GEORGE AUGUSTUS MIDDLETON – A PRODIGAL PRIEST?

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I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university.

Signed...........................................
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

Research cannot be undertaken without the support of many people. I am particularly grateful to, first of all, Professor Peter Hempenstall, formerly of the University of Newcastle, and now of Canterbury University, New Zealand. He sought me out and encouraged me to begin this study and then encouraged me further. As work progressed, Dr Barry Cairns of Melbourne, a Middleton descendant, co-operated in disseminating information and shared a number of excursions to locations in which Middleton lived and worked. Mr Kit Middleton of Sydney, along with numerous Middleton descendants, also must be acknowledged. Their support and interest was a great encouragement. So, too, were my conversations with Canon Paul Robertson. In the process of writing and supervision I am indebted to Dr Claire Walker for insightful contributions and direction as well as for patience. Also must I acknowledge the perceptive supervision of Dr Erik Eklund under whose hand the thesis was submitted. Thanks go also to the Library staff of the University and especially those in the University Archives. And not least among those deserving of recognition are my fellow post-graduate students whose conversations and encouragement filled many pleasant hours. Last of all, and most importantly, I offer sincere and loving appreciation to my wife Robyn, and my daughter Rebecca, for time I was given to work when they would have preferred other things to happen.
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Synopsis.

Born in London in 1791, George Augustus Middleton attended Cambridge University but failed to graduate. Ordained priest for the Colonies in 1819, he arrived in Sydney, New South Wales, in January 1820 and shortly after commenced work as Assistant Chaplain at Parramatta in the role of *locum tenens* for the Reverend Samuel Marsden. In 1821 he was appointed to the convict settlement of Newcastle, where, over the ensuing five and a half years he found himself in constant conflict with both the military and ecclesiastical authorities because of his perceived absenteeism and his agricultural dealings.

His conflict with the Commandant of Newcastle, Major James Morisset, originated from his perceived interference in, and condemnation of, Morisset’s disregard for the Sabbath and Christian morality. Relations between the two men broke down completely and Middleton found himself criticised from the Governor down and very much isolated.

In 1825, Archdeacon Thomas Hobbes Scott, a former secretary to Sir Thomas Bigge during Bigge’s enquiry into the state of New South Wales, arrived in Sydney and commenced the first structural organisation of the antipodean Anglican Church. Almost immediately relations between Scott and Middleton deteriorated to the point where, in 1827, Middleton resigned and moved to his land grant at Paterson, about 70 kilometres from Newcastle. Scholars since then have incorrectly seen the main cause of their conflict as Middleton’s perceived absenteeism, unaware that far greater differences existed. To Scott, Middleton was an incompetent administrator, a lax pastor and unfit for ministry.

After resigning, Middleton acted as a pastor, farmer, Justice of the Peace and community member until 1832, when, forced by drought, he moved to Sydney where
he established a school by which to support himself and his family.

In 1836, William Grant Broughton, formerly the Archdeacon of Australia, and later the first and only Bishop of Australia, returned from England, and in 1837, licensed Middleton to the parish of Butterwick and Seaham. There Middleton served as pastor until his early death in 1848.
A Note On Conversions.

Imperial measurements of weight, distance, area and currency are used throughout the text as these appear in quoted original documents. Pounds weight, miles, feet and inches, acres and pounds (£), shillings (s.) and pence (d.) equivalents (at 1966) are given to the nearest decimal place and are set out below:

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GEORGE AUGUSTUS MIDDLETON:
A PRODIGAL PRIEST?

Introduction.

Between 1788 and 1836, eighteen Anglican priests arrived in New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land. Within the church and across the settlement they became men of influence but as Graeme Griffin commented, few of their names have stayed in the public consciousness.¹ Brian Fletcher made a most apposite point when he stated that ‘Australian historiography has been assiduous in ignoring religion, and Anglicanism in particular, as a recurrent factor in Australian life’.² He might also have added that even more so, Anglicanism’s colonial clergy have been almost entirely ignored. Quite literally, they were the founding ‘fathers’ of the antipodean church and yet most have been overlooked by professional historians.³ Perhaps, as Griffin also postulates, it is partly their own fault in that they left little in writing because of the distances they travelled and the time these travels consumed.⁴ The Reverends Richard Johnson and Samuel Marsden, because of their unique roles, have been analysed in depth but concerning the others, research is, for the most part, ad hoc. Yet, it was these men, who as parish clergy, shouldered the burden of establishing and expanding the neophyte Australian church. Marcus Loane, a former

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¹ Graeme Griffin, They Came to Care: Pastoral Men in Colonial Australia, Melbourne, Joint Board of Christian Education, 1993, 7.
⁴ Graeme Griffin, They Came to Care: Pastoral Men in Colonial Australia, 9.
Archbishop of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, described their unique position and the conditions under which they operated.\(^5\) In England endowments, parishioners and government provided support. In Australia, very different conditions prevailed. With no endowments, mostly disinterested parishioners and a government working to a different agenda, they lacked a firm basis of support. In an emerging society, as they faced new challenges, they relied on initiative and imagination.\(^6\) With no central ecclesiastical authority and, by today’s standards, very primitive communication, answers to the challenges they faced derived from personal ingenuity and the realities of their environment. Often, when pressed with urgent decisions, they found it easier to obtain forgiveness rather than permission if a determination went awry. By persevering as they did, they made a unique contribution to the Anglican Church and their stories need to be told. Induced to come to the Great South Land by promises of sustenance and other support, they traversed the globe and on arriving found a church and society unlike anything ‘back home’. Confronted by a harsh climate, the unique Australian landscape, vast distances between settlements and the religious indifference of the majority of the population, they persevered, and in most instances, triumphed. The majority travelled over extensive and harsh terrain under trying conditions covering enormous distances to administer the sacraments and to preach the gospel. Most were greatly loved and sincerely admired by their congregations and generally respected across their parish communities. At life’s end they either died as did Richard Hill, while still serving, or else retired, having ‘borne

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the heat and burden of the day’. 7 Alan Grocott was correct to point out that John Barrett in That Better Country, when analysing the work of the Roman Catholic clergy, omitted ‘the toiling pioneering work of George Middleton and many other of the clergy’. 8 Perhaps William Charles Wentworth best summed up the community attitude when he wrote:

The ecclesiastical community…the members of which, consisting altogether of nine in number, of course belong to the Church of England and are perhaps, with a single exception, pious and exemplary ministers of the gospel, zealous and indefatigable in the discharge of their spiritual duties, in some instances to the neglect of their temporal concerns. 9

First and foremost these clergy faced a conflict between their spiritual function and secular demands. To survive they were forced to support themselves through glebes or landed estates with very poor soil and which were often covered in scrub and so were almost useless. Clearing them added further to their financial burden, as did employing the convicts assigned to their charge for this purpose. Further complicating their position was their legal status. They were free men living under the strictures of military rule, the Governors being all-powerful. From time to time disputes arose with the ruling elite, especially after Governor Phillip returned to England. Richard Johnson, for example, found the time he was allocated for church services was cut back and despite his pleas, he had no church from which to minister

7 The Gospel of St. Matthew 20:12. Richard Hill died suddenly in 1836 in the vestry of his parish church of St James, Sydney, shortly after conducting a service.

8 Allan M. Grocott, Convicts, Clergymen and Churches. Attitudes of Convicts and Ex-convicts Towards the Churches and Clergy in New South Wales from 1788-1851, 194.

until he erected his own. 10 As well, restrictions could be imposed on their ministry. Lieutenant Governor Grose refused to allow both Richard Johnson and Samuel Marsden, the second chaplain, to speak with John Fleming and Archibald McDonald, two men condemned to be hanged. 11 Marsden, in later years, endured further clashes with the authorities. 12 After Johnson returned to England, Marsden carried on a unique, lone and difficult ministry until 1809. 13 Under very trying circumstances and impelled by his strong Evangelical convictions, he did all that he could to plant the gospel firmly in the community. Both Johnson and Marsden have had their stories told. Of the other clergy, those who arrived between 1809 and 1831, most also have interesting tales to tell which have yet to be recounted. 14 Henry Fulton’s fame derives from his preparedness to work for justice. Ordained in Ireland, he arrived in New South Wales in 1799 as a convict, his punishment for allegedly supporting a rebellion in Ireland. Conditionally pardoned in 1800, he was appointed to the Hawkesbury River district. He later served on Norfolk Island, stood in for Samuel Marsden when Marsden went back to England in 1807, and then later still, served in

12 See Marsden’s quarrel with Governor Macquarie regarding the appointment as magistrates of ‘Pure Merinoes” and others, especially men cohabiting with women not their wives in A.T. Yarwood, *Samuel Marsden, The Great Survivor*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1977, 120.
14 The early Anglican clergy in N.S.W., in order of arrival were Richard Johnson, Samuel Marsden, William Cowper, Robert Cartwright, John Youll, Benjamin Vale, Richard Hill, George Middleton, Thomas Reddall, Thomas Hobbes-Scott, Thomas Hassall, F.M.Wilkinson, Matthew Devenish-Mears, J.E.Keane, John Vincent, Elijah Smith, C.P.N.Wilton and William Grant Broughton. There were also a number of army chaplains who gave assistance such as James Bain, Chaplain to the N.S.W. Corps 1792-1794.
the Castlereagh and Richmond districts. He sided with Governor Bligh at the time of Bligh’s overthrow and subsequently returned to England to give evidence in respect of that affair. In part, his life has been covered by C.E. Lugard in *Family of Fulton* but there is a great deal more which could be written. Two others, the Reverends William Cowper and especially Robert Cartwright, in their stories display the difficulties faced by the clergy as the colony expanded. They best represent those who fell on hard times because of official policy and indifferent parishioners. The Reverend Frederick Wilkinson arrived in 1825. He gained notoriety when Archdeacon Broughton dismissed him in 1831 because of his debts, his refusal to perform baptisms, his absenteeism and his indulgence in land and livestock. Wilkinson best portrays how clergy could lose sight of their high calling and be seduced by ‘this naughty world’. Other enticements seduced Robert Knopwood of Hobart. The *Australian Encyclopaedia* says of him that ‘he gained the reputation of being an unconventional ‘good fellow, full of sympathy and fond of wine’. Under Governor Macquarie, Lieutenant Governor Davey of Hobart was instructed to


16 C.E. Lugard, ‘Family of Fulton’ in *The Family of MacHenry in New South Wales, etc.*

17 Marsden to Pratt, 7 February 1825, ML, *Bonwick Transcripts Box 53*, 1464.


admonish him for any ‘reprehensible’ conduct.\textsuperscript{21} Mary Nicholls has produced interesting material on him, but it lacks depth and analysis.\textsuperscript{22} Rather than locate his life and service in the context of the colonial church and society, she lets her readers draw their own conclusions from Knopwood’s diary entries.\textsuperscript{23} Mabel Hookey in her work, \textit{Bobby Knopwood and His Times} whets the appetite for a greater work to be undertaken. She commented that Knopwood was ‘this most unclerical of chaplains’, a hard-riding, sports loving parson of the eighteenth century, and illustrates her thesis with a wonderful anecdote of Knopwood startling his congregation when, in the middle of a sermon he roared ‘Damn that pony of mine! He’s loose again!’\textsuperscript{24} Another writer, Geoffrey Stephens, has attempted to redeem Knopwood’s reputation from that of a guzzler and a gourmand.\textsuperscript{25} Of John Youl, Knopwood’s colleague in Tasmania, Phillip Blake has written \textit{The Forgotten Chaplain, A Biography of the Reverend John Youl, 1773 – 1827, First Chaplain to Northern Tasmania}. In it he states that Youl was ‘not outstanding but he ministered faithfully’.\textsuperscript{26} It is a small volume which again, whets the appetite for a much larger and more detailed work.

