church building, provided the backdrop for the young Burgmann's spiritual growth. He worked as an axe-man and bullocky before returning to school.[11] Meanwhile, his father's influence persisted. Burgmann wrote that he respected his father's political opinions – best labelled as Fabian socialist – more than any other man's.[12] Burgmann provided a fitting summation of his psychobiography: 'For better or for worse I am a once-born type. I early learned to trust God, not fear Him.'[13]

In contrast, Elkin baulked from self-analysis. In October 1971, the editor of the *International Social Science Journal* (*ISSJ*) invited him to contribute to a series of autobiographical intellectual profiles responding to interest in 'the psychological motivations of social scientists in different national contexts and generations.' Elkin submitted a dry, factual chronicle.

Elsewhere, Elkin showed a wary interest in his psychobiography. Perhaps in a first attempt to fulfil the spirit of the *ISSJ*'s invitation, he began a more reflective autobiography, but after thirty-five pages the typescript ended, mid-sentence, when his younger self was about twenty years old. (He had just begun a tribute to the example of his most influential

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[9] Burgmann, *Education of an Australian*, 27.
[10] *Ibid*., 25–26.
[11] *Ibid*., 51–63.
[12] *Ibid*., 20.
[13] *Ibid*., 26.

employer during the four years he worked for banks.)[14] He began with vignettes of life in Fiji, where he spent his infancy in the early 1890s – his first memory was of ‘a native at the door brandishing a gleaming knife’; and New Zealand – Maori with baskets of vegetables crying ‘Kumara!’.[15] Perhaps he considered these early memories relevant for anyone interested in the psychological motivations of a social scientist. The Fijian anecdote suggests some unexamined fears that may have underwritten the attitudes to natives in Elkin’s generation.

Other details suggest that Elkin had psychological interpretation uneasily in mind. He raised the idea that early experiences formed character but immediately dismissed it with a cliché: ‘I think that my upbringing was strict and that the twig was bent.’[16] He preferred to highlight his achievements as a young man in local clubs and associations (some of which he founded) as the crucible of not so much his character, as generic ‘character’: ‘Any fitness I have shown in various positions of responsibility and leadership should be traced back at least in part to the experience I obtained in these quite simple offices I had in country towns.’[17] More evocatively, when childhood gave way to adolescence, additions he wrote in the margins – by hand, in pencil – disclosed two recurring, morbid nightmares.[18] They probably began sometime in 1901, during his tenth year, after the death of his mother. Elkin showed a tentative interest in the workings of his subconscious, but an overall preference for a mask of convention.

By superimposing the public, conventional Elkin with the religious youth and man, we can explore the contrary impulses that shaped Elkin’s publicity in the early 1930s. On the one hand, he affirmed and aspired to fulfil social normality, but on the other hand he retained his commitment to the historical claims of a supernaturalist religion – by then, an intellectually abnormal position with which he remained uncomfortable (Ch. 3). For reasons that we can infer from his psychobiography, Elkin was as driven and uncompromising in his commitment to reason as in his faith.

Elkin’s childhood: loss and respectability

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[14] The editor’s letter to Elkin and his chronicle in reply are at EP 5/1/12.
[15] Elkin, unpublished autobiography, 1.
[16] *Ibid.*, 8.
[17] *Ibid.*, 30.
[18] *Ibid.*, 10–11. In one, Elkin was ‘running away from a grey horse and getting through a fence’; ‘the other of being in a great room or box the sides and roof of which [oppressed?] me.’

His father's *anomie*, his mother's tenacity and their marriage breakdown ended Elkin's childhood. He was born in 1891 into an unsettled family. Elkin's paternal grandparents had been sent from London to lead a New Zealand synagogue but their son, Reuben Elkin, drifted away from Judaism, finding little employment and no moral compass. In the last years of the nineteenth century, in Fiji, New Zealand, and then in the Hunter Valley, New South Wales, Elkin's mother, Ellen Bower, earned money from sewing to put Elkin through private schooling and piano lessons. Every Sunday she dressed him in suit and gloves for Church, Sunday school, formal lunch, and Church again. He recalled his mother as 'a person of drive and business ability [who] worked hard, very hard, for several years to maintain a good home, for my father was a semi-invalid.'[19] Elkin's biographer has revealed that the only disability Reuben suffered was temperamental. As Ellen's dress-making business became more profitable, Reuben's part in the marriage grew tenuous. Ellen's parents watched uneasily: they worried that Ellen's pride was having destructive effects. Reuben's shame changed him. He beat her.[20] In Elkin's tenth year, she initiated a divorce. He never saw his father again, and when he died in 1933, declined to attend his funeral.[21]

In Elkin's case, the association of respectability with parental sacrifice was hard-edged. When his father left, Elkin was the eldest male in a household suddenly amenable to Ellen's agenda of hard work, conventional religion, and social propriety. Respectability and church went, literally, hand in glove. Ellen made the gloves he wore on Sundays, but she also sold similar pairs; she specialised in 'ladies' coats and skirts'.[22] Ellen's pride was defiantly independent, based on labour and not position. Women retailers were not unknown in turn of the century Australia, but Ellen's business was unusual enough to be seen by her parents to have driven Reuben to violence.

She ensured her eldest son displayed another standard sign of a domestic surplus: skill at the piano. In his childhood community, Elkin wrote, most parents 'made sacrifices … to give their children music'.[23] When he was eight, he had some time to play with relations and neighbours, 'but I was busy with school, the piano and violin.' Roused by Britain's imperial

[19] *Ibid.*, 12.
[20] *Ibid.*, 4.
[21] *Ibid.*, 108.
[22] From an advertisement she placed in the *Maitland Mercury*, February 1902; cited in Wise, *Self-Made Anthropologist*, 6.
[23] Elkin, unpublished autobiography, 10.

war in South Africa, which lasted from Elkin's ninth to his twelfth year, 'all the budding pianists played for years after appropriate martial music.' Elkin also played the violin in a church orchestra. Music bound him into empire and church.

Ellen's early death sealed her impress upon her son. 'In 1902', Elkin recalled, 'she died fairly suddenly of some fever, no doubt run-down in health.'[24] Less then a year had passed since the divorce, and Reuben's exile. At twelve years of age, Elkin had lost his entire immediate family. (An elder brother, John, had died a few weeks after Elkin was born.) In his autobiography, Elkin recalled his losses dispassionately and briefly, emphasizing instead routine, hard work, and the processes of social distinction.

His childhood exposed him to that homelessness recurrent in discourses of the *deraciné* intellectual, but he was secured in community, faith, and nation. His maternal grandparents took him in. In the 1850s, the Bowers had emigrated from southern Germany, and in 1857 had settled in Goorangoola, near Singleton in the Hunter Valley, north of Sydney, where they became Anglicans. Thirty-four years later, Elkin was baptised in a bush church there.[25] In 1901, the ten year old returned – 'back I went to Singleton, with my piano and violin.'[26] The Bowers continued his music lessons, church, and Sunday schooling. They made him at home in the seasonal round of a small farm's daily tasks. He reminisced of his grandfather, 'routine gave him purpose and life.'[27] On his maternal grandparents' farm, Elkin found continuity to compensate for the profound rupture that had sent him there.

