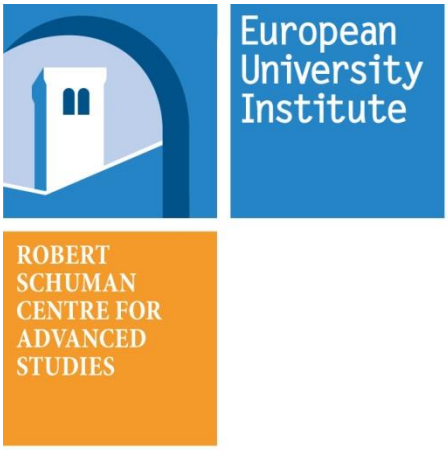

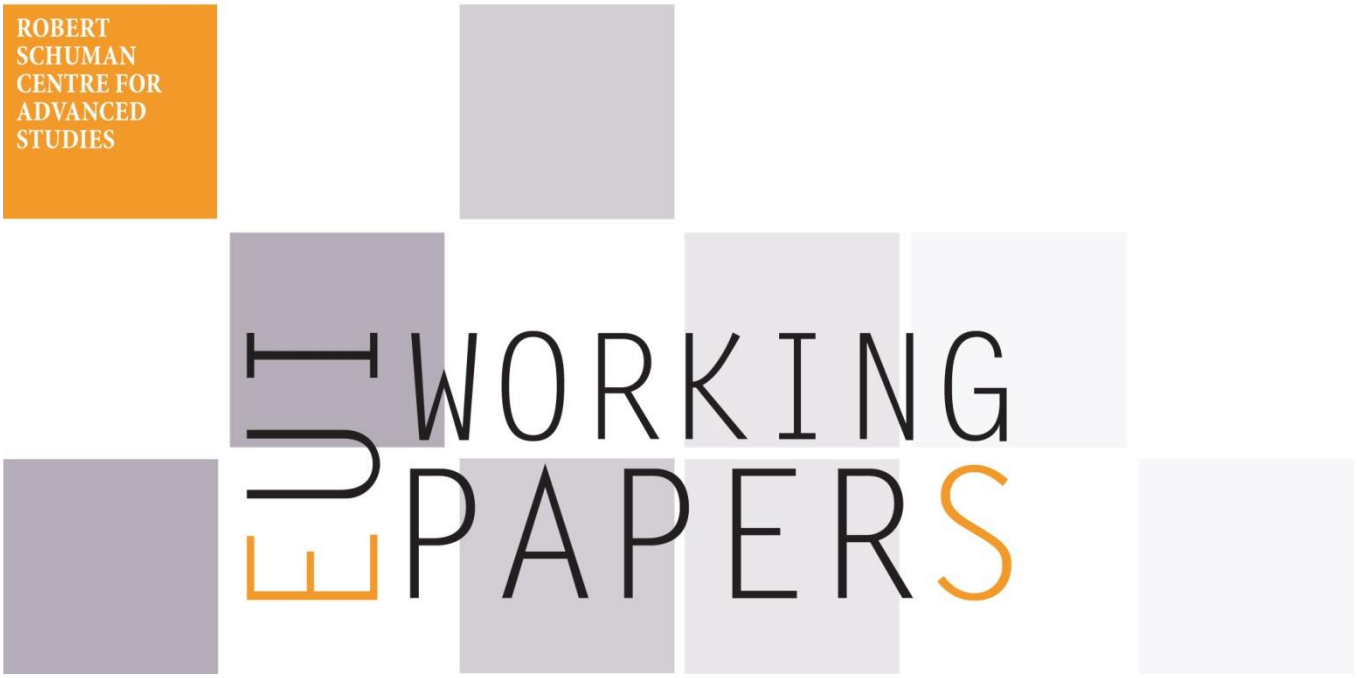

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Geoffrey Brahm Levey

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Abstract

Institutionally and culturally, Australia bridges Britain and the United States, the Old and New Worlds. Its federal parliamentary democracy borrowed aspects from both Westminster and Washington. Yet, Australia rejected both England's established church and the US's 'high wall of separation' between church and state. Australia is often compared with the US and Canada as one of the great immigrant democracies. Like Canada, it adopted multiculturalism as state policy in the 1970s. Yet, it more closely resembles many European countries and perhaps even Québec in the precedence it grants to the established (Anglo-Australian) majority culture. Australia thus combines Old and New World patterns and concerns, offering a unique vantage point on the governance of religious diversity in relation to secularism. We are accustomed to thinking that political secularism and multiculturalism – arguably, the two greatest liberal responses to religious and cultural diversity – press in opposite directions. Whereas secularism separates state and religion, multiculturalism involves the state affirmation of cultural identity. Australia presents a case where these two models genuinely complement and indeed begin to merge into each other. Indeed, I argue that Australian multiculturalism extended the approach to diversity already established by Australia's version of secularism. However, secularism and multiculturalism in Australia face a common challenge from attempts to reassert national identity. Perhaps unexpectedly for the twenty-first century, religion has become the favored vehicle for this reassertion. The paper begins with some remarks on the constitutional context and the operative political culture. The second section discusses the place of religion in multicultural Australia. The third section canvasses how religion has been reasserted in recent years as a trope for reinforcing Anglo-Australian institutions and culture as the core of Australian national identity. The paper concludes by identifying some of the key challenges these dynamics pose for Australians.

Keywords:

Australia, Secularism, Multiculturalism, National Identity, Principled Pragmatism

Introduction

Political secularism was the West's first attempt at multiculturalism. It was a political innovation that responded to pluralism by making room for it. Historically, the origins of secularism lie in a pragmatic response to the bloody religious wars of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The aim was to find a way in which different faith communities could co-exist amicably (Hunter 2008). Of course, applying the late-twentieth century development of 'multiculturalism' to the advent of secularism is anachronistic and there are two features associated with the latter that distinguish it from the former. First, secularism developed from the idea of religious toleration, specifically, from a change in attitude to heresy and heretics (Zagorin 2013). Freedom of conscience then progressively became associated with a principle of equal respect towards citizens and state neutrality (Maclure and Taylor 2011). Multiculturalism typically entails a more respectful posture towards difference than mere forbearance or toleration and an affirmatively interventionist state rather than 'hands-off' neutrality or benign neglect. Second, as Locke (1963) made clear, religious toleration implied a certain separation between religious and political authority for the sake of both. Each could best execute its respective mission if it did not trespass on the other.