\textsuperscript{21} ‘Robert Knopwood’ in \textit{The Australian Encyclopedia, Vol. 5}, 1834.

\textsuperscript{22} Mary Nicholls (ed.), \textit{The Diary of the Reverend Robert Knopwood, 1803-1838, First Chaplain of Van Diemen’s Land}, Sandy Bay, Tas., Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1977.


\textsuperscript{24} Mabel Hookey, \textit{Bobby Knopwood and His Times, from the Diaries of 1804-8, 1814-17 by the Rev. Robert Knopwood, Chaplain to Lieutenant-Governor Collins, the founder of Hobart}, Hobart, W.E. Fuller, 1929, 1-3.

Another priest, Thomas Hobbes Scott, Australia’s first and very controversial Archdeacon, reveals another facet of colonial religion and life - the potential for the use and abuse of ecclesiastical power. Ransome Wyatt, whose work is discussed later, related part of Scott’s story in *A Wine Merchant In Gaiters*. Kelvin Grose also wrote on Scott but only in respect of his coming to the colony. There is a great deal more about him that could be revealed.

Generally, arising from their pivotal role in policy formation, it has been the bishops who have attracted most historical interest. William Grant Broughton and Augustus Short are two of the earliest. F.T. Whitington analysed Broughton’s life and times in his work, *William Grant Broughton, Bishop of Australia*. More recently, G.P. Shaw, in 1978, published his work, *Patriarch and Patriot, William Grant Broughton 1788-1853: Colonial Statesman and Ecclesiastic*. Whitington also wrote on Augustus Short. Another work on Short by Judith Brown was completed in 1974. William Tyrrell, the first Bishop of Newcastle, attracted firstly,
the attention of R.G. Boodle. Tyrrell’s incessant travels originating from his missionary zeal and his laying of a solid financial foundation for the Diocese of Newcastle, made him prominent as one of the greatest of the early episcopal leaders. Much later, Professor Elkin dealt with Tyrrell’s life and times but his work was by no means a comprehensive study. Time and space forbid a full discussion of other works depicting later men but a recent example shows what can be, and needs to be achieved. Peter Hempenstall’s masterful assessment of Ernest Burgmann, a former Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Canberra-Goulburn, sets the benchmark for modern biographical scholarship.

George Middleton, the subject of this thesis, is attractive because he sat uneasily under authority and exercised an independent spirit. He, like his English counterparts, had a strong notion of autonomy. In consequence he found himself censured and in conflict with Governor Darling, the Commandant at Newcastle and his Archdeacon. In their turn, these conflicts brought him under the censure of the Evangelical movement of the church by whom he was savagely attacked through the pages of *The Sydney Gazette* in 1826. More than anything, he is remembered for his absenteeism, an unjust charge which has long overshadowed his contribution to the development of the church in the Hunter Valley.

Only after leaving Parramatta did Middleton develop his ‘prodigal’ conduct. It is easy to understand why. He was a widower separated from his young son,

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George. Newcastle was remote from Sydney and Parramatta and lacked the social structure to which he was accustomed.\textsuperscript{37} He was, as were most clergy, ignored, if not rejected by the convicts. That he absented himself and returned to the Sydney district or to his glebe and land grant is, in the light of these realities, understandable. This thesis will establish an appropriate historical understanding of Middleton the man and priest and his role in the ecclesiastical and social history of New South Wales, of Newcastle and of the Hunter Valley.

Much concerning Middleton can never be known. According to his descendants, his private letters, diaries, sermons and other written material, along with photographs, were destroyed during the nineteenth century in one of the notorious Hunter River floods.\textsuperscript{38} Consequently, among the primary sources available, those found predominantly in the Archives Authority of New South Wales and the State Library of New South Wales rank highly. They are comprised of correspondence with the Colonial Secretaries, the Governors in the period 1820 to 1832 and with Archdeacon Scott. Further important sources are the parish registers for Christ Church, Newcastle, St James Church, Morpeth, St Marys Church, Maitland and St Peters Church, East Maitland. While supplying no insight into Middleton’s personality or his thinking, these service records tell where and when he performed his ministry. Particularly useful are the entries made after June 1827. They furnish insights into a period when other documentary evidence is sparse.

As the sole pastor in the Lower Hunter district from mid-1821 till mid-1827 one might expect that Middleton would feature in the diaries and letters of the early

\textsuperscript{36} David Harvey, \textit{Britain in the Early Nineteenth Century}, London, Batsford, 1978, 68.

\textsuperscript{38} Only Middleton’s signet ring and a silver soup spoon from the cutlery given to he and his wife, Sarah, at his second marriage are extant These items are in the possession of two of his descendants.
settlers. If he did, few references survive. Such as can be found are casual and meagre in number, providing only a glimmer of insight. They reveal only that he was, from time to time, involved pastorally in the life of certain families.

Of the other primary sources available, the Sydney newspapers hold high place. The *Australian*, *The Sydney Monitor* and especially *The Sydney Gazette* provide records of some of Middleton’s activities and of the attitudes existing towards the church and the clergy generally in the early 1800s. During the period 1820–1827 they noted contributions Middleton made to welfare organisations as well as some of his ministerial activities. Of particular value is *The Sydney Gazette* in its editions for 1826. The momentous detail published there proved invaluable. It unlocked virtually all the issues and controversies involving Middleton until 1827 and formed a solid foundation on which this thesis is grounded. In the light of the *Gazette*’s pages, the letters written to and from Middleton became highly significant, providing insights and opening up lines of research which otherwise might not have been identified. The newspapers also showed a social side to his activities. He was a member of at least one agricultural society and took part in political discussions, local activities and ecclesiastical functions.39 During the time he lived in Phoenix Park near the village of Morpeth in the lower Hunter Valley, and before his return to ministry in 1837, there are, in the *Maitland Mercury*, a number of references to his community involvement. Interestingly, apart from a death notice, neither this paper nor the Sydney newspapers mentioned him at the time of his death or afterwards.40

Additional primary material was the correspondence found in the files of the

39 *The Monitor*, 2 March 1827.

40 See *The Sydney Gazette*, 19 May 1848 and the *Maitland Mercury*, 17 May 1848.
Clergy and School Lands Corporation. In an attempt to find a more adequate means of financing the stipends of clergy and of opening schools, the home government set up the Clergy and School Lands Corporation in 1825. Its correspondence, particularly as it related to Middleton’s glebe at Paterson proved very useful. Middleton’s overall financial position and pastoral interests became quite evident.

Sources from England provided only minimal information. Middleton landed in Sydney aged twenty nine years. The story of those years is sketchy. Through the writer’s inability to travel to Britain, circumstances dictated that only information from Cambridge University, from the Australian Joint Copying Project and from Middleton’s descendants has come to light. Particularly helpful was a paper written by the late Dr Geoffrey Middleton who engaged English researchers to try to uncover his ancestor’s background.41

Among the secondary sources, a variety of genres cover the history of the early colony, one of which is the family reminiscence. Dean William Macquarie Cowper’s book on the life of his father, the Reverend William Cowper, of St Phillips Church, Sydney is one.42 Another, which purports to be a biography, is anything but. It lacks any resemblance to a true biography. Essentially it is an incomplete series of reminiscences, mostly centred on Governor Hunter. Of its sixty two pages, only the last ten have anything to do with Cowper.43

The Reverend Robert Cartwright, the second of Marsden’s recruits, arrived in 1810 and served in an illustrious career in the Sydney area until he undertook an

41 Private Papers of Dr Geoffrey Middleton, unpublished. A copy is in the files of the writer.
itinerant ministry to the southern districts of New South Wales. Although not a controversial man, his story reveals his personal zeal and diligence and tells much about European penetration into new districts. Descendants of Cartwright include him as the subject of a very short chapter in a family history but the material is almost entirely drawn from official correspondence found in the Mitchell Library in Sydney.44

Another of the genres is the ‘mini-biography’ dealing with selected aspects of a person’s life. Previously mentioned is the work of Ransome Wyatt on Thomas Hobbes Scott. Wyatt’s work covers Scott’s Australian experience but omitted much of his life before 1819 and after 1831 when he returned to his parish of Whitfield in Yorkshire. That such a prominent figure has been overlooked is indeed curious.45

Secondary sources involving Middleton are very scarce. Few family reminiscences have been written and authors contemporary with Middleton or who wrote soon after his time, deal mostly with broad issues. When the church is mentioned it is in respect of policy and development. Few, if any individuals are treated in any depth. John Dunmore Lang mentions some, but mostly with reference to his personal relations or opinions and not on a wider basis. I.O. Balfour, Sir William Burton, Peter Cunningham, Robert Dawson, F. Eldershaw, W.C. Wentworth and H.W. Haygarth all present fascinating insights into the state of the colony, the church and people but rarely touch on ecclesiastical personalities.46

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44 For Robert Cartwright see Edward W. Northwood, Defend the Fold: Cartwright Family History, Star Printery, Erskinville, N.S.W., 1984, 21-36. Much of the material on Cartwright is sourced from documents in the State Library of New South Wales. Little is original.


46 John Dunmore Lang, An Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales, Both as a Penal Settlement and as a British Colony, London, Cochrane and M'Crone, 1834, J.O Balfour, A Sketch of
In the later and broader histories of Australia one would not expect to find mention of clergy unless they made significant inputs into the national development. C.M.H. Clark and Ken Inglis are two writers representative of this genre. Clarke’s work is interested in the broad sweep of Australian history and its major themes and so writes little on the individual clergy. They are outside its scope. Inglis mentions Scott and Broughton but says nothing of Cowper or Cartwright or any of their colleagues. Another who covers the broad sweep of Australian history is Robert Hughes and he, too, fails to mention any clergy other than those whose reputations loom large and who are pertinent to his thesis.

Among authors with particular ecclesiastical interests are writers such as E.C. Rowland who mentions Middleton only in the context of Newcastle and his resignation but says little else. Jean Woolmington in her book, Religion in Early Australia. The Problem of Church and State, might have been expected to include

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50 E.C. Rowland, A Century of the English Church in N.S.W., Macarthur Press, Parramatta, 1948, 78.
work on the relations between the individual clergy and those in the government but little is revealed.\textsuperscript{51} J.D. Bollen is another in whose work there is little of Middleton.\textsuperscript{52} Tricia Blombery in her opus, \textit{The Anglicans In Australia}, writing some twenty three years later, fails to analyse in greater detail as well. While mentioning Johnson and Marsden as being mostly concerned, in the early days of settlement, with the status of the church, she makes no mention of later clergy.\textsuperscript{53} Stephen Judd and Kenneth Cable might have been expected to treat Middleton with at least the same detail as is given to his contemporaries but they fail to mention him in the body of their work. In \textit{Sydney Anglicans} he is relegated to their footnotes and to their Appendix.\textsuperscript{54} Marcus Loane in his work on the colonial church comments on him in a disapproving manner, mentioning specifically his interest in agriculture.\textsuperscript{55}

In 1962 Ross Border presented a detailed analysis of the constitution of the church but wrote nothing of Middleton nor any of his contemporaries with the exception of Scott.\textsuperscript{56} As Middleton had little, if anything, to do with the specifics of Border’s analysis, his omission is easily explained. Alan Grocott presents by far the

\begin{small}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Jean Woolmington, \textit{Religion In EarlyAustralia. The Problem of Church and State}, Stanmore, N.S.W., Cassell, Australia, 1976.
\item Stephen Judd, & Kenneth Cable, \textit{Sydney Anglicans}, Anglican Information Office, Sydney, N.S.W., 1987, 17, 351.
\end{enumerate}
\end{small}
most detailed assessment of the colonial church and individual clergy.\textsuperscript{57} Insofar as Middleton is concerned, Grocott is highly condemnatory. His judgement is based on Middleton’s actions, actions which, like others of Middleton’s time and ever since, he made no effort to understand.