Intellectual life, like church, had its performative aspect. Elkin became fascinated with evolution, and soon after leaving school he reviewed Darwin's *Origin of the Species* for the Church of England Men's Society, tactfully enough to become its Honorary Secretary. The Society published his paper.[28] Earnestness and enjoyment of study for its own sake, and seriousness about religion, expressed an internalised respectability. When Elkin was fifteen and entering his final year of school, it was probably these qualities that attracted the attention of Stacey Waddy, then just returned from Balliol College, Oxford, to become Rector in the Church of England Parish of Singleton, Newcastle diocese. Waddy persuaded Elkin to

[24] *Ibid.*
[25] *Ibid.*, 2.
[26] *Ibid.*, 12.
[27] AP Elkin, 'The Aged in Australian Society', address to ANZAAS symposium, 1969; cited in Wise, *Self-Made Anthropologist*, 7.
[28] No record survives.

take the Senior Public examination, and thus qualify for matriculation to University, instead of the Commercial examination.[29] He did, and passed with distinction, but 'as none of my relations on my mother's side had any association with Universities, I decided to become a bank clerk.'[30] At the time this did not seem a second-best option: 'banking was … a matter of social position and "calling".' He was already rising socially.

Despite the career detour Balliol had, in a sense, gathered one of its own. Elkin did obtain a scholarship (details below), and at St. Paul's College and the University of Sydney he revered Professors who self-consciously propagated the Balliol legacy– of social radicalism and a morally assertive, liberal imperialism – celebrated in Anderson's subtitle 'Green of Balliol'.[31] In the previous chapter we noted the centrality of T. H. Green's teaching in Elkin's thinking about civic obligation. The Balliol influence was not merely intellectual, but a matter of ethos, of status achieved through merit and justified by a determination to display moral distinction.[32]

Meanwhile, between school and University, Elkin studied the interplay of character and financial credit. He worked in a series of rural branches of the Commercial Banking Co., Sydney. He found that 'the character of the client, especially if he would a "borrower be" was the more important part of, or index to, his security, as of course it is in all situations.'[33] He enjoyed the mentorship of bank managers, and seemed set to become one. However, he had desires, perhaps needs, that banking could not requite. In the meantime, four years spent banking trained Elkin in the management of credit – financial and social.[34]

Elkin had learnt from his mother's work ethic – and from its contrast to his father's – that financial means were intrinsic to the pursuit of spiritual ends. In 1911, he applied for and won the Stanton bequest. Stanton had been Bishop of Newcastle and his bequest financed a

[29] Elkin, unpublished autobiography, 20.
[30] *Ibid*., 21
[31] Wood and Anderson, see Elkin chapters one and three. Francis Anderson, 'A modern philosopher – Green of Balliol', *Union Book of 1902* (Sydney, 1902).
[32] In the last quarter of the nineteenth century Balliol had been one of the two earliest Oxford colleges to introduce competitive entrance examinations. See Melvin Richter, *The Politics of Conscience: T. H. Green and his Age* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 53. For Balliol's characteristic moralism, see RM Crawford, *A Bit of a Rebel* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1970).
[33] Elkin, unpublished autobiography, 31.
[34] Elkin gained from his proficient management of money. In his thirties, he improved parish finances, strengthening his position when he bargained with his Bishop for time off for anthropological research. He was considered a safe option as Professor of Anthropology in part for fiscal reasons. In his forties, the Rockefeller Foundation made out in his name a US $10 000 cheque for anthropological research.

local Anglican 'to enable selected candidates for Holy Orders to attend the University and enter St Paul's College,' with the expectation that they would then serve within the Diocese.[35] It need not diminish the spiritual aspect of the undertaking to observe that Elkin heard the call to the life of the cloth in the terms of eligibility of a scholarship. The suggestion that in so doing Elkin was merely opportunistic is a superficial cynicism. A Weberian approach takes us deeper: it is likely that Elkin believed that his seriousness, his piety, and his appetite for intellectual work merited the credit that Stanton had made available. The intensity with which Elkin worked at university indicated his determination to discharge his debt and prove his good character.[36]

Indeed, in his autobiography, Elkin tells that he had been trained in respectability since childhood, and the end of this training was 'character'. Marks of social distinction accumulate in Elkin's recollection: the hand-sewn gloves; the violin and piano lessons; the Church orchestra; the young choirmaster; the honorary secretary of a church discussion group; the potential bank manager. Respectability had significance as display, but its end was internal. Habits of work and social commitment – leading to a vocation – meant that material needs would fall into place. Opportunities, like scholarships, would come. With self-interest secure, and so bracketed, the prospective gentleman could cultivate character. Character looked beyond self-interest to find strength of purpose in the service of something higher, be it family pride, nation, empire, or God. Ideally, these loci of service opened into one another such that even daily duties had intimate, public, and spiritual sanction.[37]

Elkin's autobiography: loss, dissembling, and religious transformation

In Elkin's case, these marks of respectability both compensated for and concealed a formative loss. Elkin found no narrative place for his most personal experiences. In his autobiography, we find no mention of grief at his mother's death. He also omitted to mention his parents' divorce, and his father's departure. According to his unpublished autobiographical fragment, his father was 'a semi-invalid': he provided no other explanation for the fact that his maternal grandparents became his guardians when his mother died. In the version he approved for

[35] Elkin, *A History of the Diocese of Newcastle*, (Sydney: Australian Medical Publishing Company, 1955); cited Wise, *Self-Made Anthropologist*, 13.
[36] Elkin submitted undergraduate history essays of over 20 000 words, and bears some responsibility for GA Wood's excessive marking burden. See Fisher library Rare books, Elkin files 001 and 002.
[37] For one example of this sociological exhortation, see sermon 2 in the ninth sermon book, EP 5/3/12.

publication, he simply lied, claiming that it was his mother's death that broke up the family.[38] To these denials we may link an omission: in his various autobiographical writings, we find not a word about his religious faith or practice. This hiatus recalls his reduction in 1961 of his leading role as a publicist to his association with the 'solid citizens' of the APNR (Prologue). The tendency in each of these retrospectives is towards a 'solid', normal, respectable citizenship. It was as if Elkin replaced his actual self with a generic self.

Elkin's evasive self-concept is suggestive both as a significant outlier, a study in the psychology of leaders, and as a norm, a study in the social yield of a particular Church culture. [39] Events enabled Elkin to experience the personal efficacy of the *corporate* religion – as a 'figuration', or self-other continuum – sufficiently deeply, so that he granted it a reality prior to reason.[40] As we will see, in his account of the socialisation of adolescents, Elkin went so far as to describe reason as 'the shallows'. At the same time, Elkin devoted himself to the scientific outlook: quite separately, both religion and science afforded him impersonal forms through which he could develop character; establish respectability, belonging, and prestige; and attempt to serve a greater good.