[1] Here, again, toleration prefigured state neutrality based on equal respect. Matters of faith could best be pursued 'privately', while political authority governed the public domain. In contrast, multiculturalism typically entails the *public* recognition of cultural difference.

Australia presents a case where these two responses to diversity – secularism and multiculturalism – genuinely complement and indeed begin to merge into each other. Or so I will argue in this paper. However, I also want to argue that secularism and multiculturalism in Australia face a common challenge from attempts to reassert national identity. Somewhat unexpectedly for the twenty-first century, religion has become the favored vehicle for this reassertion.

Australia is of more general interest, I suggest, in at least two other respects. First, though it is in Asia it is not of Asia. Institutionally and culturally, Australia instead bridges Britain and the United States, the Old and New Worlds. Its federal parliamentary democracy borrowed aspects from both Westminster and Washington, leading some to call it a 'Washminster' system (Thompson 1980). Yet, Australia rejected both England's established church and the US's 'high wall of separation' between church and state. Second, Australia is often compared with the US and Canada as one of the great immigrant democracies. Like Canada, it adopted multiculturalism as state policy in the 1970s. Yet, Australia more closely resembles many European countries and perhaps even Québec in the precedence it grants to the established (Anglo-Australian) majority culture (Levey 2012). Australia thus combines Old and New World patterns and concerns, offering a unique vantage point on the governance of religious diversity in relation to secularism.

Today Australia's population is approaching 24 million (ABS 2015). Twenty-eight per cent of the population was born overseas, and a further 20% has at least one parent born overseas. Indeed, the current Prime Minister Tony Abbott was born overseas (England) as was his main predecessor Julia Gillard (Wales). Australia is the only country apart from Israel to have doubled its population through immigration in half century. Though the majority of Australians remain nominally affiliated with Christianity (61%: 35.9% Protestant, 23.3% Catholic), this has been steadily declining over the years. The largest non-Christian religious group is Buddhists at 2.5% (530,000) of the population. Muslims account for 2.3% (476,000) of the population; almost 65% of Muslims in Australia were born

[1] Two of the Abrahamic faiths divided authority along similar lines, Christianity via 'rendering unto Caesar and unto God', and Judaism via its rabbinic principle of 'the law of the land is the law'. In this sense, the advent of political secularism was itself a religious injunction (Taylor 2008; Levey 2008a). Jonathan Israel (2006) notes that early Enlightenment thinkers drew on and reinterpreted Scripture to fashion their arguments for toleration.

overseas. A little over 23% of Australians report having 'no religion' (it is higher for younger cohorts), a figure that has been steadily rising over the years (ABS 2015).