Quite surprisingly, historians and others writing specifically on the Hunter Valley also make little mention of Middleton or the clergy who followed him. Middleton in particular, played a significant role in the lives of the very early settlers, not only by his pastoral ministry, but also through his knowledge of the district, yet he rates little mention except in the works of Professor Elkin. Even there, the accuracy of some statements has to be tested against the historical records. Elkin tends to be more hagiographical than historical.\textsuperscript{58} Dulcie Hartley, a keen student of Hunter Valley history, might be expected to cover Middleton in some depth. Regrettably, in her work, \textit{Men of Their Time: Pioneers of the Hunter River}, she makes no mention of him. In another work, \textit{Settlers of the Big Swamps} he rates but a few lines concerning his ministerial function involving a convict, Barbara Styles.\textsuperscript{59} Judy White in \textit{Tocal}, says only of him that he was a member of the Agricultural Society of New South Wales and the Paterson Farmers’ Club.\textsuperscript{60} In \textit{Dawn In The Valley}, a work purporting to be a detailed insight into the early history of the Hunter Valley, Walter Allan Wood also makes only passing reference.\textsuperscript{61} A.C. Archer’s \textit{The

\textsuperscript{57} Allan Grocott, \textit{Convicts, Clergymen and Convicts. Attitudes of Convicts and Ex-convicts towards the Churches and the Clergy in New South Wales from 1788-1851}, 1980.

\textsuperscript{58} A.P.Elkin, \textit{The Diocese of Newcastle. A History of the Diocese of Newcastle, N.S.W., Australia}, 31.


Settlement of the Paterson District also makes only casual reference yet, Middleton was one of the very first to take up land in the Paterson district, firstly in his glebe and later in his land grant.  

For those writing specifically of Newcastle, the story is no different. Dan O’Donnell mentions Middleton only incidentally. Paul Robertson in his work on the Evangelical clergy of early Newcastle and the Hunter Valley mentions Middleton but falls into at least two traps. He has Middleton returning to England in 1822 and then meeting his future wife on the return trip. Middleton never returned to England even though he applied to do so. Secondly, he conjectures as to Bishop Broughton’s allowing Middleton to operate from his home at Phoenix Park. There is no evidence to support his premise. Of all the authors, James Waddell in his book, A History of St Peters Church, East Maitland, is the only one who attempts to discuss Middleton in the context of all his activities and not just those which drew the criticism of his contemporaries. His thumb-nail sketch of Middleton is the only comprehensive and most accurate outline of his activities so far written.

The question arising out of this analysis is, ‘Why then is so little written about the clergy generally in the general and ecclesiastical histories and about Middleton in the local histories’? A number of suggestions spring to mind. He was subjected to trenchant criticism and in the mind of many, unworthy of the position he

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64 Paul Robertson, Proclaiming Unsearchable Riches, Hertfordshire, Gracewing Fowler Wright Books, 1996.
65 This issue is dealt with in a later chapter.
66 James Waddell, A History of St Peters Church, East Maitland, Townsville, Qld, Image Print, 1996.
held. Consequently he is better relegated to obscurity rather than to, in their terms, be allowed to besmirch the story of the church. He does not easily fit into their theses. For others, knowing only of his alleged absenteeism, there is nothing else to add.

Essential to an understanding of Middleton is his background within the English scene and later within the Australian context. These areas are the subject of Chapter One. In Chapter Two Middleton is discussed in relation to his early life, his decision to emigrate, his journey and arrival, his time in Parramatta and his appointment to Newcastle. Chapter Three then examines Middleton in the context of his ministry in the Hunter Valley and his relationships with the people he encountered, namely Brevet Major Morisset, Archdeacon Scott and the convicts assigned to him. Also included here is an analysis of his relationship with the Aboriginal people. Because Middleton’s dealings with the establishment gave rise to all the controversy surrounding him, Chapter Four examines in detail his falling out with Major Morisset and with Thomas Scott, his Archdeacon. The latter conflict resulted in his resignation. Also analysed is his relationship with the Evangelical wing of the church as expressed through the pages of the *The Sydney Gazette*. In Chapter Five there is an analysis of clergy finances in which Middleton’s finances are investigated and compared with those of his clergy colleagues. Chapter Six examines Middleton’s life after he resigned from the ministry in 1827 and his subsequent return to ministry until the time of his early death in 1848.
Chapter 1.

Englishman, Educator and Emigrant.

As the industrial revolution spread across Britain and Europe, George Middleton lived out his formative and early adult years. As changes took place they affected the economic, political and the ecclesiastical spheres and brought about social changes, a notable one of which was that of a rising middle class. Those who were well-positioned to benefit from the burgeoning commerce and industry of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries began to seek the advantages it could bring. In England, the traditional land-based economy was giving way to a cash-oriented economy brought on by the development of trade and industry. Even so, the basis of much wealth in Middleton’s time was still land, and power belonged to property and inherited position. Once arrived in New South Wales, Middleton showed that he was one influenced by this reality and was prepared to take advantage of what could be had and achieved in a colony with vast tracts land available for distribution among the settlers. He looked to the attainment of wealth and prestige which land ownership might bring. Middleton’s eagerness to acquire land and to join the ‘landed gentry’ in the new colony was obvious. He also sought to attain an additional status over and above that which his priesthood bestowed.

Theological change was also afoot. The Evangelical Revival had begun but had not yet overtaken the prevailing theology of Latitudinarianism. Even though

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John Walsh, Colin Haydon and Stephen Taylor now question Latitudinarianism as a definition, it is still understood by the majority of people as a belief structure aimed at producing conformity within both the church and the individual by developing a spirit of tolerance and reasonableness in the interpretation of religious doctrine.\textsuperscript{68} In essence, it was an ecclesiastical form of \textit{laissez faire}. It reinforced the Biblical teaching that the individual should ‘do good unto others’ in the course of daily life.\textsuperscript{69}

The most famous, and therefore the most influential sermon in the late seventeenth century, was Archbishop Tillotson’s on the text, ‘His Commandments Are Not Grievous’. Tillotson stressed that if a man applied the same principles he uses in business or commerce to his moral life, he could be sure of a place in Heaven.\textsuperscript{70} Such teaching ideally suited the protestant ethic that God rewards His people and the reward is evidenced in the extent of their wealth. What better teaching could there be for a man of Middleton’s disposition? It was in this climate that he studied at Cambridge and his desire to be successful was doubly reinforced by his environment. Whether intended or not, this teaching was, in effect, a very useful means of social control which put the church in a strong position across society. With its network of parishes across the country and by using their clergy to promote policy and in many instances, to administer justice, it maintained an important role in the social structure of the land. Further, the Church of England was the established Church and so ‘Throne and Altar’, in conjunction with other means of control, could work together


\textsuperscript{69} W.A.Craik, \textit{Jane Austen In Her Time}, London, Thomas Nelson and Son, 1969. 81.

to maintain peace and quietude.\textsuperscript{71} Middleton lived in this environment as he grew and later became caught up in it in his position as a chaplain and as a master of convicts. In New South Wales religion was again used as means of control of the convicts.\textsuperscript{72}

While good in theory, the reality was very different. In many English parishes the clergy were non-resident. Pluralism and absenteeism were rife. While holding several livings, many resided in only one and sometimes were not seen in the other(s) for long periods of time, if at all. In 1812, out of ten thousand incumbents, six thousand were non-resident.\textsuperscript{73} The Rev. John Prowse, Rector of Camerton in Somerset, then aged 72 years was one such non-resident. His net annual income of approximately £270 came from his glebe, his 30 acres in the Parish of Wellow and also from land at Woodburrow. The remainder derived from his Easter offerings and surplice fees, as well as from his tithes, both Great and Small.\textsuperscript{74} After he had paid his taxes and Curate’s stipend of £50, the remainder was at his disposal. To earn it Prowse did very light duties ‘only once a Sunday and occasional burials’.\textsuperscript{75} By modern standards, he was grossly under-employed. But before condemning these pluralists outright, it has to be remembered, as William Gibson points out, that the

\textsuperscript{71} Sheridan Gilley, \textit{A History Of Religion In Britain: Practice And Belief From Pre-Roman Times}, Oxford (England) Cambridge (Mass), Blackwell, 1994, 278.


\textsuperscript{73} Hammond et al, \textit{The Village Labourer}, 221.

\textsuperscript{74} John Skinner, (ed.), \textit{Journal Of A Somerset Rector, 1803-1834}, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1971, xi. Surplice Fees are those monies paid to the clergy for baptisms, weddings, funerals and other ministrations. In Australia the most prevalent custom today is that, since clergy are paid a regular stipend, the fees are put into a Discretionary fund to be used for the relief of the needy.

41st Canon of the Canons of 1604 allowed pluralism to ‘one of learning and very well able and sufficient to discharge his duties’. Moulded by such men, Middleton’s absenteeism, the charge laid against him from 1821 until 1827, can be easily understood, especially as other factors revealed later, put him under immense pressure.

Prowse was very fortunate. Many others, mostly impoverished curates, attempted to live on as little as £50 per annum. These men were unable to find a patron who could place them in ‘good’ livings. Peter Virgin points out that out of every hundred men ordained in late Georgian England, one fifth never held a benefice, one quarter died young and over one third took more than six years to find a living. A.D. Harvey summed up the situation best when he wrote ‘patronage was everything’. Without it a priest stood very little chance of attaining an incumbency. Middleton didn’t have such patronage and knowing his prospects in England were severely limited, his desire to minister in New South Wales, where entirely different circumstances prevailed, is obvious.

Patronage was in the hands of Bishops, Universities, landed gentry and others who had the right to appoint clergy to the parishes they controlled. Closely allied to patronage was nepotism, especially among the wealthy classes. Family connections enabled the aspiring priest to obtain advancement within the ecclesiastical structure, be it a living or promotion or both. Fathers could appoint sons, uncles could assist

79 David Harvey, Britain in the Early Nineteenth Century, London, Batsford, 1978, 67
nephews, friends could assist friends. Across the whole Church of England patronage and nepotism prevailed as a means by which a priest might obtain security and tenure.\textsuperscript{80} In fact, there was one body designed solely to assist this process. It was the \textit{Corporation Of The Sons Of The Clergy}.\textsuperscript{81}

At a higher level, nobles of the realm, the landed gentry, the universities and people such as politicians controlled the appointment of bishops. Eris O’Brien was correct when he described the Church of England as being an out-arm of the British aristocracy.\textsuperscript{82} Networking became an important element in the life of clergy with ambition but produced a negative effect. It took them away from their pastoral duties. Once in office, the network had to be maintained for whatever benefits might still accrue. Again, pastoral duties would be neglected. And this was true of most bishops as it was of any other clergy. If then, certain Bishops had little concern for pastoralia and lived lives suited to their own pursuits, why would not the clergy act similarly?

Closely allied to patronage was party membership. Conforming to a party’s philosophy and codes of practice gave the aspirant another rung on the promotional ladder. In the period under review two parties stand out. The most conservative was the Orthodox Party or liberal group. These were the ‘High Churchmen’.\textsuperscript{83} They claimed to be traditionally Anglican and looked to the great men of the past such as Hooker, and in lesser degree, to the Caroline Divines: Lancelot Andrewes, Jeremy

\textsuperscript{80} Sheridan Gilley, \textit{A History Of Religion In Britain: Practice And Belief From Pre-Roman Times}, Oxford (England) Cambridge (Mass), Blackwell, 292.


\textsuperscript{82} Eris O’Brien, \textit{The Foundation of Australia, 1786-1800, A Study in English Criminal Practice and Penal Colonization in the Eighteenth Century}, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1950, 44.