Elkin identified adolescence as the time when educators provide the young with 'moral and spiritual power'.[41] In 1936, at a conference in Hawaii on native education, he encountered a theory that the adjustments of adolescence required educators to focus on young people's problem-solving skills. An American College administrator, Dean Wist, seemed to Elkin to want a society 'controlled by scientific knowledge [such that] morality will be a matter of intellectual choice [and life] a matter of calculation.'[42] In a contribution to discussion at the conclusion of the five week conference, he contrasted the American calculating persona with the 'so-called muddling Britisher … almost a mystic, getting joy out of many aspects of life (including knowledge) just for their own sake.'[43] He repeated the

[38] EP 5/1/12.
[39] Elkin attributed leadership to 'psychopathology', see AP Elkin, *Man, Society and Change* (Sydney: Christian Social Order Movement, 1943), 11. See also Judith Brett, 'The Tasks of Political Biography', in *idem* (ed.), *Political Lives* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997), 1–15.
[40] Robert Van Krieken, *Norbert Elias* (London: Routledge, 1998), 6.
[41] Elkin, 'Philosophy of Education – A Criticism', notes on Conference on Native Education, Hawaii. Rare Books, Fisher Library, Elkin 083. 2pp. For his published report on the conference, see 'Education of Native Races in Pacific Countries: Report of a Conference', Oceania 7 (2) December 1936, 145–168.
[42] Elkin, 'Philosophy of Education', 1.
[43] *Ibid.*

point, and the metaphor: Britain 'muddles through.' He was sure the British approach was the best one, and not just for Britons: 'We are all enigmas.'

He had been provoked by what he perceived to be a fundamental misreading of adolescence, and of human nature. Wist presumed that intellectual processes held the key to the problems encountered by youths. Elkin countered:

> There is also the development resulting from the appeal of the heroic, of social ideals, of the past, and from being caught up in the sentiments of the society. *Loving* and *willing* play even greater parts than thinking, and all make for the education of the whole personality.

Non-rational processes were primary for settlers as for natives.

Indeed, in this matter, the normal tutelary relationship ought to reverse:

> Man is feeling and will as well as intellect (and all three are aspects of that inter-relating part or aspect of man – his mind); and he in practice finds much difficulty in making an act of will merely as a result of a knowledge of standards or the effects of experience. In most cases, his emotions must be touched also, and the new standard must become part of a new moral or social sentiment. … Native peoples inculcate moral standards not by intellectual presentations alone, nor do they wait for experience to teach; rather, they develop in each individual, social and moral sentiments by ritual, public instruction, mythological sanctions, and by centring the emotional life on certain *sacra*; and we would be well advised to pay heed and so not flounder about in the shallows.[44]

Intellectual formulae or processes in themselves could not guide youths beyond 'the shallows'.

The depths could be gained only though the emotional power of '*sacra*': collective, and so impersonal, sacred forms. Through them, the perplexed adolescent found security in higher things.

> There are [in adolescence] also times of surety and certainty which are even distinct from the state of satisfaction resulting from the successful meeting of a situation. … There is the joy of certainty, the joy of life, a restfulness, and a readiness to respond to the call to service and to grapple with a task. … Things that were problems are no longer such – in their stead, is a duty and a task; we perform this and get deep joy out of doing so, … out of life itself.[45]

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[44] *Ibid*., 2.
[45] *Ibid*.

Thus Elkin evoked, in a secular discourse suited to both western and native cases, the paradox central to religious practice: the submission of the will that frees its confident, joyful exercise. Tellingly, he labelled the position he favoured 'philosophic idealism', and the other, 'mechanical'. But this indication of allegiance to the *philosophical* aspect of Green's legacy was misplaced, for he had ascribed fundamental importance to the non-rational socialisation of adolescents. But how could ritual, mythological sanctions and emotionally powerful *sacra* live again in sceptical, secular modernity?

Elkin's answer was evident in his actions and discursive evasions as much as his words. Firstly, his experience satisfied him that however out of joint they may be with thought, Western *sacra* had retained their efficacy. In 1929, as a priest, he evoked the sense of strength a congregation ought to expect when they gathered 'in one accord': 'Does a rushing mighty wind follow?' he asked. Then he indicated in note form the effect of such an experience: 'Courage – power – service.'[46] A church service provided Elkin with a heightened version of that sense of sanctioned empowerment he mandated as the necessary adolescent experience.

He knew that *sacra* worked for non-rational 'reasons'. Elkin's faith was a journey into a negative capability, 'that is, when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason'.[47] He expressed this spiritual ideal as 'throughth': his neologism for the deeper purpose that religious submission revealed.[48] 'Throughth' combined the ideas of insight and a universal purpose; it was the perception of the one life-force that ran through all things. By abiding in this kind of contemplation, Elkin taught his congregation, the Christian could achieve union with a reality beyond the individual's everyday experience. 'The way of sacrifice' enabled the integration of self-compulsion and social sanction.[49] But Elkin's journey into 'throughth', in theory a transcendence of self, was marked and marred by his denial of central aspects of his life experience. The autobiographical counterpoint with Burgmann clarifies the psychological

[46] 'With one accord', second sermon, sermon notebook 9, undated, EP, 5/3/12.
[47] Cited in MH Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 113.
[48] 'A cloud received Him out of their Sight,' first sermon, sermon notebook 9, undated, EP, 5/3/12.
[49] For the importance of this kind of resolution of 'thin' approaches to practices and devices, and 'thick' approaches to habitus, that comprehend its causal, creative role, and hence its historical significance, see Robert van Krieken, 'Occidental Self-understanding and the Elias–Duerr Dispute: "Thick" versus "Thin" Conceptions of Human Subjectivity and Civilization', *Modern Greek Studies* 13 (2005), 273-81, at 277–79.

dynamic at play.

Personality as historical continuity vs. personality as self-discovery

Burgmann propagated an easy and natural religion, which he articulated with complicated and sophisticated intellectual processes of self-discovery. In his autobiography he argued that parental influences formed his faith. He associated his father's pragmatic theology and daily decency with his faith in God. For Burgmann, the personality of his father blended easily into a liberal, accommodating enquiry into the divine. Burgmann celebrated Anglicanism as 'a guide to freedom in the search for knowledge.'[50] Knowledge of this kind was not merely intellectual, but something closer to wisdom, an existential guide, as suggested by Burgmann's view that 'the nearer we can get to the truth the less likely we are to be let down by life.'

Burgmann wrote that 'Man is drawn by love, and driven by fear of suffering.' A more specific iteration might apply to Elkin: that he was drawn by social distinction, and driven by fear of *anomie*. Elkin lied about the failures of his father, who likely had a great influence upon the inner dynamics of his faith. He preferred to erase those elements of his family history that might have suggested that religion provided succour to any special personal need.

For Elkin, open inquiry began at a distance from himself, and from his faith. In this sense, he distanced reason from faith. But at the same time, to the extent that Elkin accepted his mentor's gendered analysis of religious psychology, Elkin had to replace his father, and his relation with transcendence, with reason.[51] Intellectual adventure into religious questions was intimate and intuitive for Burgmann; for Elkin, it was impersonal and oriented towards external, instituted authority.

At the same time, Elkin privileged the role in religion of mystery. Specifically by its ability non-rationally to undergird existence – rather than (as for Burgmann) to integrate

[50] Burgmann, *Education*, 25.

[51] Burgmann's analysis provides us with a perceptive account of psychodynamics drawn from a time and place close to Elkin's. Disregarding the gendered dimension, the significance of Elkin's interrupted and unresolved relationship with his father remains. As Loewenberg has written, 'it is high time that historians take from psychoanalysis its scientific approach to human subjectivity. This means recognizing, taking seriously, and utilizing the cardinal discoveries of the transference and the counter-transference: the bringing of unconscious patterns and periods of feelings, attitudes, behaviours, fantasies, loves, and hates, from other persons and periods of one's life into the present. The transference is always ambivalent, and usually rooted in experiences with significant others, such as parents … .' Peter Loewenberg, *Decoding the Past: The Psychohistorical Approach* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 4.

reason into processes of spiritual perception – a mysterious communion had enabled the adolescent Elkin to draw strength from personal tragedy, it is reasonable to infer. This experience produced in him an abiding conviction of the necessity – prior to and quite apart from the truthfulness – of religious practice.[52] Elkin defined salvation as 'health and security'.[53] At the heart of faith, Burgmann saw the alignment of experience and expectation; Elkin saw issues of physical survival and belonging. For Burgmann, religion was an extension of rich personal relations. No doubt this was also true for Elkin. But his secrecy and even deceit concerning his childhood tragedies, and his tendency towards impersonal and mysterious forms strongly suggest that for Elkin religion had a central compensatory role.