Australian society is overwhelming irreligious and, in this sense, secular. Less than 10% of the population attends church weekly and less than a quarter do monthly (Maddox 2009). Unlike presidents of the United States, Australian prime ministers do not feel duty-bound to ritually 'God Bless Australia'. Nor do they feel the public need to attend church. Indeed, when Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke confessed to being unfaithful on national television in the 1980s, his popularity rose (presumably, as much for his candour as for his infidelity).

I will begin with some remarks on the constitutional context and the operative political culture. The second section discusses the place of religion in multicultural Australia. In the third section I canvass how religion has been reasserted in recent years as a trope for reinforcing Anglo-Australian institutions and culture as the core of Australian national identity. I conclude by noting the key challenges these dynamics pose for Australians.

Constitutional Context and Political Culture

Maclure and Taylor (2011: 27-35) distinguish between a 'rigid' or 'republican' and an 'open' or 'liberal-pluralistic' way of institutionalizing a secular state. The USA- ('high wall of separation') and France (*laïcité*) well illustrate the rigid-cum-republican approach. Most liberal democracies, however, practice secularism as a way of accommodating religion rather than keeping it at bay. They impose no religious doctrine on their citizens, set no religious tests for public office, and protect freedom of worship. Otherwise, their state authorities variously support, recognize and accommodate religious institutions and practices, including, in some cases, sanctioning an established church.

Australia very much falls into the accommodationist mold of state secularism, albeit with a twist.[2] The twist is that it is not altogether clear whether the country observes its own constitutional provisions on state-religion relations as it is far from clear what these provisions actually require. Section 116 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia states:

> The Commonwealth shall not make any law for establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth.

The religious provisions were expressly modeled on the First Amendment and Article VI of the Constitution of the United States. However, the Australian Constitution contains no bill of rights. Indeed, Section 116 is the only provision in the Constitution that has even the appearance of an explicit reference to a civil liberty (and even then is understood as a statement of government powers rather than of a liberty). Adding to its anomalous status, Section 116 appears in that part of the Constitution dealing with the states, yet the provision only binds the Commonwealth and not the state governments. There is no Australian equivalent of America's 'equal protection' clause in the Fourteenth Amendment; attempts to introduce such a covering clause have failed.

Section 116 has some subtle differences in wording compared to the US First Amendment. The High Court of Australia has interpreted the section to mean that the Commonwealth is barred from making laws 'for' the stipulated purposes, whereas the First Amendment speaks of a more encompassing 'respecting an establishment' and 'impeding' free exercise. There have been only four cases in which Section 116 has been tested in the High Court (which itself tells a story), three involving free exercise and one involving establishment. In each case, the Court opted for a narrow interpretation of free exercise and establishment. Compulsory military service (1912), dissolving a

[2] Veit Bader (2003: 271) cites Australia along with Belgium, India, Germany and post-1983 Netherlands as a prime example of what he calls a 'nonconstitutional pluralism' model.

branch of Jehovah's Witnesses and acquiring its property (1943), and the forcible removal of Indigenous children from their families (1997) were held not to contravene the free exercise clause. In the Defense of Government Schools (DOGS) case of 1981, state aid to religious schools was judged not to be 'for establishing any religion'. In short, where a free expression of religion conflicts with a state interest, the state prevails.[3] And the state may engage with religion in any way it chooses short of aiming to establish any religion or setting religious tests for public offices.