\textsuperscript{83} This term does not mean today what it meant in the period under review. It denoted those who had a ‘high’ theology of the church. In present times it has more to do with ceremonial and ritual.
Taylor and Bishop Ken. These were the safe men. Next in significance was the Evangelical party comprised of zealous and diligent men and women who believed they held the only key to the door of salvation. These were the immoderate men. Whether ‘safe’ or ‘fanatical’, party allegiances were detrimental to the church in two significant ways. Firstly they divided it and secondly, in their attempts to obtain incumbencies, aspiring incumbents sought out men of like mind and in so doing, further refined the process of patronage.

Yet another influence must be noted. Formal training for ordinands such as exists today was unknown in the period under review. Having obtained a degree from Cambridge or Oxford men offered for ordination. Provided they were able to obtain good references they then appeared at the place of ordination to be examined as to their suitability. If deemed a fit and proper person, the candidate then entered the cathedral or the bishop’s private chapel for the laying-on-of-hands. With so little attention paid to a man’s priestly formation and such casual acceptance of them for ordination by those who administered this sacrament, little condemnation can be levelled at those who were both the subjects and victims of the church’s policy.

As the seventeenth century rolled into the eighteenth, the liberals were the Church’s largest and most influential party. They were also the ones most concerned with mammon and their creature comforts. Clergy accommodation was always (and to some extent, still is) a challenge for the church. A rectory or vicarage might not always be in good repair and the incumbent either paid for the necessary improvements or went without them and lived as best he could. Protest often brought on great disfavour because no matter how bad, the homes, with the exception of that

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85 L.E. Elliott-Binns, Religion in the Victorian Era, 42.
of the Squire, were almost always much grander than those of their parishioners. Middleton found himself caught in such a situation when he moved to Newcastle.

Another feature of English church life was that the Rectors or Vicars, next to the landowner, occupied the most influential place in rural life, hence the government’s desire to use them for political ends. Their duties were Sunday services (usually two), one of which had a sermon. On weekdays they were obliged to pray the Morning and Evening Prayer services and to observe saints days, but this was not strictly followed. During Lent they catechised the youth of the parish. They also visited the sick in times of ‘extremis’ and sometimes took the sacrament to them. But they also aligned themselves with the wealthy and noble of the land. The effect was to demean them in the eyes of the laity. Jane Austen, a daughter of the rectory, had a wide and insightful knowledge of clergy and reflected much common opinion. In Pride and Prejudice she portrayed the Reverend Mr Collins, Rector of Hunsford, as a self-interested and insensitive panderer to his patron. At the same time she also portrayed the universally recognised necessity for good connections. That they were important is also evidenced in the example of a Curate of Pentridge. In an 1817 address to those mourning a man hanged for arson, he declared the man had been murdered. The dead man was also supposed to have given shelter to one of the Derby rioters or traitors. Because of his opinions the Curate was described as one ‘of the lowest orders of the clergymen, uneducated, of vulgar habits and low connections’.

Many clergy performed little pastoral work and that which they carried out

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86 W.A. Craik, Jane Austen In Her Time, 79.
was often discharged only out of necessity. With little pressure exerted by episcopal authorities to compel them to apply themselves more than they wished, incumbency, for those so inclined, could mean living a life of ease and gentility with little concept of a ministry of self-sacrifice and service. 88

For the laity, one demand for their self-sacrifice and service galled above most things. The requirement to pay tithes stood out as the most provocative. They were compelled to provide one tenth of their produce to the incumbent of their parish. Derived from the Bible, this practice copied that of the people of Israel who were, by Divine command, to set apart one tenth of their produce for use by the Priests and Levites who served at the Tent of Meeting and after its construction, in the Temple in Jerusalem. 89 That the tithe was generally unpopular can be seen from the following threat which appeared as part of a letter in the London Times.

We have inquired into your tithes, and we have determined to set fire to you in your bed if you do not lower them….You and your daughter shall be burned in your beds… 90

By the end of the eighteenth century and during the first three decades of the nineteenth, the Church in England began to experience massive criticism both from within and without. The Wesley brothers, John and Charles, had at first attempted to reform the theology and practice of the Church of England but in the end found they could not. Forced from the church, John led a breakaway movement in 1739. Others sought to revive the Evangelical thrust of theology and practice, founding their lives

90 The London Times, 22 December 1830 in Douglas Hay et al, Albion’s Fatal Tree, 316.
They formed themselves into groups, the most noteworthy after 1792 being Charles Venn and the Clapham Sect. Over time their influence grew and penetrated all levels of society both in England and abroad. Eventually they effected change and became a potent social and religious force.

It was from this background and with these influences that clergy came to the ordained ministry in the United Kingdom. But when those who left England to serve as chaplains arrived in Australia, they found a different world altogether. In the period under review, the colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land were military establishments under the control of the Governor in Sydney and the Lieutenant Governor in Hobart. The Governors’ powers over the people, including the clergy, was total. In theory, nothing could be done without their authorisation. For example, movement around the colony and the celebration of marriages could be undertaken only with specific written permission. At the same time, there was no ecclesiastical authority with specific oversight of the priests. Samuel Marsden, as the senior chaplain, had no real sway to direct the clergy. Only with the appointment of Archdeacon Scott in 1825 did change begin. Even so, Scott had to report all his decisions for the Governor’s approval.

While not legally established, the church in New South Wales was given the same rights, privileges and practices as in England. It also had the same expectations placed upon it. This concept would be transferred to the antipodes when as J.D. Bollen suggests, the English church perpetuated itself by a coalescing of the ties

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93 Instances of this are given later in the thesis.
between the mother country and the colonies. In 1820, for example, all government officials participated in the obsequies for the death of King George III. The occasion was solemnly observed when a Government and General Order required the Clergy and Magistrates along with the principal inhabitants,

To attend at Government House, Sydney, at the hour of eleven in the forenoon of Sunday next in deep mourning to form a solemn procession to the Church in humiliation on the demise of the late King George III of Blessed Memory - and to attend in like manner at Government House, Sydney, on Monday next at twelve noon to join in the ceremony there of publishing and proclaiming the High and mighty Prince George Prince of Wales and afterwards to proceed with the constituted authorities through the form in making further proclamation thereof.

The link between the church and the establishment is evidenced further in respect to the changes necessitated in the church’s liturgy because of the King’s death. His name was to be removed in the Prayer Book from all prayers for the royal family and the name of the new King was to be inserted, notice being received in a letter dated 15th August. Prior to this, these same officials had been required to attend Government House on 20 July in order to participate in ‘mourning and procession’. Four days later they were required to sign the Oath of Allegiance to the new king, a further indication that the church was regarded as established in the colony as it was in England.

Even so, there were noticeable differences in the manner in which

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95 Lachlan Macquarie, ‘General and Government Order, 20 July 1820’, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, ML, CY Reel 6007, 4/3052, 137,138. (FM4 10429)
96 Campbell to all Clergy - Circular Letter, 15 August 1820, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, ML, Reel 6007, 4/3502, 199.
97 Circular Letter from the Colonial Secretary 20 July 1827, ML, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, ML, Reel 6007, 4/3502, 137-138.
appointments of clergy were made. Patronage and nepotism were out of the question because all appointments, when and if men could be garnered to come to the antipodes, were made in London. Party allegiances meant little at first but with the passage of time came to be more significant. A desperate shortage of ordained men spread over large distances while endeavouring to minister to a growing population decreed there was too much to accomplish to be caught up in internecine squabbles. Distance also determined that the early clergy probably saw each other infrequently and in some instances, perhaps not at all. In an attempt to explain the immensity of the task he and the other clergy faced, William Grant Broughton, who succeeded Scott as Archdeacon, wrote to a friend in England,

I cannot give you a better idea of the size of this archdeaconry than by asking you to think of an archdeaconry having one church in St Alban’s, another in Denmark, another at Constantinople with the Bishop at Calcutta, hardly more distant from England than from many parts of the Archdeaconry in Australia, for indeed the case is, in many ways, similar.99

Distance determined other factors, too. By virtue of the size of their parishes, clergy absenteeism was a constant familiar for family and parishioners. In England, the size of a parish had no effect on absenteeism. There, as has been shown, it was brought on, for the most part, by pluralism. In Australia other factors prevailed. Unable to be in two places at once, a priest might find himself on a circuit of services away from his base. But there could also be deliberate absenteeism, the choice made by the incumbent, for whatever reason, simply to not ‘be there’. For some it raised questions of conflict between pastoral and other duties and for others became a

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99 Broughton to S.P.G., in William Grant Broughton, Bishop of Australia, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1936, 35.
strong source of criticism, especially if linked to their glebes.¹⁰⁰

Glebes were an important feature of English rural life. In times before regular giving to the church became commonplace, they were the clergyman’s means of support. In medieval times a parcel of land was set aside for the parson to grow his food and both the practice and the land remained attached to the parish as it passed into the hands of each new incumbent. Often, the incumbent farmed it himself or paid labourers to work it. Generally the returns were good and so the glebe was a valuable asset and source of income. In Australia, especially at the beginning of settlement, glebes were even more essential to survival than in England. Richard Johnson and Samuel Marsden both received land and had no choice other than to make it productive. With little other food apart from what came on the First and Second Fleets it was essential that everyone grew what crops they could and grazed livestock. Failure to participate meant starvation. From that time and until 1827, the practice of distributing land to clergy was retained even though the urgency for food production diminished. The accepted wisdom for continuing the practice was that the stipend paid to clergy was insufficient to support their families or to cover the charitable demands made on them. Born of necessity and good intention, the glebes, for most of the clergy, unlike their British colleagues, were more a burden than a boon. Often on poor quality land they were distant from the parsonage and required travelling time and constant supervision of servants and stock. Time spent supervising meant less time in the parish and opened the possibility of charges of laxity in the performance of duty.

Stipends also mirrored the English scene. The inequality of stipends and

¹⁰⁰ This aspect of Middleton’s behaviour is discussed later in the thesis.
emoluments supplied to the clergy was as rife in Australia as it was in England. Failure to provide adequate housing, one of the emoluments, and in some instances, no housing at all, caused one priest, Benjamin Vale, to return to England embittered by his colonial experience.\footnote{Benjamin Vale arrived in 1814 and departed for England in 1816.} Robert Cartwright, another victim, suffered immense financial hardship resulting from the inadequacy of his housing.

Transport across the countryside engendered another inequality. Town clergy such as those in Sydney and Hobart found less need for transport in their comparatively small parishes. For those flung further afield it was a different story altogether. Unable to walk the immense distances they were compelled to cover, they needed one or more horses. But in the foundling colony and for many years afterwards, horses were scarce and consequently, expensive, and for some clergy, virtually out of reach. And no matter by what means they travelled, potential dangers had to be taken into account each time they set out. Accident or illness, hostile Aborigines, escaped convicts and bushrangers frequented remote settlements. As well, the weather, the landscape and some native fauna could all endanger the traveller.

Finally, there was the loneliness and isolation of separation from extended family. Cut off by distance and slow and poor communication with the home country, clergy and their families lost close contact with friends and relatives. Then, often distanced from immediate family by the demands of the ministry and its travel, the priests endured a great deal of both personal sacrifice and professional separation. In England, such was not the case. Nor in England were the clergy far from those who could advise them on policy and practice. But in Australia there was no recourse
to nearby advisers and so decisions were made ‘on the run’ as new situations arose.

Middleton was not beyond the reach of all these influences. Throughout his early years in New South Wales he displayed many of the characteristics common to the English clergy of his time. He could and did absent himself from his post as he saw fit. He enjoyed the company and the confidence of the wealthy, and especially the landed settlers, the ‘squire’ equivalents within the colony. In his early years he made good use of his glebe and like many of his counterparts in England, became a good judge of sheep and cattle. He acquired wealth but became victim to those who criticised him as being too concerned with mammon. To his cost, he came to realise that he also ought to have networked with those around him. Had he done so, his story might have followed a vastly different path.
Chapter 2.