As indicated earlier, these different inclinations reacted with different strands of the Anglo-Catholic heritage. The prophetic strand, associated with Christian Socialism, looked towards a church justified by its leadership of a social movement towards equality and brotherhood. In this ideal, every individual would have the property, education, and environs he needed to grow into a full Christian and British personality. Christian socialists were heroes to Elkin: he named his sons (Maurice, 1922 and Kingsley, 1929) after F.D. Maurice and Charles Kingsley[54]; these Victorian Anglicans were also the well-springs of the Idealism that T. H. Green made a central characteristic of the Balliol influence in Australian 'cultural liberalism' (Ch. 1). Anderson's gospel of the brotherhood of man carried the Christian Socialist banner, handed down by Glasgow's (and Balliol's) Edward Caird as well as Green. But important as the prophetic vision was to Elkin, the priestly strand was the more distinctive influence within his religious thought.

The Priest looked backwards rather than forwards. He appreciated the unique and seminal achievement of the Catholic Church in sustaining an ethos older than Christian Socialism – Christianity itself. The influential early twentieth century revival called Anglican Catholicism was the legacy of the mid-nineteenth century Tractarians, as challenged by the social Gospel of the Christian Socialists. Elkin's existential exposure at ten years of age after his father's departure and mother's death made him particularly sympathetic to the Tractarian concern with religious continuity.[55] The Tractarians taught obedience. Corporate belonging

[52] Burgmann, *Education*, 92.
[53] AP Elkin, *The Diocese of Newcastle* (Sydney: Australian Medical Publishing Company, 1955), 706.
[54] Wise, *Self-Made Anthropologist*, 43, 91.
[55] The key text exemplifying this is Elkin, *Christian Ritual*, Morpeth Booklet 8 (Morpeth: Morpeth Press, 1933).

came before the exercise of reason. The leading Anglo-Catholic thinker, Charles Gore renovated this stricture in the light of the 'new criticism' of the Bible. But Gore retained a nuanced version of the imperative to subject the freedom of thought to the obedience that followed from membership of a corporation bound to make *collective* sense of man's relation with God.[56]

Elkin shared Gore's neo-Tractarian insistence upon the binding, impersonal quality of corporate loyalty. His autobiographies indicate that he, unlike Burgmann, was not comfortable with a picture of faith that could seem merely contingent – a product, for instance of one's childhood luck. Not for Elkin a Burgmannesque, plain treatment of the personal factors that determined faith. He was determined to base his religious practice within the Church, in ways prescribed by the Church. Elkin affirmed the centrality of ritual practice in Christianity in a way that made and reason a quite separate matter. As we will see (Ch. 3), by following the pragmatic turn in the apologetics of religious experience, and fusing it with the sociological turn in the analysis of religious community, he repositioned religion relative to reason and science. But this was a long and difficult procedure, in which the sometimes competing claims upon his loyalty of Anglicanism and philosophical Idealism were formative.

The relation between Anglicanism and Idealism

British Idealism grew from the doubts of Anglicans, but we need to understand the ways in which Elkin's Anglicanism was distinct from the philosophical movement.[57] Elkin embraced his Church as the specific source of Idealism, which provided a local and personal platform from which ideals could diffuse. He valued an inclusive Church, not limited to philosophers, and ideally, not limited to those who happened for personal reasons to 'believe'. It ought to be the communion of an entire geographic community, he believed, as well as a scaffold from which some could scale the heights of thought.

Looking beyond this concrete, parish-based inclusion, Idealists, by remaining rational, aspired to a universality that transcended time and place. The complexity of their task – to demonstrate in general terms the truthfulness of the Christian ethos – meant that this purpose

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[56] Gore, *Anglo-Catholic Movement*, 4–5, 9, 14–23.
[57] Richter, *Politics of Conscience*, 1–56.

remained abstract.[58] Idealism could not support any particular set of practices whereby the higher ideals might be articulated with everyday activity, and with the relatively unreflective (at least, less garrulous) minds that comprised the main part of society.[59] Some in the Anglican Church felt similarly drawn towards rational consistency, and away from the Anglican heritage, replete with intellectually awkward symbolism and anachronism.[60]

Elkin never took for granted his inclusion within a broad group of people, whose thinking may have been less abstract than his, but whose purposes he shared. We have discovered in his childhood reason enough for this communalism, and we will find it elaborated in the vein of Anglicanism in which he was instructed. Throughout his career as an anthropologist, he rarely if ever strayed from his understanding of the thinker's obligation as part of a society, most members of which considered abstract thought relatively unimportant, compared with cohesion and security.

Elkin was raised and trained in Anglo-Catholic environs. That style of churchmanship fitted his particular interests in corporate religion and independent rationality. The core principle of Anglican Catholics was inclusive breadth. Its defining contrast was with Papal authority: Anglicanism advertised its refusal to 'fence truth on any side'.[61] But neither would Catholic Anglicans accept any barrier between their communion and Christian continuity – the apostolic succession from Jesus, to the twelve disciples, and on through all Bishops.

Two Anglo-Catholic teachers who formed Elkin's religious practice stood for other aspects of the church's breadth. As we have already noted, Charles Gore, Bishop of Oxford and the movement's leader, stressed the solidarity of Anglo-Catholics with all those who worked towards social justice. Lewis Radford, who was Burgmann and Elkin's Warden during their years of residence as undergraduates at St Paul's College, took as his central theme that the Anglican church was the '*via media*' – the way between the Roman and Orthodox churches, and so the leading hope for a re-unified Catholic church. Radford will

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[58] *Ibid.*, 167–180.
[59] On the consequences of idealism's abstractness, see Richter, *TH Green*, 185. In Elkin's account of the importance of binding symbol and ritual in the history of religious diffusion, he argued that Stoicism and Buddhism had comparable histories. 'Both at first thought that religious sanctions could be omitted, but the omission had in both cases to be made good.' See his final draft of an article, 'Jesus and the Ethics of his Day' undated; presumably unpublished, EP 5/3/24, p. 28.
[60] Kenneth Henderson, *Morpeth Review*, 1934.
[61] Ernest Burgmann, *The Education of an Australian* (Canberra: St Mark's National Theological Centre, 1944, 1991), 25.

serve as our figure for Anglican Catholic orthodoxy; we will counterpose his influence upon Elkin with Francis Anderson's Idealism.