Scholarship on Section 116 is almost as limited as the case law. Interpretations tend to divide according to discipline. The classic historical account of the Constitutional conventions of the late nineteenth century (charged with drafting the Constitution) concludes that the delegates overwhelmingly intended Section 116 to replicate the 'high-wall' of church-state separation as propounded in the US (Ely 1976). The leading political science analysis contends that the resemblance of Section 116 to the First Amendment is misleading as the Australian constitutional provisions and their judicial interpretation were informed by the experience and institutions of the colonial period (Hogan 1981, 1987). For example, the colonies of Victoria and Queensland abolished state aid to church schools in the 1870s, and New South Wales in 1880, upon establishing their own state schools (McLeish 1992: 215). The latter were to be 'free, secular and compulsory', however, secular then meant non-sectarian Christian or more specifically, generically Protestant (Bouma 2011). Catholics elected to establish their own comprehensive school system, as did some other religious groups on a lesser scale. Government and religion thus remained entwined. Reviewing the history and the jurisprudence, legal scholar Stephen McLeish (1992) notes that inclusion of Section 116 was largely motivated by the recognition of 'Almighty God' in the preamble to the Constitution and the desire for 'balance'. He argues that the imperative behind church-state relations in Australia has always been twofold: the avoidance of sectarianism and the protection of religion. On this view, Section 116 should be read as an expression of state neutrality in the sense of equal treatment and non-preferentialism rather than as separation or 'hands-off' neutrality. Secularism clearly resembles some versions of multiculturalism, on this reading.

How the Constitution is interpreted and, indeed, how religious and cultural diversity is negotiated owe much to the political culture. In this respect, a few points are worth highlighting. The state preceded the formation of civil society in colonial Australia and has been strong and central in its national life ever since. Australians do not fear government; they look to it for everything. The political culture values pragmatic, utilitarian, and efficient solutions to problems. It is not in thrall to tradition, ideology, or principle for principle's sake. Marion Maddox (2009: 611) suggests that the 'conventional "pragmatic liberalism" view of Australian political thought' is to see religious exemptions, state funding of religious schools and the like as 'momentary aberrations or populist accommodations, the triumph of pragmatism over theory'. She maintains these cases are better understood as a 'series of religion–state interpenetrations that suffuse Australian political life'. She is right about the latter. However, whatever the popular understanding, pragmatic liberalism in Australia is not of the *ad hoc* or purely populist variety. Whether in terms of utilitarian benefit, avoiding sectarianism or a 'fair go', Australian pragmatism typically has been governed by principled concerns. As one observer famously put it, Australia is a 'Benthamite society' (Collins 1988).

Australian Multiculturalism and the Place of Religion

Australia turned to multiculturalism as state policy in the 1970s. Previously, it had sought to exclude diversity at the door. The White Australia policy was in effect from federation in 1901 until its formal abolition in 1973. However, from the 1940s, cultural assimilation was increasingly advanced as the preferred policy response to diversity. As suggested in the preceding section, religious groups were

[3] One analysis suggests that attempts to restrict dress based on religious identity would fall foul of the free exercise clause in the Constitution (Gray 2011).

often accorded state support and accommodation long before the advent of multiculturalism. Indeed, religion was a privileged 'identity' dimension in this respect. Historically, this privilege included the outlawing of blasphemy. Most of the six states had provisions against blasphemy in their criminal codes or under common law. While some still do so, these laws have long been 'dead letters'. The only Australian prosecution for blasphemous libel occurred in New South Wales in 1871, while the last attempted crown prosecution for it was in Victoria in 1919 (Coleman and White 2010). More vital examples of accommodation include exemptions from standing law. To cite one such case, Jews in New South Wales were granted exemption from animal slaughter laws as early as the 1920s.[4] State funding for church schools was reinstated in the early 1960s (after a ninety year hiatus).

Thus, in Australia, multiculturalism *continued* rather than inaugurated a tradition of publicly recognizing religion and religious minorities. It is sometimes said that liberal multiculturalism focuses on ethnic, racial, or indigenous groups to the near exclusion of religious groups, precisely out of concern for the principle of state secularism (e.g. Modood 2010). It is doubtful this characterization fairly describes the positions of most liberal multiculturalists[5]; it certainly does not reflect the Australian experience with multiculturalism, where religion is anything but the poor cousin among identity groups.