Parramatta, Priesthood and the Parson.

On 27 January 1820 and at the end of a three and a half month voyage, Middleton and his entourage stepped onto the wharf in Sydney Cove. Two days later Governor Macquarie signed an order announcing his ‘appointment, arrival and destination under this Government until further orders’.  He became an Assistant Chaplain in Sydney. Within a short time he was directed to work as locum at Parramatta relieving the Reverend Samuel Marsden who had received permission to travel to New Zealand. He continued as Marsden’s substitute (in which he signed himself as ‘Officiating Chaplain, not ‘Assistant Chaplain’) until Marsden returned some time in November. Before departing for New Zealand, Marsden wrote to Dr Howley, the Bishop of London, Middleton’s ordaining bishop. The letter contained a number of matters and it also praised Middleton. No doubt, Howley would have felt very satisfied. But had Marsden not gone overseas, he may not have been so fulsome in his praise. By June of 1820 Middleton began to exhibit several personality traits which did not go unnoticed. The first was that he was not an administrator. In the words of the Prayer Book, ‘he left undone those things which he ought to have done’. When asked to forward certain missing returns for St Johns and

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102 Campbell to Middleton, 31 January, 1820 ML, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence 1788 – 1825, CY Reel 6007, 4/3501, 220.

the other churches under his care, he experienced a problem that continued throughout his first period in ministry up until 1827: delay in the forwarding of statistical and other returns to the appropriate authority. The reason is easily explained. He was averse to paper-work. He also found difficulty in submitting to those in authority. If he believed himself wronged, he resisted his superiors, both lay and clerical. But he paid a price. By the end of 1826 he was isolated and virtually abandoned by those whose good opinion he needed. During 1820, the year he served at Parramatta, there is record only of his laxity in forwarding statistical returns required by the Colonial Office. In 1821 he moved to Newcastle and reacted to what he saw. His response brought on serious problems for him which would have ramifications beyond anything he could have imagined. Only a few months after his arrival he criticised the Commandant, Brevet-Major James Morisset, for conduct and attitudes which he saw as inconsistent with Christian morality. In similar vein, he later drew criticism from the colony’s increasingly vocal Evangelicals who regarded him as a very poor pastor indeed. Brian Dickey says of them that they were powerful, creative, energetic and keen to transform society. They viewed Middleton as anything but. Ultimately they became the most powerful ecclesiastical group in England, one which Walsh, Haydon and Taylor described as being ‘a considerable phalanx’. From 1788 onwards they grew in influence in Australia and it is by their standards Middleton has been judged ever since. They used their power and energy to bring down a man who, in their view, was not transforming society. To them a chaplain should be one who would


converse with the prisoners, admonish the profligate, exhort the thoughtless, comfort the sick, and make known to the condemned that mercy which is revealed in the Gospel.\footnote{106}

Middleton, in their view, stood outside this definition. To them he was disinterested in the prisoners, profligate in his quest for wealth and one who, while quick to admonish, seemed slow to exhort. That he comforted the sick is known from his correspondence but as for making known the Divine Mercy to others, they believed he was more in need of it himself. The result is an unjust and immoderate assessment of his performance and personality. That he was not an Evangelical is beyond doubt. Roland Hassall, a former south seas missionary, likened him to Ephraim’s cake ‘that wanted turning’.\footnote{107} Lancelot Threlkeld, the missionary to the Awabakal people, when newly arrived in Newcastle, wrote about Middleton on 15 January 1825 and added the rider ‘though not Evangelical’.\footnote{108} Walter Lawry wrote:

A young widowed clergyman has lately arrived in the colony whose name is Middleton. I hear he is a great gambler. Mr Marsden thinks him a stranger to religion, but well read.\footnote{109}

But, judge him as they did, Middleton succeeded where Marsden and most others failed. He was one man of whom it could not be said, as Stuart Piggin alluded, that

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\item \footnote{106}{James Colwell, *The Illustrated History of Methodism : Australia, 1812 to 1855, New South Wales and Polynesia, 1856 to 1902 : with special chapters on the discovery and settlement of Australia leading up to Methodist Union*, Sydney, William Brooks & Co., 1904, 5.}
\item \footnote{107}{Roland Hassal to Thomas Hassall, 23 February 1820, *Hassall Correspondence*, ML, Vol. 4, A1667/4, 126. The reference come from the prophet Hosea, Chapter 7, verse 8. Ephraim is an ancient name for Israel and the verse implies that the nation is incomplete and not pure because it “mixes...with the peoples”.}
\item \footnote{108}{Neil Gunson, (ed.), *Australian Reminiscences & Papers of L.E. Threlkeld, Missionary to the Aborigines, 1824-1859*, Canberra, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1974, 85. Entry for 15 January 1825.}
\item \footnote{109}{Lawry to Hassall, 15 February 1820, ML, *Hassall Correspondence*, CY Reel 913, A1677/2, 259.}
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‘Aboriginal people were largely ignored by the church’. To the Newcastle tribespeople, Middleton was a great favourite. To a majority of colonists he may have been just the opposite because he was an exception. Malcolm Prentis pointed out that the Europeans failed to recognise the interdependence and closely woven ties which characterised Aboriginal society. Middleton, unlike the majority, appears to have been more perceptive. But like so many, he witnessed their fate at the hands of the white ‘civilisation’ but was unable to make much difference to their plight.

As Middleton attended Cambridge University it is entirely probable that in theology he was a ‘High Churchman’, this being the prevailing school of thought during the years of his enrolment. High Churchmen believed in moral piety rather than the Evangelical teaching of a sense of sin and a need for God’s grace to overcome the total depravity of humankind. This, then, explains why, in 1826, he became the object of attack from the increasingly predominant Evangelical party. Of his manner of preaching the Word or of his administration of the Sacraments little is known. Further obscuring the picture are the failures of his contemporaries and later commentators fail to verify much of what they said and wrote about him. Almost without exception they have merely repeated previous writers without questioning authenticity.

113 Graeme Griffin, *They Came To Care. Pastoral Ministry In Colonial Australia*, Melbourne, Joint Board of Religious Education, 1993, 79.
When he landed in Sydney Middleton was twenty nine years old. The story of those twenty nine years is hard to tell because material is scarce. Only information from Cambridge University, from the Australian Joint Copying Project and from Middleton’s descendants has come to light. Particularly helpful was a paper written by the late Dr Geoffrey Middleton, a direct descendant. He engaged English researchers to try to uncover his ancestor’s background and was told that George’s father was a Charles Middleton of Middlesex but specific information on him is unavailable. At that time there were others named Charles Middleton who might easily have been his parent. Searches made for Wills failed to connect them to George but eventually there came to light a Charles Middleton who married Mary Powell and had children whom they named Charles, George Alexander, Osmond and Agnes. Dr Middleton was convinced that George Alexander was the George on which this thesis centres.\textsuperscript{116} Supporting this is the fact that several of George’s own children bore these same names. Naming one’s children after close relatives was a traditional practice over many generations. This Charles was an architectural draftsman and engraver who had been appointed architect to George III. He was a man of talent. Beside designing country residences and gardens he published four professional works. In 1779 he gained the silver medal of the Royal Academy of Arts in London for the best drawing of the tower and spire of S. Mary-le-Bow Church, London. He also appears to have superintended some repairs there in 1788. In that same year he published Plans etc. and specifications for the House of Correction in

\textsuperscript{116} Geoffrey Middleton, Tucker-Middleton Family History, undated, 6. This is an unpublished document, a copy of which is in the writer’s possession.
Coldbath Fields which establishment opened in 1792.\textsuperscript{117} Such a man would have accumulated wealth from this prestigious office and this raises a question as to why, if George was his son, he went to Cambridge as a ‘sizar’.\textsuperscript{118} This Charles Middleton died ‘about 1818’ and it is interesting to note that in 1819 a Charles Middleton died just a short time before George was ordained and set sail for Sydney. This is the man thought by Dr Geoffrey Middleton to be George’s father.\textsuperscript{119} If this is the case, George would have inherited some of his father’s estate and it would explain how he came to Sydney and could manifest characteristics of wealth.

Persistent among the Middleton descendants has been a suggestion that he was the illegitimate son of the then Prince Regent and that he had a sister who was a lady-in-waiting to one of the the Royal Princesses. Also persistent was the belief that, if Middleton was not actually an illegitimate son, there was a connection through his natural father to the personal chaplain to the Prince Regent. It was also held that his father was brother to the Bishop of Calcutta, that he was well connected with friends at court and generally speaking, ‘a pretty important fellow’.\textsuperscript{120} How these theories originated is not known but the most likely suggestion is that his supposed father and the ship which brought him to Australia, the \textit{Prince Regent}, have been confused. No substance for these ideas has been found.

\textsuperscript{117} Samuel Redgrave, \textit{A Dictionary of Artists of the English School, Painters, Sculptors, Architects, Engravers and Ornamentists, with Notices of Their Lives and Work}. Bath (Somerset), Kingsmead Reprints, 1970. \textit{Edition New edition.}, revised to the present date, (revised by Frances M. Redgrave), 46

\textsuperscript{118} Sizars or ‘Bishops boys’ were one of four students benefiting from a foundation instituted in 1623 by Bishop Williams at the time he was Dean of Westminster. In the University of Cambridge and at Trinity College, Dublin, a sizar was an undergraduate member admitted under this designation and who received an allowance from the College to enable him to study. The name probably indicates that the person so admitted received free ‘sizes’ or fees. Formerly sizars performed certain duties now discharged by the college employees.


\textsuperscript{120} Geoffrey Middleton, \textit{Tucker-Middleton Family History}, 3.
St Johns College, Cambridge, provided copies of documents for both Middleton’s personal and educational records. They reveal that he was born 31 August 1791 and was educated in the Westminster School from where in March 1809, he proceeded to St Johns College, as a ‘sizar’ or ‘bishop’s boy’.121 That Middleton held this scholarship signifies that his family was not sufficiently wealthy to send their son to University from their own resources. According to Dr Middleton he might serve at table and carry dinners and clean boots or such like, and be given fees or tuition for those services. It was a pretty awful life, a bit like a perpetual fag and pretty hard to take.122 Cambridge University Sources also tell that sizars wore purple gowns to distinguish them from other students and this must have influenced young George deeply. He and others like him would have been obvious figures of discrimination based on family lineage and wealth. One can only imagine some of the treatment that may have been meted out to them. With little other recourse to an occupation which might lead to fame and fortune, it is entirely possible that Middleton entered the ministry as the one acceptable career that might engender wealth and social acceptance.123 Some time after leaving Cambridge he applied for a reference, but only one man could remember him clearly. Evidently he was a nice, pleasant, studious and quiet character who left little impression.124 It may be that his conduct was a result of the treatment he received. Bishop Williams’ foundation was never funded adequately and living with a financially constrained background in a university containing many affluent students, it is entirely feasible that Middleton resolved, as soon as was

123 B.G. Worrall, The Making of the Modern Church, 2.

45
possible, to make his fortune in later life. If so, this is the obvious explanation for his interest and involvement with his cattle, his farming, his glebe, his 2000 acres and the income he derived from them.

At Cambridge Middleton studied classics and the College examination books for 1810 and 1812 show that he was in the third and lowest class in those years in the College examinations. 125 This level of attainment may explain why he failed to take his degree and so eliminated any possibility of ordination for work in the Church in England.126 After leaving Cambridge he became a private tutor at Holland House in London. Later he returned to his old school as a teacher. It was from there that he obtained the referees for his ordination. On 17 March 1817, at the age of 25, he married Mary Hull, a minor, in St Marys Church, Lambeth and a little over a year later their son George was born. Mary died three months after the birth and was buried on 30 June 1819 from the church in which she and George were married and from which he proceeded to ordination.127 Mary’s cause of death is not stated.