Radford was a moderate churchman. He managed to preach his Catholic Christianity without attracting the controversy that embroiled each of the 'high' Anglican churches adjoining the University of Sydney.[62] But the Catholicism of the Church of England was the central theme of his writings, and Hempenstall has argued that Radford's influence at St Paul's may explain why in 1915, when he became a Rector, Burgmann wore the biretta – a clerical hat symbolic of the Anglo-Catholic movement.[63]

We have more concrete evidence of Radford's influence upon Elkin. For one of two major essays in his History major, Elkin drew upon Radford's first book, on Thomas Beckett – a Saint to Catholics, a charlatan to Protestants.[64] The story of Thomas Becket, as Elkin studied it and retold it, illumines the relation Elkin saw between corporate obedience and civic liberty – a congruent relation to that between religious submission and the individual reason.

Radford found in Becket's story a lesson concerning the Anglican Catholic Church's independence from secular or papal authority. Radford's Roman Catholic sources celebrated the fact that as Archbishop of Canterbury, despite his intimate friendship with Henry II, Thomas refused to help the King defy a Papal edict. Protestant sources instead stressed Becket's inconsistency: as chancellor, he fought the King's battles and defied the Pope; as Archbishop, he betrayed his former loyalty. Radford found a middle way. His research into Thomas Becket's youth showed that each loyalty was longstanding, and evidenced earlier betrayals on each side. Unable to reconcile his sense of duty to King and Pope, Thomas simply fulfilled, with unusual courage, the duties of whichever office he held at the time. Radford's Becket was a minor hero, courageous within the limits of official pride, whose greatness lay in his unintended contribution to the freedom from both King and Pope of the English church.

In Elkin's version, written for G. A. Wood, Becket's martyrdom showed that the way to democratic liberty was prepared by collective reverence. Elkin's favourite adjectives for

[62] Hempenstall, *The Meddlesome Priest*, 47–48.
[63] *Ibid*.
[64] Lewis B. Radford, *Thomas of London Before his Consecration* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1894), 231–232.

Becket were 'genuine' and 'honest' – his way of noting Becket's sincerity in fulfilling his obligations.[65] Becket reinvigorated the Church, and made the office of Archbishop a power beyond the offices it funded. 'The reverence he inspired in the people empowered them to win liberty from the King in struggles to come, led by Simon de Montfort and Stephen Langton,' Elkin concluded.[66] Reading history backwards, Elkin interpreted Becket's effect upon public opinion as a forerunner of Wood's beloved Whig narrative:

> Not till the king was in some way responsible to the people could it be feasible that complete control of all classes and institutions should be in his hands. Becket's death won a victory for this principle. It was not exactly for what he fought, nor was it exactly what his death directly won, but it resulted from the revulsion of feeling at the sacrilege, and from the personal worship which was shown him.[67]

In this way, as Elkin saw it, collective religious impulses – the positive sanction of reverence, and the negative sanction of sacrilege – quickened democracy. Becket's death was 'a victory for personality': that is, for the capacity of the individual to fulfil himself by representing a collective, broadening freedom.[68] As an object of English reverence, the Catholic Saint became a liberal hero. He represented the movement of collective reverence towards political liberty.

Individual courage rose to fulfil social obligation, Elkin believed.[69] Elkin's social commentary had no part for the romantic picture of the solitary genius: just as the loner was Durkheim's suicide; he was, in Elkin's sociology, the figure for perplexity.[70] As well as leading him to the exceptional case of Becket's martyrdom, Radford introduced Elkin to the ways that Catholic Anglicanism reconciled the responsibility of the individual and the authority of the church.

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[65] AP Elkin, 'Thomas Becket', a History Honours essay. Fisher Library, Rare Books, Elkin 001, at p. 45, for example, and throughout.
[66] *Ibid*., 63.
[67] *Ibid*. 62–63.
[68] *Ibid*,, 57.
[69] See, for example, his the second sermon in the ninth sermon book, EP 5/3/12; 'The Function of Religion in Society', *Morpeth Review* II (16), June 1931, 8–17, at 17; and AP Elkin, *Society, the Individual and Change: with Special Reference to War and Other Present-Day Problems* (Sydney: Camden College, 1940), 52–53.
[70] AP Elkin, 'The Practical Value of Anthropology', *Morpeth Review*, 1 (7), March 1929, 23–33 at 33; on perplexity, see for example Elkin, *Society, the Individual and Change*, 42–44. Melleuish has drawn out this dynamic in cultural liberalism as romantic myth vs. social ethos: see *Cultural Liberalism*, Ch. 3.

2. Anglicanism

Radford disseminated his doctrine of the *via media* via a subtle appreciation of churchmanship. We can see the attention Elkin paid to it in his annotated copy of Radford's 1913 Moorhouse Lectures, which in 1916 he received as a prize (perhaps to celebrate being priested, 17 March) from Radford's successor as Warden of St Paul's College.[71] In the lectures, Radford showed how Anglicans had for almost two millennia steered a middle course between recurring heresies. They escaped Gnosticism by affirming that God was known primarily by faith, and only secondarily through knowledge. They escaped Pelagianism by admitting that human effort was necessary but not sufficient for salvation, and that Christians rightly sought the Church's dispensation of divine grace. Each of these orthodoxies was a matter of emphasis: the search for knowledge and the struggle for personal virtue, pursued in moderation, were Anglican goods; but faith and grace were essentials. 'The fairest and purest graces of character' – Radford mentioned reverence, humility, submission, and trust – 'spring almost wholly from a sense of dependence on a higher and better being than ourselves.'[72] Regarding the interplay of free will and divine determination, Radford wrote 'Wisdom must be subtle here: [as resolved in the fifth century], we must appeal to free will in the pulpit, but Augustine is with us in the sanctuary of prayer.' That is, publicly, the Christian encouraged strenuous effort towards right living; privately, he acknowledged complete dependence upon God.[73]

Radford moved his argument from intellectual exposition to concrete example, and best ritual practice. He wrote that the layout of Anglican churches reflected the confession's ancient wisdom. They gave the pulpit prominence without predominance, symbolising the Christians' basic desire for authorised, public reconciliation. Just beyond the pulpit, the lectern and the prayer-desk reminded the congregation that the point of preaching was to provoke men to study and prayer; alongside it, stood the board for communion. Thus, church design expressed the interdependence of collective and personal religion.[74] The Pelagians were individualists, Radford explained, but the massive social multiplications of sin required a church, and a central dispensation of grace; from that basis, Christians could regroup and

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[71] Lewis B. Radford, *Ancient Heresies in Modern Dress* (Melbourne: George Robertson and Co. 1913).
[72] *Ibid*., 282.
[73] *Ibid*., 259–260.
[74] *Ibid*., 270.

sustain their struggle.[75] Thus Radford sought to show how, through intellect and ritual, Catholic Anglicanism reconciled the individuality of effort, the impersonal scale and complexity of social problems, and the obligation for Christians nevertheless to strive to realise the Kingdom of God in this world.

Radford's churchmanship involved both compatibility and conflict with Idealism. Radford introduced Elkin and Burgmann to the 'Johannine' or 'Incarnationist' tradition in Anglican history and in contemporary Australia. He told how St. John, in the fourth gospel in the New Testament, presented Christ as the fulfilment of Greek philosophy: the '*Logos'*, present at the creation of the world, and immanently thereafter – a vision of the divine that exceeded the Church. Further, the Christian version of *Logos* was not merely reason: in Christ, reason and matter were revealed as joined. The Incarnation showed that God was present in the material world, and not opposed to it.[76] Radford presented a line of Incarnationist Christians, from the founding Christian Socialist thinker, F. D. Maurice, to the present bishop of Oxford, Charles Gore, and including the important Australasian Bishops, Selwyn and Tyrell.[77] These four names recur in our study, evidence of Elkin's involvement in the Johannine theology via the Diocese of Newcastle, and especially through his personal preferences.