Australian multiculturalism first took shape as a program of migrant settlement and welfare support for people from non-English speaking backgrounds (Galbally 1978; Australian Ethnic Affairs Council 1978). By the early 1980s, its ambit was being framed as addressing 'all Australians' rather than only migrants and 'ethnics'. The first national multicultural policy statement—*National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* (OMA 1989), inaugurated by the Hawke Labor government—identified four main planks: the right of all Australians to maintain their cultural identities within the law; the right of all Australians to equal opportunities without fear of group-based discrimination; the economic and national benefits of a culturally diverse society; and respect for core Australian values and institutions—reciprocity, tolerance and equality (including of the sexes), freedom of speech and religion, the rule of law, the Constitution, parliamentary democracy, and English as the national language. Subsequently, three further national policy statements have been issued (Commonwealth of Australia 1999, 2003; DIAC 2011). These versions have further refined the policy's emphases and presentation of principles, though the key 1989 principles have essentially endured.

Church groups and religious minorities clearly felt multiculturalism was relevant to them as they figure prominently among those making submissions to the various public hearings held around the country as the policy was being developed (e.g. Council of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs 1984). Moreover, the ensuing policy recognizes them within its brief; religious groups are eligible, for example, to compete for the various multicultural grants programs and they participate in the annual multicultural festivals and events, such as Harmony Day.

The picture is not all rosy. Australian multiculturalism works well in certain respects and remains deficient in others. Specifically, 'liberty' and 'equality' issues tend to be well accommodated. Institutionally and culturally, Australians today are generally relaxed about people expressing their cultural difference. For example, at the very time that France was embarked on banning the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols at state schools, the Victorian Police Force was graduating its first observant Muslim female officer with a specially made hijab for police work (*The Australian* 2004). While a few conservative politicians agitated to have the hijab banned in Australian state schools in

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4 Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1901-1953 (NSW).

5 Most liberal multiculturalists invoke religious practices for discussing legitimate cultural rights claims as well as their limits (e.g. Tamir 1992, Margalit and Halbertal 1994; Miller 1995; Soutphommasane 2012). Kymlicka (2002: 344-345) does suggest that the treatment of religion is unhelpful for considering the appropriate relationship between the 'liberal-democratic state and ethnocultural groups' as the former is rightly based on 'separation of church and state'. However, elsewhere he includes religious minorities as having legitimate cultural rights claims under the terms of his theory of minority rights (Kymlicka 1995).

the mid-2000s following further restrictions in some European countries, these calls went unheeded (*Sydney Morning Herald* 2005; *The Australian* 2006). Surveys confirm that 'there is little public objection to the hijab or the women who wear them' (Dunn 2009). Even calls in 2014 to ban the wearing of the burka and niqab in the Australian Parliament by visiting members of the public, on security grounds, came to nothing.

Public institutions also have been generally responsive to accommodating religious and cultural difference. For example, some Australian banks specialize in Sharia compliant finance, which is overseen by the banking sector's regulator, the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority. Many universities have provided ablutions facilities and prayer rooms for their Muslim students (Levey 2009). Rather more controversially, religious institutions are exempt from various anti-discrimination provisions. Australian governments and legal institutions have also conscientiously grappled with the vexed issue of Jewish divorce and the 'chained woman', that is, where the Jewish woman is unable to remarry (under Jewish law) unless her husband grants a *gett* or bill of divorce (e.g. ALRC 1992; Jones and Jones-Pellach 2011). While civil courts have been reluctant to intervene in any determined way, a potentially landmark decision by a Victorian court in March found that withholding a *gett* constituted unlawful 'psychological and emotional abuse' (*Australian Jewish News* 2015).

Regarding equality, extensive anti-discrimination laws apply at the state and federal levels. Most jurisdictions have some protection against discrimination based on religion. Victoria's *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001*, Tasmania's *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998* and the Northern Territory's *Anti-Discrimination Act 1996* are the most comprehensive in outlawing discrimination on the basis of religious belief as well as religious activity. South Australia's *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* protects 'religious dress (in work or study)', while New South Wales's *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* includes only ethno-religious membership as a recognized ground of discrimination. At the federal level, the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* protects against discrimination on the basis of religion in employment by Commonwealth bodies.

Also relevant in this connection was the concerted attempt by the conservative Abbott government last year to repeal the anti-vilification provisions of the *Racial Hatred Act 1975* (Cth), ostensibly in the name of free speech. The spur to the attempted reform was a Federal Court's finding, under the provisions, against a conservative commentator who had impugned the motives of a group of prominent 'light-skinned' Aborigines. Although the racial hatred provisions do not cover religious vilification, the moral compass of Australians on speech regulation is indicative. The government threw everything it could behind the proposal to win it support, including installing a free-market, libertarian polemicist as the federal Human Rights Commissioner to help advocate for it. Minorities mobilized against the change and the Australian public at large (according to polls) remained unconvinced that weakening the protections was desirable. After a protracted government campaign and public debate, the reform proposal was summarily dropped (Levey 2015).