Middleton came highly recommended to the Bishop of London, his ordaining bishop. The Reverend J. Wood, Master of St Johns College, writing to him stated that Middleton’s conduct ‘was such as I warmly approved’.128 All three of his clergy referees commended him as well and wrote:

We therefore whose names are attached hereunto subscribed do certify that the said George Middleton having been personally known

125 Malcolm Underwood to the writer, 8 September 1997. Email in writer’s possession.
126 At that period in its history, the English Church demanded an M.A. from either Oxford or Cambridge Universities as a prerequisite for ordination.
127 The above information is taken from unpublished research commissioned in England by the late Dr Geoffrey Middleton, a copy of which is in the writer’s possession.
128 J. Wood to Bishop of London, undated, in unpublished papers of the late Dr Geoffry Middleton, copy in possession of the writer.
to us for the space of three years last past hath during that time lived piously, soberly and honestly and diligently applied himself to his studies nor hath he at any time, as far as we know or believe, held, written or taught anything contrary to the doctrine or the discipline of the United Church of England and Ireland. And moreover we believe him in our conscience to be a person worthy to be admitted to the sacred Orders of Deacon and Priest. 129

From this letter it appears that Middleton was studying with a view to ordination with these men as his mentors and their credentials were impeccable. William Page was the Headmaster of the Westminster School and Rector of Quainton in Buckinghamshire, Edward Smedley was Rector of Powderham in Devon within the Diocese of Exeter and D’Arcy Haggitt was curate of St Johns, Westminster and Vicar of Branxton in Northumberland within the Diocese of Durham. 130 D’Arcy Haggitt also was highly esteemed. The Bishop of Durham described him as ‘a beneficed clergyman in my Diocese and worthy of it’. 131

If Middleton’s personal credentials were impeccable, the system of training for the ministry was not. As has been shown previously, no formal preparation existed. These men were unprepared except for what ministerial skills they could glean beforehand. 132 Whereas a degree from either Oxford or Cambridge was obligatory for ordination, theology was not necessarily part of the course. In consequence, a parish might have in it a man schooled in mathematics or the classics but with only minimal knowledge of the religious teachings he was supposed to promote. John Stoughton recorded that the Bishop of New York, while visiting

129 William Page, Edward Smedley and D’Arcy Haggitt to Bishop of London, 10 May 1819, in unpublished papers of the late Dr Geoffrey Middleton, copy in possession of the writer.
130 The above information is taken from unpublished research commissioned in England by the late Dr Geoffrey Middleton, a copy of which is in the writer’s possession.
131 The above information is taken from unpublished research commissioned in England by the late Dr Geoffrey Middleton, a copy of which is in the writer’s possession.
England in 1824, declared that whilst the English clergy were very good scholars, they were commonly ignorant of theology. He went on to add that he agreed with a suburban Rector concerning the country clergy ‘that they were characterised by depth of knowledge as to the flight of swallows and the habits of hedgehogs.\footnote{John Stoughton, \textit{Religion in England from 1800 to 1850. A History With a Postscript on Subsequent Events}, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1884, 9}

Middleton’s ordinations to both the Diaconate and the Priesthood raise fascinating questions. Why was it that he presented himself only weeks after the death of his wife, that his ordinations followed in rapid succession with what some might see as indecent haste and that he sailed for New South Wales soon after? On the day after Mary Middleton’s funeral, Parliament passed an Act allowing clergy without a degree to be ordained for service in the colonies. This opened the door for Middleton. Even so, he was limited in the work he could do. The Act stated without ambiguity that:

\begin{quote}
In every such case it shall be distinctly stated in the Letters of Ordination of every Person so admitted to Holy Orders, that He has been ordained for the Cure of Souls in His Majesty’s Foreign Service.
\end{quote}


Middleton’s ordination to the Diaconate took place in Fulham Palace, the residence of the Bishop of London, on 18 July 1818. The ordaining bishop was the Diocesan, Dr William Howley. Especially worth noting is the timing. It occurred just nineteen days after Mary’s death and eighteen days after the passing of the Act. His ordination to the Priesthood followed two weeks later on 1 August at the hands of Dr John Fisher, Bishop of Salisbury in Salisbury Cathedral. Fisher acted on Letters
Dismissory from the Bishop of London.\textsuperscript{135} The reason for the move from London to Salisbury is not known. The speed and the circumstances surrounding these ordinations are, to modern clergy, remarkable and raise several questions. Had George and Mary resolved on Middleton’s being ordained to serve abroad and planned this as their future? If so, it suggests that Middleton was deeply committed to his vocation and nothing would stand in his way, not even the death of his wife. Or, as she lay dying, did Mary insist that he proceed with their plan, part of which may also have been to provide a better future for their young son? On the other hand, it may be that the arrangements were so far matured that, irrespective of the circumstances prevailing, they could not be stopped. The only obstacle to their design was the anticipated Act of Parliament and it is obvious that Middleton was waiting for this to become law. When it did so on 1 July 1819, it copied the policy at that time applying to ordinations for the Church in Ireland. With the obstacle removed, Middleton was ordained and set sail for Sydney in October 1819 aboard the previously mentioned \textit{Prince Regent}, a convict transport ship. His son George and young George’s nanny accompanied him.\textsuperscript{136} Again, because of a dearth of sources, little is known of the role Middleton played on the journey out. Efforts to trace the ships log and the diaries of passengers and crew have been unsuccessful. The ship’s doctor, James Hunter, kept a \textit{Medical and Surgical Journal} in which neither Middleton’s name nor that of his son are mentioned and so it is assumed that

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\textsuperscript{135} Letters Dismissory are the permissions granted by one diocesan bishop to another bishop to ordain clergy on his behalf. The ordinations may take place in that bishops own diocese or in another, depending on which is the more convenient arrangement.

\textsuperscript{136} Dr Geoffrey Middleton, \textit{Middleton/Tucker Family History}, unpaged.
\end{flushright}
neither of the two Georges endured any health problems during the voyage.\textsuperscript{137} Nor does it appear that George senior was called on to perform much pastoral work.\textsuperscript{138}

According to the \textit{Journal}, no deaths occurred during the voyage and so he had no call on the funerary function of his professional services. If he exercised any priestly role it would have been to conduct Sunday services and perhaps to baptise the daughter born near the end of the voyage to the wife of Thomas Hughes of the 48\textsuperscript{th} Regiment.\textsuperscript{139}

Since the 1960’s in particular, the Christian churches in Australia have lost almost all the standing they once possessed. This is especially true of the Anglican Church. In years past its leaders spoke with force and determination on issues relating to the world in which they lived and they were heeded. In more recent times, the few who from time to time speak out, are generally ignored or if sufficiently controversial, become grist for the media mill. Consequently it is difficult for modern society in general to comprehend the significance of the role of the ordained minister in societies of earlier years. Middleton’s position in society was prominent and he had considerable influence. At the same time, his position was a two-edged sword. He came under close scrutiny. His every word and action, his social and professional contacts and his whereabouts at all times were under constant observation and woe betide him if he were weighed in the balance and found wanting. More especially was this so in the virtually closed society of early colonial New South Wales.

If it is true that one can tell a man by the company he keeps, Middleton’s

\textsuperscript{137} James Hunter, \textit{Medical and Surgical Journal of the ship Prince Regent between the 1\textsuperscript{st} September, 1819 and the 26\textsuperscript{th} February, 1820 during which time the Ship was employed in conveying Convicts to New South Wales}, NL, Adm 101 61, Joint Copying Project, unpaged.

\textsuperscript{138} James Hunter, \textit{Medical and Surgical Journal of the ship Prince Regent} unpaged.

\textsuperscript{139} James Hunter, \textit{Medical and Surgical Journal of the ship Prince Regent}, unpaged. The woman’s christian name is not given.
friendships clearly indicate his thinking, his character and his ambition. The Reverend Samuel Marsden had entrenched himself on his land and acquired considerable wealth by the time of Middleton’s arrival and was a very significant model for Middleton’s fiscal dreams for the future. Marsden, by 1820, was far from struggling financially, having accumulated large flocks and herds along with his crops. John Blaxland was another whom Middleton admired. In 1820 Middleton was appointed as *Locum* at Parramatta, while Samuel Marsden was in New Zealand. During that time Middleton and Blaxland became firm friends. Blaxland was a very successful businessman and when Middleton took up his appointment as chaplain to Newcastle in July 1821, Blaxland accompanied him. He had a salt works there. For six weeks they worked together on the glebe at Paterson or shared residence in the parsonage while in Newcastle. Blaxland’s *Journal* for that period is invaluable for the insights it gives into the priorities and daily life of the new Chaplain.

Middleton was also possessed of strong notions of propriety and his place and function in society. He looked out for his privileges and his material welfare. Letters of late 1821 and 1822 reveal clearly that when he felt his rights and benefits endangered, he was vociferous to say the least. In his dispute with Brevet Major Morisset, Commandant of the settlement at Newcastle, he left no-one in any doubt as to his stance. Morisset’s conduct, both private and public, came in for scathing denunciation. But even more revealing is the manner in which Middleton made his feelings known.

Government officials, of whom Middleton was one, were entitled to several benefits and he determined always to ensure he received those applicable to him. Believing the Parsonage to be inadequate for his needs, he requested that it be
improved. On another occasion he expressed outrage over his treatment at the hands of Morisset concerning the condition of a boat for his ministry. He objected to restrictions placed on him which prevented him from filling his larder and to benefit in the milling of his flour. At the same time, when thwarted in his aims, he displayed a tendency to harass. Requests designed to irritate and infuriate his antagonists were not uncommon. Outstanding among these is his request for an allocation of more land adjoining the parsonage, which clearly, was intended to annoy Morisset.

Now a thriving centre of commercial and industrial activity, Newcastle was, in 1804, because of its then remoteness from Sydney, founded as a place of secondary punishment for convicts. Prisoners sentenced there endured strict discipline and harsh penalties if they further transgressed. Such rigorous control suited Middleton’s outlook but at the same time affected his ability to minister to the felons. Either because of this stance or because of the convicts’ attitude towards those in positions of authority, Middleton performed only perfunctory ministry among them. Likewise, with his assigned convicts he could be, and was, as stern as any other master if he believed them deserving of their fate. The *Returns of Punishments* for Newcastle show that he caused several to be flogged when he believed their ‘crimes’ warranted such chastisement. He could also be as relentless in his pursuit of offenders in the same way as he could in the pursuit of his adversaries. James Williams, a convict who caused him no end of trouble discovered this to his cost. On the other hand, Middleton was compassionate towards convicts whom he felt were unjustly accused. His efforts to alleviate the condition of Barbara Styles were most commendable.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Middleton to Goulburn, 17 November 1823, *Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825*, ML, CY Reel 6067, 4/1809, 115.
So, too, were his efforts on behalf of the Aboriginal population of Newcastle and the surrounding regions. To them, Middleton was a great favourite.\textsuperscript{141} His knowledge of them as people and their tribal domain was extremely useful to the Reverend Lancelot Threlkeld, the renowned missionary to the Awabakal people. Middleton assisted him in locating the site for his first mission at what is now the suburb of Belmont on the eastern shore of Lake Macquarie.

That Middleton was able to participate in such events was undoubtedly due to his lack of family obligations. For the first two and a half years that he was in Newcastle Middleton remained unmarried. Then, on 17 February 1824, at the age of 33, he married Sarah Rose, aged 14, in St Luke’s Church, Liverpool.\textsuperscript{142} The witnesses to the nuptials were John and James Cobb who remained firm family friends for many years.\textsuperscript{143} To modern sensibilities the age difference is remarkable if not offensive or indecent, to colonial sensibilities, it was expedient, and especially for one such as Middleton, a priest. Under no circumstances could he marry a convict or emancipist woman. He had to choose from among those women who were free and at that time in the colony, and especially in the outlying districts, such women were not numerous.\textsuperscript{144} In subsequent years Sarah bore him thirteen children. Judging by his pronouncements and ministerial activities there can be no doubt that he prized the family as the core of Christian society. Even so, his son, born in 1818, did not accompany him to Newcastle, no doubt because of the nature of its population.