But Radford intended to warn as well as recommend. God may be present in the world, but he could be known fully only through obedient service within the Christian Church. 'Neo-Platonists', amongst whom he included the British Idealists, reduced the supernatural Christian faith to 'the evolution of the idea of God in human thought'.[78] They committed the heresy of Gnosticism, in that they attempted to know God conceptually, rather than through daily obedience and faith. The leading Neo-Platonist in Australia was Francis Anderson, Burgmann and Elkin's mentor.

Radford's Anglicanism vs. Anderson's Idealism

We know enough about Anderson's teaching (Ch. 1) to sketch briefly its relation to Anglicanism, pausing only to add some of his specifically religious attitudes. Anderson,

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[75] *Ibid*., 281
[76] *Ibid*., Preface, and 199.
[77] *Ibid*., 1.
[78] Radford, *Ancient Heresies*, 138.

heretically from the orthodox Anglican viewpoint, taught a critical and sceptical affirmation of the 'Christian principle', which (as we have seen) he glossed as 'personality'. Anderson challenged Anglican orthodoxy, represented here by Radford, on three fronts. Firstly, he decried the privileges of any priestly caste, and looked sceptically upon ritual. The sacrament, for instance, he described as 'an irrelevancy where it is not an abuse, an ecclesiastical convention where it is not a direct instrument for the maintenance of the authority of a priestly caste, which Christ likewise came to destroy.'[79] Radford taught that the sacrament was necessary to salvation – God's instituted means of grace.[80] Secondly, Anderson taught Kant's critique of all proofs of God, and left his students in no doubt that whatever truth inhered in Christianity, it had never yet been philosophically established.[81] A third, and most fundamental point of difference: Anderson considered Christianity the highest revelation yet obtained, but not necessarily the ultimate.[82] Against this, Radford, and Anglican orthodoxy, taught that to deny Christ's final pre-eminence was heresy.[83]

Elkin and Burgmann each accepted Anderson's liberal attitude to the historical meaning of Christianity. They each refused to be associated with the word 'theological', which implied that religion could over-ride philosophy – Burgmann had the word dropped from St John's College, the seminary of which he was Warden and Elkin briefly Vice-Warden. They preferred to see it as a University College in the making. Each mounted synoptic historical apologies (and not atemporal, intellectual defences) for their Christian faith. Anderson's, we saw last chapter, was an inclusive version of the Victorian stadial scheme; Burgmann's and Elkin's were both, in different ways, modern.[84] Each, in his Masters of Arts under Anderson, found Christianity's justification not only in an historical sequence of expanding and individuating liberty, but also in a constant, underlying religious function (see below). Each of them represented the religious function as universal, and its

[79] Francis Anderson, *Christian Liberty and Ecclesiastical Union: An Examination of the Proposed 'Basis of Union of the United Church of Australia'* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1923), 23–24.
[80] Radford, *Ancient Heresies*, 281.
[81] Wise, *The Self-Made Anthropologist*, 19–20.
[82] Francis Anderson, *Liberty, Equality and Fraternity* (Sydney: Australasian Association of Psychology and Philosophy, 1922), 19–20.
[83] Radford, *Ancient Heresies*, 141.
[84] By modern I mean post-Victorian, and after the fall of the perfectionist moral norm. Functionalists traced non-moral normative modes, in that patterns of expected behaviour were conceived without reference to ends other than integrated existence. I see Burgmann and Elkin (though the latter intermittently) as transitional figures: moralising functionalists. For that demarcation, see Daniel S. Malachuk, *Perfection, the State, and Victorian Liberalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 6–7.

Anglican form as just the Church into which they happened to be born.[85] These departures from the Anglican creed were unambiguous and essential heresies, held quite openly by two increasingly prominent ministers. Elkin's biographer argues credibly that Elkin endured severe bouts of psychosomatic illness due to the conflict between his Idealist, non-dogmatic philosophy and his conservative Anglican loyalty.[86]

But Burgmann's contrasting example demonstrated that Elkin's problems of conscience were as personal as they were systemic. The important point to note about this mismatch between Idealism and Anglicanism is that the logically consistent exponents of each creed – Anderson and Radford – welcomed not only debate but also sustained influence from the other. Radford presented Pelages as a heretic who led many astray, but contributed invaluably to the church's self-understanding; he crossed swords with the neo-Platonists in the same spirit.[87] Likewise, Anderson celebrated Anglicanism – despite its priests and its triumphalism – precisely for its accommodation of dissenting viewpoints.[88]

Anglicanism and Idealism had still closer intercourse. The intellectual leaders of Anglican Catholicism urged that Christians ought not only to engage constructively with Green's Idealism: they ought to emulate it. By the 1920s, Charles Gore and Henry Scott Holland were the central figures in Anglican Catholicism. Together at Balliol in the 1880s, they had been students and disciples of T. H. Green. In Australia in the 1920s, at summer schools Burgmann organised for clergy from the Diocese of Newcastle, Gore and Scott Holland on the Incarnation was standard fare.[89] Soon after leaving Balliol, these Christian Idealists edited a collection of essays in which Idealist contributors interpreted as Christian imperatives Green's teachings on political obligation. As suggested by its title – *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation* – the writers wrote from within High Church Incarnationism. They looked for Christ's presence and ongoing revelation in creation itself, in social movements, and not only in the individual. Yet, older High Churchmen (and

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[85] Elkin 'Road to God', ; Burgmann, *Education of an Australian*, 25.
[86] Wise, *The Self-Made Anthropologist*, 16–24.
[87] Radford, *Ancient Heresies*, 246–249; 138.
[88] 'It is the glory and good fortune of the Anglican Church that, although its Articles and Prayer Book contain beliefs and practices which are not assented to or accepted by all its members, it has preserved that comprehensiveness and catholicity of spirit without which a Church degenerates into a separatist party or a dissident sect.' Anderson, *Christian Liberty*, 12.
[89] Newspaper cuttings 1914–1927, MS 9834/2/1, Papers of Elkin, NLA.

Radford after them) discerned a loss of balance: they accused the Anglican Idealists of capitulating to the Pelagian and Gnostic tendencies in Idealism.[90]

The problem concerned the Church's self-interest. As a state religion in England, a property-owning institution, and one to a significant extent dependent for its income and cultural authority on the support of the land-owning classes, the Anglican Church had traditionally supported the property regime uncritically. But Gore and Scott Holland turned the High Church scholarly tradition decisively towards Christian Socialism. Scott Holland founded the Christian Social Union, a leading organ of Fabian socialism. One of the CSU's seminal publications was a collection edited by Gore entitled *Property: Its Rights and Duties*. Gore, and most of his contributors, explicitly acknowledged Green's influence. Hobhouse developed Green's defence of individual property rights only to the extent that all men had access to that sufficient practical extent of property that builds character. Hobson teased out the differentiation, inherent in Green's political theory, of unearned from earned increment.