Liberty and equality issues are the 'good news' story. Australian multiculturalism also has failings. Another important aspect of successful multicultural integration – inclusion (in effect, the third of the tricolor values, *fraternité*) – is scarcely acknowledged in the policy or enacted in practice. This deficiency is particularly evident in areas of symbolic and rhetorical recognition and institutional representation. Here, religion looms large. Examples include the government's scheduling of national elections or other major national events, such as the 2020 Summit on Australia's future, on the Jewish festivals of Yom Kippur and Passover; the non-inclusive manner in which Christmas is publicly celebrated in state schools and elsewhere (Levey 2006); and the continued practice of opening sessions in both houses of the federal Parliament with the Lord's Prayer. The latter practice persists despite calls and suggestions for making the opening statements more inclusive and representative of the population (Cahill et al. 2004). The US Congress, for example, rosters or invites opening prayers or statements from its diverse communities, despite its more fervently Christian society.

Such slights and exclusions surely do not count as major disabilities. Nevertheless, they are emblematic of a general attitude of condescension towards minorities, which understandably rankles them. Three examples serve to illustrate the attitude:

- In the mid-2000s, the conservative Howard government was telling Muslims they must abide by democratic norms. At the same time, it was telling the Muslim and indigenous communities who among their members would represent them to the government – hardly a lesson in democracy.
- The current Prime Minister Tony Abbott served as Health Minister in the Howard Government (1996-2007). In Parliament, in connection with what he viewed as ethnic 'branch stacking' in a Labor Party pre-selection battle, he jibed across the chamber: 'Are there any Australians left in the so-called Australian Labor Party today?' In an instant, the minister had rhetorically disenfranchised every immigrant Australian as not being really Australian, and this in the 'People's House'.
- Dignitaries and political leaders routinely address the Jewish community by affirming the Jews' place in Australian society only after noting the contribution of prominent Jewish figures in business, the professions, the arts, and so on. Apparently, even for an old Australian minority like the Jews – who have been present in the country since European settlement in 1788 – being a born or naturalized Australian and a regular law-abiding citizen are not warrant enough to be a valued and equal member of the society. Conspicuous achievement is instead the listed price of acceptance.

After thirty or so years of official multiculturalism, in a country built on immigration, the continued prevalence of such attitudes may seem surprising. Their common denominator is the strong current of cultural nationalism to be found among sections of 'Anglo-Australia' and especially its elites.

Former prime minister and arch cultural nationalist, John Howard captured the sentiment well in one of his favored expressions: 'People come to Australia to join us, not to change us'. Howard refused even to say the word 'multiculturalism' during most of his eleven years in office (Johnson 2007). In a 1999 referendum, he unsuccessfully tried to have the legendary Australian custom of 'mateship' inscribed in the preamble to the Constitution. In 2001, he controversially appointed an Anglican Archbishop to be the Governor General of Australia, the first time the Queen's representative in Australia had been a man (or woman) of the cloth. (When challenged, Howard noted that there had been two Jewish Governors General, as if every Jew were a rabbi.) The first Australian citizenship test, which his government introduced in 2007, included questions on cricket heroes and other Australian sporting icons (Tate 2009). In 2006, he removed the words 'multiculturalism' and 'multicultural' from all federal governmental use. The cultural-nationalist outlook, which assumed prominence in the post-War period, has become defensive in the multicultural era. As Brisbane's *Sunday Mail* (2005) newspaper (in the Murdoch stable) editorialized: 'The statistical evidence is that there will probably come a time when the celebrations of other faiths will loom larger in Australian life. In the meantime, Christians will continue joyously to observe their important celebrations in a manner that will reflect their historical dominance'.