\textsuperscript{141} Windross and Ralston, \textit{Historical Records of Newcastle 1797-1897}, 11.
\textsuperscript{142} Registers of St Luke’s Church, Liverpool, N.S.W., Book II, 1823 – 1825.
\textsuperscript{143} Charles Middleton to Hugh Middleton, 4 October 1921, unpublished. Copy in the possession of the writer.
Mystery surrounds his son’s whereabouts until the time of his father’s marriage. Documents relating to Middleton’s time in Parramatta make only one reference to him and none exist relating to Newcastle.\textsuperscript{145} He appears not to have joined his father at any time before the marriage. If he were being cared for in Sydney his presence there would account for some of Middleton’s absences from Newcastle. When George and Sarah married, young George would have been seven years of age and it is then that he probably rejoined his father in the parsonage. The next time he appeared in his father’s story he was seventeen and living with him in Balmain, Sydney. Whilst holding strong views about the importance of family, Middleton did not necessarily value all members of the family equally. Of consuming interest is his letter in which he described his mother-in-law. He despised her and wrote of her that she was ‘a female of a most violent disposition and little worthy of entering into that society where I would want to move’.\textsuperscript{146} He handled the lead-up to the marriage proposal rather badly and paid for his indiscretion. Sarah’s mother was now a Mrs Pennington, she having re-married after the death of Sarah’s father, a Mr Rose. Mr Pennington had allowed Sarah to retain her original surname and Middleton, not aware of this, was curious as to the difference in names. Although he described his efforts to ascertain this information ‘with a becoming delicacy’ his letter was read in an entirely different light when he ‘solicited from Mrs Pennington information


\textsuperscript{145} Middleton to Campbell, 20 April 1820, \textit{Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825}, ML, CY Reel 6050, 4/1746, 246.

\textsuperscript{146} Middleton to unspecified recipient, 13 February 1824, ML, \textit{Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825}, CY Reel 6028, 2/8305, 43.
respecting her first marriage’. She interpreted his request as an ‘impeachment of Miss Rose’s legitimacy’ and several contentious days passed until permission was received for the nuptials to ensue.

Sarah Middleton supported George in his ministry but she receives almost no mention in his story. In writing of missionary wives, Hilary Carey postulated that for these women, there was a dominating drive to be a helpmate and partner in the work of their husband. So also was the role of the non-missionary clergy wife. Such was the fate of clergy wives of that time. What is known of Sarah comes predominantly from unpublished family papers such as one of her son’s only existing letter and the bequest in George’s Last Will and Testament. To one writer ‘the minister’s wife should be the most pious, able to learn and forbear with all Christian fortitude’. In other words, she was, among her many duties, also to be a role model for other Christian wives. Anne O’Brien made a very valid point when she stated that the clergy wife was ‘constantly worked, unpaid, of inferior status’ and was of ‘a category of women whose circumstances have remained unchanged for over a hundred years’. In reality, the time frame is much longer, reaching back to the time when clergy were first permitted to marry. Whether this describes Sarah’s conduct is not

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147 Middleton to the Colonial Secretary, 13 February 1824, ML, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, Reel 60282/8305, 41-43.
149 Information supplied in unpublished family memoirs, a copy of which is in the hands of the writer.
150 Rowland Hassal to Thomas Hassall, 23 February 1820, Hassall Correspondence, ML, Reel CY 928, A 1677/4, 127.
known but given the circumstances of her lifestyle, it is safe to assume that O’Brien is correct. What is known with certainty is that she did set a pious example, at least where service to others was concerned. The Sydney newspapers disclose her name among lists of contributors to charitable causes, one of which was the School of Industry to which she donated what in those days was the very large sum of £5. This was the only way in which she could express publicly her commitment and minister outside her home and at the same time be part of a significant and influential group, that of mothers and teachers and carers. 153 Little else of her life is revealed. 154 As with other colonial clergy wives we know little of the joys and sorrows they experienced, the trials and tribulations they faced.

Charitable works also attracted Middleton’s attention. Shortly after arriving in Sydney he became involved with the Benevolent Society and thereafter made regular donations to its funds. On one occasion he paid a subscription of £2 and donated £1 more. 155 Middleton’s association with the Benevolent Society lasted a number of years and he gained prominence in it. At the Anniversary meeting held in 1826 he moved the motion of thanks and acknowledgement to ‘His Honour the Vice Patron for his continued support of and concern for the welfare of the Association’. 156 Believing that those who served the community should be rightfully acknowledged, he accepted the position of treasurer of the committee organised to


154 The Sydney Gazette, 29 April 1825.

155 The Sydney Gazette, 14 April 1821.

156 The Sydney Gazette, 10 February 1826.
honour Edward Charles Close when he retired as a magistrate in 1827. Consistent with his willingness to defend those he believed wrongfully accused, he signed the ‘Address’ in support of Governor Darling over Darling’s threatened impeachment brought on by a group of citizens in 1829. And consistent with his ecclesiastical interest, he was present as a chaplain at the opening of St Pauls Church, Paterson in 1845. Nor did he lose his interest in education. In 1843 he acted as a referee for George Walker who proposed to take 12 ‘boarding scholars’ in the school he wanted to open. Prior to this, from 1831 until 1837, it was his interest in education which would preserve he and his family whole. Throughout his adult life education captured and held Middleton’s attention. In Parramatta he practised as an examiner for schools and Sunday schools. After his arrival in Newcastle, he fostered the continuation of the school which assembled in the vestry of Christ Church. The teacher was Samuel Dell. Forced by economic circumstances to move to Sydney in 1831, Middleton conducted a school at ‘Bellmaine’ (Balmain). In August, a news item appeared in the *Australian* informing the populace that Middleton was ‘about establishing a boarding school’ and described his scholastic attainments as being ‘of a very superior order’. An advertisement in the same newspaper indicated that he would receive pupils as of Monday 10 October 1831. Professor Elkin suggested


160 *Maitland Mercury*, 8 April 1843, unpaged.

161 *The Sydney Gazette*, 30 December 1820, unpaged.

162 *The Australian*, 26 August 1831.

163 *The Australian*, 10 October 1831.
that Middleton, while at Butterwick, as well as working his parish, also ran a school in Morpeth.\textsuperscript{164} Again, a dearth of sources makes this but speculation. It is possible that with a young family he educated his children along with some of the children from other families but there is no supporting evidence. Given the comments of members of the Blomfield family, residents of the Morpeth district, Elkin was writing from hearsay:

\begin{quote}
It is a sad thing not having a school to send them to. I regret it more on account of keeping them away from our farm servants than from what they would learn. I take them myself to school for two hours every day and Thomas is beginning to read nicely. He can say the Church and their other catechisms besides several of Watt’s hymns very nicely.\textsuperscript{165}
\end{quote}

It is as a pastor that Middleton is most extraordinary. Already mentioned has been his absenteeism. Another element of surprise in his story is that as a man of God he could attract reproach over his penchant for gambling.\textsuperscript{166} He also attracted criticism resulting from his failures to supply returns requested by the colonial authorities. In Parramatta, he delayed remitting documents required by the Colonial Secretary for the Bigge enquiry. He did the same to Archdeacon Scott after his arrival in 1825. With the inauguration of the first archdeaconry in 1825 and the arrival of Thomas Hobbes Scott as Archdeacon, the colonial church took a momentous step forward. It also ushered in a significant period in Middleton’s life. Scott was a man of considerable conceit and a martinet in respect of administration. He wrote a number of letters to Middleton demanding information which had not

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\textsuperscript{165} C.J. Blomfield to Louisa Blomfield, 5 June 1828 in T.V. Blomfield, \textit{Memoirs of the Blomfield family being letters written by the Late Captain T. V. Blomfield and his wife to relatives in England}, Armidale N.S.W., Craigie & Hipgrave, 1926, unpaged.
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\textsuperscript{166} W. Lawry to T. Hassall, 15 February 1820, \textit{Hassall Correspondence Vol. 2}, ML, CY Reel 913, A1677/2, 259.
\end{flushright}
been forthcoming and pointing out tasks that had been neglected. Middleton almost ignored him. Being a man of independent spirit, he did what was necessary but only when it suited him. In no time at all, Scott decided that he could not countenance such antics. In Scott’s view Middleton was unreliable, untrustworthy and totally unfit for the position he held in the church and in society. He allowed his personal feelings to blind him to the realities that Middleton faced. He took no cognisance that he traversed a vast and rapidly expanding parish in all weathers, governed always by the river tides, the terrain, the activities of run-away convicts and bushrangers and the ever-increasing hostility of the Aboriginal people. The correspondence between the two men reveals deep insights into the divisions between their personalities. In particular it raises the issue of the disciplining of clergy. Scott held immense power in this regard but chose not to exercise it over Middleton. As their relationship disintegrated, Middleton felt he could no longer function under what he construed as his Archdeacon’s victimisation and resigned his position in May 1827.

In like manner as he was concerned for his privileges and responsibilities as a pastor, so too was Middleton concerned for his material welfare. Already mentioned is the Parsonage. Recouping the costs he outlaid for professional expenses and for the work done on his glebe also concerned him. He liked his own way and when aggrieved he expressed outrage and could be petulant in response. Some might argue that his rejoinders reveal him as a pompous and self-righteous prig. This is strengthened by his remarks to the Archdeacon when, over a matter which is not clear, he reminded Scott of his position in society. 167 Without any doubt, the *Sydney*  

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Gazette viewed him as such, going so far as to label him a ‘rhodomantade’.168

Other criticism levelled against Middleton claimed he was far more interested in living as a pastoralist than as a pastor. Certainly, he made good use of his land and perhaps, because of his success, became the envy of others, especially the majority of his brother clergy. The clergy of this period were in straitened financial circumstances and most of them held glebes and other land-holdings which, over time, became more of a burden than a blessing. Apart from the Reverends Samuel Marsden, Thomas Hassall and John Youl, Middleton was the only priest able to make full and profitable use of his glebe and land grant. When his fortune failed in the 1830s, his financial difficulty was brought on, not, as with his colleagues, by his incompetence as an agriculturalist, but, as with so many other farmers, by drought and by debt.

Following his resignation from the ministry in 1827, Middleton’s life took a dramatic turn. He moved to his land grant, Glenrose, at Paterson and became very active in local affairs and held at least one significant position in a public entity. He also carried on an itinerant ministry to those who requested his services, a fact which upset both the Archdeacon and Frederick Wilkinson, his successor. On one occasion he asked Wilkinson to allow the banns of marriage to be published in Christ Church. The request was refused.169 Prior to this, Middleton’s wishes to publish banns had been granted.170 On this matter Scott wrote to him and also to Governor Darling. In the letter to Darling he reported that Middleton had replied with ‘a very insolent

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170 Middleton to McLeay, 21 April 1827, AONSW, Index 2563, 5/2340, 7755.
answer’ and a threat to resort to the public for support.\textsuperscript{171} He also requested Darling to stop Middleton from being able to marry all couples who came to him with such a request.

By mid-1831, a victim of drought, Middleton had fallen on hard times and so removed to Sydney where he opened his school. His family moved down-river to a rented house at Phoenix Park opposite Morpeth.\textsuperscript{172} While in Sydney he found himself involved as a witness into a murder trial but apart from these episodes, little else is known of his life until 1837 when he returned to active ministry and was instituted into the parish of Butterwick under the licence of Bishop Broughton. There he remained until his death.