Elkin identified with Gore and Scott Holland's Anglican Catholicism. In the early 1920s, he invoked the Christian Socialist agenda when he criticized the Lambeth resolutions for being vague and weak on the issue of industrial relations.[91] Elkin also taught the problem of unearned increment;[92] and signalled his sympathy for Fabian evolutionary socialism.[93]

The Relation between Anglicanism and Idealism, Priesthood and Prophecy

Our protagonists, who benefited from the intellectual estates of Anglicanism and Idealism, sought to win modern ground for both. Before conducting a brief comparative survey of the different ways Anglican and Idealist heritages combined in Elkin's and Burgmann's thinking, a brief account of their colleague, Gerry Portus's career exemplifies a generational drift from

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[90] Richter, *Politics of Conscience*, 123.
[91] See the report on the Newcastle clergy Summer School, *Newcastle Diocesan Churchman* March 1 1921, 10 in Newspaper cuttings 1914–1927, MS 9834/2/1, Papers of Elkin, NLA. See also Hempenstall, *Meddlesome Priest*, 103.
[92] Elkin, *Man, Society and Change,* 14–15.
[93] Sympathy, but perhaps not outright support. The following example is typical: Elkin's point was that 'taboos' (surrounding property, for instance) were as essential to civilized as to primitive peoples: 'We hear the cry for revolution and change. But without a real preparation for the higher type of state which is promised, may not the result of drastic change be not merely the upsetting of the present regime – perhaps not a calamity – but also the indefinite postponement of better things – a real calamity.' 'Primitive Peoples: What They Teach' 12 June 1923, *The Newcastle Sun*, clipping in NLA, MS 9834/2/1.

Christianity to secular ethics.[94] Portus drifted, Elkin and Burgmann did not. The three remained closely associated. What did Portus lose, what did he gain, by leaving the Church?

Like Burgmann and Elkin, Portus attended the University of Sydney on a scholarship designed to equip him for ministry in the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle. As Elkin put it, they were 'all three Paulines, and trained for Newcastle'.[95] At St. Paul's, Portus like Burgmann and Elkin came under Radford's pastoral care; at the University, he also obtained Honours in Philosophy under Anderson. After deciding that his inability to affirm Anglican orthodoxy required that he cease to act as a clergyman, Portus developed his Idealism in promoting and administering the Workers Educational Association (WEA). He ran it for the better part of three decades, enlisting Burgmann and Elkin as teachers.[96] Fittingly, Francis Anderson was a key ally in Portus's attempts to build a politically independent (and so progressive) WEA.[97] As we will see (Ch. 9), the WEA was a crucial venue for Elkin's development of a popular anthropology, and so, mid-century, it was a significant cause of the broad impact of his ideas. Portus also exemplified the internationalist perspective characteristic of the WEA and Australian Idealism in general.[98]

Portus's transition, from Anglican clergy to his sole commitment to the WEA, probably accounts to a large extent for the success of that organisation. He gave the Association a political and institutional independence it would probably have lacked had its director still been associated with the Anglican Church. Portus took his stand on an undiluted agnosticism. This attitude had strengths:

> Probably the best feature of it all was that the tutors tended to sit very lightly by dogma. Pledged at the outset to examine contradiction from whatever quarter it might come, we kept our minds in a continual state of agnostic tension. We were really trying to think, to interrogate facts and abide by the yard of reason.[99]

So far, his words apply equally to Burgmann, Elkin and himself. But Portus went on: 'We were certain of not much more than that we could not be certain of anything. The grammar of

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[94] On this trend, see Rowse, *Liberalism and National Character.*
[95] Hempenstall, *Meddlesome Priest*, 158.
[96] GV Portus, *Happy Highways* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1953), 177–191.
[97] *Ibid.*, 176–181.
[98] *Ibid.*, 71.
[99] Portus, *Happy Highways*, 179.

social science seemed to us to abound in prudent "buts" rather than jubilant "therefores".'[100] Upon this question of political commitment, the three Paulines diverged.

Unlike Portus, Elkin and Burgmann each did propound emphatic 'therefores'; Burgmann, explicitly in Christ's name; Elkin, somewhat less directly, but decisively so.[101] Portus' agnosticism may have positioned him in the cultural mainstream but at the expense of effective conviction. Where Portus retreated to cultural processes, Burgmann (with reference to the unemployed[102]) and Elkin (Aborigines) risked didactic policy prescription. How did the latter two combine the non-dogmatic Idealist project with the morally didactic commitments associated with organised religion?

Burgmann, who led the Idealist Anglican movement in Australia, welcomed inconsistency so long as it derived from the whole person's pursuit of the truth. As an Arts student, he majored in Greek and Philosophy. The Masters thesis he wrote for Anderson explored the Hellenic and Hebraic elements of Christianity.[103] It established an interpretive theme that he developed in various ways for many years.[104] Hellenic elements were inward and individualistic, centred upon the Platonic theory of forms and direct, meditative access to a timeless intuition of the good, the true, and the beautiful. Hebraic elements emphasized tradition, reverence, and obedience. Christ manifested the Hellenic freedom, but also fulfilled (while transcending) the Hebraic duties. The two did not fit easily together. On Christ, Burgmann quoted Ralph Waldo Emerson: 'with consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do.'[105] Christ's life was ambivalent; the interplay of free individuality with reverence and corporate duty that Burgmann discerned in the Gospels shaped Burgmann's mature teaching, and thus became an important influence upon Elkin.

Burgmann approached religion functionally. It was the means, both individual and collective, whereby man nurtured and repaired personality. During the 1920s, Burgmann controversially advertised his 'discipleship' to Freud.[106] He affirmed a psychoanalytic

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[100] *Ibid.*
[101] For the Christian influence upon Elkin's political commitments, see Chs 5, 6, and the Epilogue below; for Burgmann's, see the Epilogue.
[102] Hempenstall, *Meddlesome Priest*, 143–145, and *passim.*
[103] *Ibid.*, 52–53.
[104] See, for example, 'The Platonic Tradition in English Religious thought', *A Review of Life and Work* 1, 1927, 22–23.
[105] *Ibid.*
[106] *Idem*, 'Psychology and Medicine', *Morpeth Review,* I, (3) March 1928, 54– 56.

reading of history: in stages, man won from a primitive complex of sexually jealous authority a space of forbearance. Under the auspices of reverence, humility, and forgiveness, he cultivated the practices of civilization – religion, science, and art – which in turn transformed him. But freedom was never finally won, and its enjoyment depended upon the agent's spiritual discipline in facing and mastering the incessant return of the primitive.[107]

Accordingly, Burgmann taught that reverence remained the key to man's escape from the delusion that he could find freedom by pursuing his own interests and managing his own desires with reference to his own interests. What he needed was a vision of the good that integrated the personality into a transcendent, external good (and not only one's 'super-ego') – an integration that Jesus modelled in his relation to his 'heavenly Father'. The same dynamic applied to society as a whole; but whereas the individual needed only example, self-analysis, and meditation, society needed a corporate vision, and a practical project for democracy and equality – these, the prophet supplied.

> Religion would die if it depended on the work of priests alone. Every now and then the prophet must appear and plough up the ruts in which the priests patiently plod. We cannot do without the priest, but to allow him to get the illusion of final authority or self-sufficiency is to turn him into a petty tyrant.[108]

Burgmann taught that the better part of religion was vision.