Australian multicultural policy has sought to accommodate something of the cultural-nationalist sentiment within the community. The first national multicultural policy states, for example, that '[o]ur British heritage…helps to define us as Australian' (OMA 1989: 51). Some critics see Australian multiculturalism, in policy and in practice, as little different from old-time Anglo-conformity and assimilationism (e.g. Hage 1998; Boese and Phillips 2015). Elsewhere I have argued that Australian multiculturalism is more aptly described as a form of 'liberal nationalism', in which the established Anglo-Australian institutions and culture are recognized as being foundational and granted some

precedence but whose privileged position is seriously limited in the interests of serving all Australians (Levey 2008b).[6]

Such accounts, however, do not entirely explain why Australian multiculturalism neglects 'inclusion' as a worthy principle in its own right. A close reading of the national multicultural policy statements reveals that 'inclusiveness' is identified with respecting the liberty and, especially, the equality ('access and equity') provisions (Levey 2013).[7] The assumption is that inclusion is simply the corollary of respecting these other values. Overlooked is the fact that one can enjoy equal citizenship rights and equal opportunities and still be socially marginalized.

Encouraging this blind spot is arguably two features of Australian political and general culture. The legacy of Australia's origins as a penal colony is a powerful ethos of egalitarianism, anti-authoritarian and leveling or 'commoner' in character. To this day, Australians instinctively sit in the passenger seat next to the driver when taking a taxicab to avoid the impression of being chauffeured. The nation's leaders, from the Prime Minister down, typically follow suit in their government vehicles. Respecting 'inclusion' for its own sake also rubs up against the powerful Australian cultural norm of 'mateship', referred to above. What might seem to be the quintessentially Australian sentiment of fraternity and inclusion is traditionally reserved for males and therefore excludes half the population. Moreover, the practice of mateship tends be highly demanding and conformist; one is accepted as a mate on the implicit understanding that one does as one's mates do. As Russel Ward (1958: 168) observed in his classic *The Australian Legend*, '[b]y the 1880's mateship had become such a powerful institution that often one could refuse an invitation to drink only at one's peril'. Mateship works to dissolve difference rather than to include it.

Religion and the Reassertion of National Identity

Over the last decade or so both conservative and Labor governments have placed increased emphasis on social and national cohesion. This has come in the wake of public anxieties over Islamic radicalism and Muslim integration. While the Labor governments have generally avoided linking social cohesion campaigns to notions of Australian national identity[8], the conservative governments have shown no such reticence. Invoking the 'Judeo-Christian tradition' and more expressly Christianity figures prominently in this enterprise.

Maddox (2007) identifies several policy areas where the Howard governments sought to promote Christian values:

- Outsourcing welfare services to churches
- Government-funded pregnancy counseling service
- Amending the *Marriage Act* to ensuring marriage can only be between a man and a woman (and overturning the Australian Capital Territory's attempt to sanction civil unions)
- Increased proportion of federal funding to small, non-denominational Christian schools
- Offering tax benefits to two-parent families with one breadwinner
- Sustained rhetorical attack on Muslims ('us vs. them')

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6 Political historian Gregory Melluish (1997) argues that the accepted form of liberalism in Australia has been of the 'Machiavellian' nationalist rather than 'Hegelian' universalistic variety.

7 The first Rudd Labor government (2007-2010) introduced a 'social inclusion" policy that was framed entirely in terms of addressing socioeconomic hardships.

8 In his speech announcing the Gillard government's intention to reinvigorate multicultural policy, Immigration Minister Chris Bowen (2011) did not once refer to national identity.

As Maddox (2007) observes, given the irreligiosity of Australian society, these initiatives are more about reinforcing the dominant culture in the face of perceived challenges from Muslims and other minorities. Still, not every policy listed can bear the weight of this interpretation. As the then Health Minister, Tony Abbott oversaw the pregnancy-counseling service. Abbott is a committed Catholic (he trained for the priesthood) and had publicly described abortion as a 'national tragedy' (Fozdar 2011). That view is not widely shared in the community. The pregnancy-counseling service was very much his baby. Also, Howard is a committed Methodist. So both men's respective appeals to Christian values are sincere. It is just that they also sincerely believe that these values are and should remain integral to Australian culture and national identity and help put pesky minorities in their place.

Since 2007, when Howard lost office, popular momentum has built in favor of same-sex marriage and many politicians have announced that they no longer oppose its legal recognition. Abbott has been holding out saying his Party's position stands and he would not be granting a conscience vote on the question (Gartrell 2015). On some issues, Abbott has pushed religion even more vigorously than Howard. The National School Chaplaincy Program, whose first iteration was established by Howard, is a federally funded program for religious chaplains to visit state schools to offer counselling to students. The government has steadfastly refused to include qualified youth and social workers in this program, insisting they be religious chaplains. They can, however, be of any faith. In 2014, the High Court found the program to be unconstitutional, but not for the reason outsiders may think. Section 116 and the secular state were not the issue; rather, the Commonwealth was found to have breached its powers by directly funding an area of education that falls within state jurisdiction. The Commonwealth now hands the money to the states to run the program.

As elsewhere, security issues are ever present, sometimes allegedly in the unlikeliest of places. Abbott has recently given the green light to a government investigation into Halal certification of foods. The issue ostensibly is that monies for certification are being siphoned off to fund Islamic radicals abroad. However, a Christian conservative and inveterate critic of Islam, Senator Cory Bernardi, led the campaign for the investigation.

Religious instruction (RI) in schools has been another point of contention in recent years. The general pattern is that religious education – that is, education about religions – is provided as part of the state's educational curriculum, while RI (or 'special religious education' in NSW) – that is, training in a particular faith – is available for a short period each week and provided by registered personnel from religious groups. Children for whom an appropriate religious instructor is unavailable or whose parents do not wish their child to participate in the program are exempt and assigned alternative educational tasks for the duration. The system has worked well for decades. In 2011, however, the Queensland and Victorian Departments of Education changed their 'opt-in' provision for RI to an 'opt-out' provision, meaning children would automatically receive some RI unless their parents' formally declined it. It is a curious turn of events in multicultural Australia. As Gary Bouma (2011) observes, to 'by default, force children into being instructed as though they were Christians, or Christians in the making – or as one School Chaplain described them "not-yet-Christians" – is unsupportable in multicultural, multifaith Australia'.

However, it is also clear that many Australians continue to subscribe to the view that Australia is a Christian society and feel particularly threatened by diversity and change. Recently, for example, a grassroots protest movement 'Reclaim Australia' has been established and has held demonstrations against Islam and Muslims in the capital cities. The organization's website states:

> 'Australia is a nation of many people groups with the majority being caucasion [sic] and Christian. We have successfully embraced multi-ethnicity for decades...Yet, all of a sudden we have to make all these changes to the way we do "Australian" in order to cater to an minority who refuse to integrate anyway. If Islam can't cope with how we do "Australian" well then perhaps Islam needs to move along to somewhere where they are not so offended by the locals' (Reclaim Australia 2015).

Almost as concerning some scholars have suggested that liberal values are responsible for this inhospitality towards Muslims instead of a simplistic and culturally nationalistic rendition of them (e.g. Ahmad 2015).

Conclusion

The two great liberal attempts to accommodate diversity – secularism and multiculturalism – are often assumed to be at loggerheads. In Australia, they work in tandem. Here, state secularism is taken to mean no established church and non-sectarianism. Accordingly, Australia does not have divorce from religion so much as polygamy. The state is engaged across the board with religion and has many partners. The multicultural era simply extended a long tradition of state entanglement with religion.

This arrangement benefits religious minorities in that they enjoy the kind of state support and accommodation that a separationist form of secularism would deny them. However, the same cultural and institutional context that allows government to support and accommodate religious minorities allows government to support, recognize and accommodate the dominant culture and its religious preferences. In the same vein, Australian multiculturalism recognizes the established Anglo-Australian institutions and culture as foundational and seeks only to *limit*, and not eliminate, majority precedence. This produces challenges not only for minorities.

Cultural nationalists and the mass public face the challenge of remembering – or learning – that liberal-democratic institutions and values are also an integral part of the British inheritance and the Anglo-Australian core culture and should not simply be equated with dominant cultural patterns. Liberals face the challenge of acknowledging that liberal democratic principles are often in tension and, in any case, admit of competing interpretations. And all Australians face the challenge of 'drawing lines' – deciding where public recognition of religion and culture – of the majority no less than of minorities – is and is not appropriate and on what basis. This conundrum is, of course, not only an Australian one. But if the past is any guide, the Australian approach will continue to bring a 'principled pragmatism' to these sorts of negotiations. Unfortunately, this reflex posture also means that rectifying blind spots such as the inattention to the principle and practice of inclusion is likely to prove just as challenging as ever.

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