Elkin, on the other hand, was interested in religion as continuity. The previous century in particular of Anglican continuity afforded him an historically achieved integration of contrary principles: he embodied the Christian Socialist and Tractarian poles of the Anglo-Catholic movement and was probably its most complete Australian exponent. His Arts majors were History and Philosophy. The Masters thesis he submitted to Anderson extended to earliest times his enquiry into the permanent structure of humanity's religious nature, and the pre-history of personality.[109] In Aboriginal religion, he found insights into the historical continuity of a people destined, it was then thought, only for extinction. But they had prospered in their time in a society that cohered around recognisable modes of reverence. They regarded proper communion with the supernatural as the condition for society's

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[107] *Idem*, 'The Culture of the Future', *Morpeth Review*, 1 (8), March 1929, 5–10.
[108] *Idem*, *Education of an Australian*, 41.
[109] AP Elkin, *The Religion of the Australian Aborigines*, presented February 1922, Honours MA Thesis in the School of Philosophy. Rare Books, Fisher Library, Elkin 006.

preservation. Elkin argued that this 'primitive', conservative religious impulse was as necessary in modern times. (We will examine Elkin's MA in more detail next chapter).

The differentiation of Anglican Catholicism from Idealism aids our understanding of Elkin's enquiry into anthropology. His investigation centred on the importance of ritual to an understanding of primitive man, and Elkin wrote that his religious practice gave him special insight.[110] The distinction between the comparatively sterile rational integrity of the intellectual few (the Gnostics), and the vital religious practices of a broader society, is germane. As we will see next chapter, Elkin championed the work of William Robertson Smith (who saw religion as the practice of communion) against E. B. Tylor (who presented it as the failure of reason). He also followed fellow Anglican R. R. Marett's interpretation of Durkheim, such that religious truth issued from the believer's submission (which for modern Christian scholars characteristically involved the public deferral of private agnosticism or a kind of mystical or abstract heterodoxy), and could not inhere in the sociologist's detached analysis.

Another insight we gain by remembering Elkin's Anglicanism concerns the difference between affirmation and mere intent. Elkin's emphasis on understanding Aborigines was a typical instance of what cultural critics have decried as the 'facile optimism' of Australian liberals between the wars.[111] But it was a rare *Christian* intellectual who, writing within a symbolic framework that began with the fall and looked forward to the apocalypse, could succumb to that weakness. Elkin did not. He did urge his audience to attempt 'to attain the unachievable'.[112] The weakness of this strategy was not naiveté, but a form of fatalism, informed precisely by the understanding Radford propagated: that priests and prophets alike could expect to see little of their projects realised, and depended upon corporately sustaining grace.[113] (In this respect it is important to note that Elkin never justified his moral exhortation with reference to any world other than this one.) This element of religious fatalism – a corporate as well as an individual spiritual discipline – is a crucial element in our background to Elkin inasmuch as it supported a resilient and realistic mode of affirmative publicity.

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[110] '[I]t may be that persons who are religious, and who have got down to the inner meaning and experience of religion, will recognize in many rites and ceremonies and experiences of a primitive people a real religious experience.' *Ibid*., 3.
[111] Melleuish, *Cultural Liberalism*, 51; Rowse, *Australian Liberalism*, 40–75.
[112] See, for example, 'The Present Social Function of Religion', *Morpeth Review* II (16), December 1931, 23–33, at 30–31.
[113] *Ibid*.

Conclusion and Prospect

With this combination of Idealism and fatalism in mind, we ought to reconceive the balance that religious liberals including Elkin advocated between ideal means and achievable but compromised ends. Their recourse to exhortation – in alliance with critique (Chs. 5, 6 and 8) and social activism (Chs. 6 and 8) – appears more tragic than facile, and more wise than naive. A neat symbol of this tendency is Elkin's Presidency in 1939 of the Sydney chapter of the Australian League of Nations Union. He followed his Idealist mentors, Wood and Anderson, into the Union. Amongst other things, the Union was a rallying point for the WEA, and for Idealist critiques of narrow nationalism.[114] That Elkin, so late in the lead-up to war, continued to commit his time to the League's administration indicates a stubborn purpose. Earlier in the 1930s, his similarly intransigent adherence to right means despite likely failure became critical for the course of Aboriginal affairs in Australia (Chs 4–9). Elkin's leading role in Aboriginal affairs stemmed in part from his religious response to the tension between achievable and worthy goals.

Ritual played a key role in this subtle complex of Idealism and realism. Elkin's ritualism was not only a matter of private faith or one priest's style of churchmanship. Through his anthropological studies, he elaborated his idea of what ritual meant, and how it worked. He synthesised new developments in psychobiology, social psychology, sociological structuralism, and the pre-history of cultural diffusion. The common ground upon which Elkin assembled the insights from these disciplines was non-rational, volitional, corporate religious practice. It should not be surprising, then, that his indispensable guide in these matters was another High Church Anglican social scientist, Marett, whose part in Elkin's story, crucial in the Elkin's difficult early years as a priest, centres our next chapter.

For Elkin devoted himself to the scientific outlook. Quite independently of each other (it must have seemed to a casual observer), both religion and science afforded him impersonal forms through which he could develop character; establish respectability, belonging, and prestige; and attempt to serve a greater good. Behind these relations between belonging, religion, science, and ambition, dwells an unanswerable question. Given the tendency inherent in Elkin's childhood and early adolescence towards a psychological

[114] Portus, *Happy Highways*, 195.

mechanism of compensation; and given elements of ruthlessness in his mother's influence, uncertainty in his father's; considering his drive and intelligence; what might he have become if he had not found *enduring*, intellectually liberated belonging in a community based on the attempt to imitate Christ?[115]

Less speculatively, we will have cause to recall our consideration of Elkin's faith and religious practice as we consider the ideas, inspiration, lines of enquiry, constraints, and alliances that religion provided or influenced, and which were central to his later achievements. As we will see, he could not have led anthropology and public opinion as he did in the 1930s without the interaction in his thinking and willing of an existential settlement profoundly affected by his childhood losses, which benefitted from the support and inspiration of priestly and prophetic Catholic Anglicanism, was amplified by the Idealist intellectual project, and was extended in its practical reach by the discipline and achievements of scientific work.

But this supporting line of religious continuity and collaboration was not easy for Elkin to reconcile with his intellectual career. As we will see next chapter, Elkin's first attempt – in the years 1918 to 1920 – to corroborate his faith in God with reference to primitive religion, and so appease his self-doubt and support his ministry, remained unconvincing. For an enduring and empowering religious settlement in this vein we must wait until Chapter Seven, in which we study a new development, a decade later, in Elkin's appreciation of Aboriginal religion – one based not on white men's books, but on first-hand experience in the desert of Aborigines' living religious continuity. In the meantime, let us study Elkin's engagement, guided especially by Marett, with such definitive modern thinkers as Darwin, Nietzsche, and Durkheim, to see the intellectual depth of the enquiry through which he sought to support his spiritual vocation.

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[115] For some extreme but suggestive parallels, see Erik Erikson on Hitler and Stalin, each of whom trained as Christian clerics as a young adult: *Childhood and Society* 1950 (New York: WW Norton, 1963), 326–358. For a consideration of and context for Erikson's psychohistoric method, see Peter Loewenberg, *Decoding the Past: The Psychohistorical Approach* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 14–34. Concerning the severity of each of these contemporaries of Elkin's reactions against Christian norms, see Kenelm Burridge on the relation between abstract reason, communality, and millenarianism: Kenelm Burridge, *Encountering Aborigines: Anthropology and the Australian Aboriginal, A Case Study* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1973), 1–16.