Like so many people, Middleton had no way of knowing the twists and turns of fate which would mould his career and his personality. From his experiences in Cambridge and the death of his wife there can be little doubt he suffered deeply. Yet there were positives: the birth of his son, the recommendations of his referees and the positive reaction he received when he first arrived in Sydney promised well for his ecclesiastical future. In like manner, so, too, did his ability as a neophyte agriculturalist. With his second marriage came further promise of lifelong fulfilment. Regrettably these promises, with the exception of that of his marriage, produced results, which, partly by his own doing and certainly by the actions of others, would cause him great personal and financial pain and loss. It is to his credit that he was not broken but rather, was able to overcome adversity each time it struck him and to rise above it. Middleton was a survivor. Each time he triumphed his success had a wider

\textsuperscript{171} Scott to Darling 18 August 1828, ML, \textit{Scott Letterbooks, Vol. II, 409,410.}

\textsuperscript{172} The records show that children \textbf{born during} these years were recorded as born at Morpeth or Phoenix Park and their baptisms were entered in the Christ Church register.
import. He worked for the benefit of not just he and his family, but for those he was ordained to serve. Though separated from ministry he never abandoned it and so, when restored to full-time work by Bishop Broughton, he served faithfully and well until his death.

Chapter 3.

Convicts and Kooris.

Samuel Marsden returned from New Zealand and resumed duty at St Johns in late 1820. Middleton was now free, at least in theory, to go elsewhere. He didn’t. The correspondence for this year reveals two significant aspects of his movements and personality. His letter of 1 January 1821 listing persons desirous of being married in Newcastle was written from Parramatta and was signed ‘Officiating Chaplain’.\(^\text{173}\) The Governor’s reply granting permission was dated 9 January 1821 and received by Middleton at Parramatta. In it, Macquarie addressed him as ‘Officiating Chaplain’.\(^\text{174}\) From where in Parramatta he wrote has not been discerned. Had the Marsdens been living at Mamre, their chief property, some sixteen miles from Parramatta, he might

\(^{173}\) List of Persons Praying His Excellency the Governor’s Permission to have their names published in Church in order their Being Married In Parramatta, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence 1788-1825, ML, Reel 6007, 4/3503, 6. (FM4 10429)

\(^{174}\) I. Atkinson for Campbell (Absent on Duty) 9 January 1821, ML, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence 1788-1825, ML, Reel 6007, 4/3503, 6. (FM4 10429)
have used the parsonage. But at that time Marsden’s son, Charles, was living at Mamre and Marsden was resident in Parramatta. At this time he appeared to have moved to Newcastle. On January 9 1821, the same day as he received his reply from the Colonial Secretary, he wrote a letter headed ‘Newcastle’ seeking to publish the Banns for four couples. Perhaps it was not written from Newcastle at all. Time would not have allowed the letter to go to from Newcastle to Sydney, receive approbation and be returned in the one day. The only conclusion that can be reached is that having received unofficial notice of his appointment to Newcastle, George had been approached in respect of the banns and writing from Parramatta, had distinguished that they were for Newcastle, perhaps in an attempt to avoid confusion and perhaps, misrepresentation. It must also be noted that at the time of his correspondence complaining of Major Morisset’s behaviour, some his letters are also addressed from Parramatta and not Newcastle.

Once Marsden returned, what did Middleton do? Because there are no service registers extant for that period it is impossible to know. Approximately six months passed before he set out for Newcastle during which time he travelled to the Hunter Valley to select the parish glebe. This in itself raises a number of questions. If so, did he proceed there early in the year and discover the excellent land and its

175 Yarwood, Samuel Marsden, The Great Survivor, 252.
176 Yarwood, Samuel Marsden, The Great Survivor, 203, 234.
177 Middleton to the Colonial Secretary, 9 January 1827, Reel 6007, 4/3503, 6
178 Middleton to Brisbane and Goulburn to Middleton, 7 January 1822, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence 1788-1825, ML, CY Reel 6008, 4/3504A, 241, 242.
179 See Middleton to Brisbane, 24 December 1821 written from Parramatta, Middleton to Brisbane, 27 December 1821 written from the Parsonage, Parramatta and Middleton to Goulburn, 7 January 1822 from Sydney, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, ML, CY Reel 6016, 4/5781, 171.
180 John Radley to Henry Dangar, 1 March 1822, ML, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence 1788-1825, CY Reel 6016, 4/5781/, 200 and CY Reel 6067, 4/1808, 71.
possibilities? Had he done so he would have been spurred on to take with him as many cattle as he could muster. Or did he concentrate on his cattle interests in the Parramatta district, having heard from others that the Hunter River offered excellent opportunity for those prepared to invest? Osman Middleton, his son, told that his father’s first stock purchases were obtained from Samuel Marsden.  

No matter the answer, he was more than prepared for his future when he set out for Newcastle in July 1821. A large proportion of the 174 cattle he took with him in his party were his own. Like other clergy he would attempt to overcome the challenge of making ends meet by supplementing his income. That he could amass so many cattle is such a short time must have been a great source of pride. So, too, was his sense of his duty well done. On 8 January 1821 he wrote to Marsden in response to Marsden’s letter to him asking his opinion of the religious and moral state of the parish. He replied:

I feel myself fully justified in declaring that the church was well-attended, the state of the congregation as regular, decent and orderly, and that at least as many, if not more communicants at the administration of the Holy Sacrament as to my knowledge usually frequented at Divine Service at St Phillips, Sydney with reference to the great disparity in population.

In his view his stipend had been well-earned.

Middleton’s perception of his appointment to Newcastle is not extant but his response to it became increasingly clear. In Parramatta he moved in sundry places and had social contacts a-plenty, a secure and prestigious position in society, and probably only minimal contact with the convict population. Newcastle was totally

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181 John Dunmore Lang, An Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales Both as a Penal Settlement and as a British Colony, London, A.J. Valpy, 1837, Auchmuty Library, University of Newcastle, N.S.W., Microfilm 2950 (SEGMENT 2) Reels 1670-3380, 252-254.

182 Middleton to Marsden, 8 January 1821, ML, Appendix to the Bigge Report, Bonwick Transcripts 25, Reel CY 1299, 5625.
the reverse. It had a population in 1820 of only 968 exclusive of the military.\textsuperscript{183} Social contact was limited to the officers and men of the 48\textsuperscript{th} Regiment and a few free settlers who had begun to take up land on the banks of the Hunter River. His position, whilst relatively secure in terms of employment, lacked overall prestige and would soon lose even the little of that which it carried. And as for the convicts, time spent with them may have increased in quantity but its quality was almost negligible. If he perceived himself as the apostle to sinners thirsting for salvation, he was soon to discover differently. Clinging to the beach and spreading up the hill lay a tiny settlement in which lodged felons harbouring intense hostility because banishment to Coal River was second only to hanging.\textsuperscript{184} According to Evans and Nicholls, it was ‘the most dreaded sentence’.\textsuperscript{185} Governor Macquarie’s injunction that corporal punishment was to be inflicted as little as possible and then only on assured evidence was obeyed lightly.\textsuperscript{186}

Middleton’s ministry to the convicts was minimal. Both John Blaxland and Lancelot Threlkeld suggest that it was little more than token.\textsuperscript{187} Threlkeld records that he and Middleton visited the gaol to hand out religious tracts but there is no mention of the convicts domiciled elsewhere. Commandant Morisset also believed Middleton


\textsuperscript{184} Coal River is an early name for Newcastle. Other names were Kings Town and New Castle until the present name became universally used.


\textsuperscript{186} Warwick Eather, ‘The Convict Emancipist Policies of Lachlan Macquarie and Their Realationship with Newcastle and the Hunter Valley’, Thesis 2385, University of Newcastle, N.S.W., 24.

neglected the felons.\textsuperscript{188} The Parson fulfilled the requirements laid upon him by visiting the goal, by holding services on the Sabbath and making an occasional sortie to the Limeburners, a place of punishment for those who offended whilst in Newcastle. It was distanced about six kilometres up-river and was notorious for the harshness of punishment inflicted on the convicts. ‘Observator’, writing to \textit{The Sydney Monitor} newspaper claimed:

\begin{quote}
To delineate this scene of horror would be a task too painful for our own feelings, and we will not, Mr Monitor, harrow up those of your readers by the recital – suffice it to say that urged headlong to destruction, death has often been sought as the only source of relief – direful acts in fenzied moments have been perpetuated to hurry on the oft wished-for termination of a life of despair.\textsuperscript{189}
\end{quote}

No trace of it remains today.

For his efforts in such a place Middleton expected little in return and may have agreed with the Reverend James Hassall, who, in 1902 wrote,

\begin{quote}
The thought of an offender against the laws being a fellow-creature, a brother man, never entered the mind of those who had charge of the prisoners then.\textsuperscript{190}
\end{quote}

Realising he could not achieve the impossible, Middleton found himself with little to do. To fill up his days he turned to more fulfilling enterprises offering greater personal satisfaction. If he were to ‘seek for Christ’s sheep which were dispersed abroad’, he would muster them in other pastures. But first he had to deal with the

\textsuperscript{188} Morisset to Erskine, \textit{Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825} 1788-1825, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 1989, Reel 6016, 4/5781, 172.

\textsuperscript{189} \textit{The Monitor}, 28 July 1826.

convicts assigned to him. The records of punishment show that several caused him difficulty and it may be that Sandra Blair focussed on the causes when she postulated that many of the problems people such as Middleton faced originated from their ‘excessive severity towards their assigned convict servants’. She also pointed out that many landowners developed slave-owner mentality and when one reads the reasons Middleton caused his servants to be punished, it is not difficult to believe that he may have been imbued with such thinking.

Middleton discovered quite rapidly that his profession was no buffer against those who ‘erred and strayed from their ways like lost sheep’. Not even in the parsonage was he immune from predation. On several occasions between 1821 and 1827 his assigned servants plundered his goods. Nor was he alone in this problem. Robert Cartwright told the Bigge Enquiry: ‘I myself have been frequently robbed as well as others when at church’.

Unlike his colleague, Middleton wasn’t robbed only while at church. Thomas Smith, one of his assigned servants, on 31 March 1821, received 75 lashes ‘for robbery and taking to the bush’. On 11 October 1822, The Sydney Gazette reported that on 24 September, while Middleton was absent, the parsonage had been

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191 These expressions are taken from the Ordinal in the Book of Common Prayer, 1662.


194 See the Confession for Morning and Evening Prayer in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.


196 Morisset to His Excellency the Governor, undated, List of Prisoners punished at Newcastle with the nature of the offence 1 January 1821 to 31 March 1821, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, ML, CY Reel 6023, 4/1718, 125.
‘plundered of wearing apparel and other property to a considerable amount, exclusive of a large number of dollars’. The culprits managed to escape, probably wearing Middleton’s clothing as a disguise and taking the cash to finance their new life and the property to sell. About eighteen months later Sarah Acton and John Welsh were indicted for ‘burglariously breaking and entering the dwelling house of the Reverend Mr. Middleton’. At the same sitting, Mary Cottam and Thomas McCarthy were indicted for aiding and abetting. Of the four, Acton and Welsh were found guilty and the others were acquitted. James Oberry and John Birch walked a similar path and each received fifty lashes for ‘having in their possession and offering for sale a quantity of goods supposed to be stolen from the Rev. George Middleton’.

Most unusual for modern readers among the thefts was two phlemes, small hollow needles used to bleed horses. William Foxley was charged for receiving them but was acquitted. Others like John Gwylim received 50 lashes for participating in a robbery. George Smith received 50 lashes because he harboured improper persons at the Parsonage and robbed his master. Smith found himself in further trouble in July 1824, this time ‘for beating and ill-treating a little girl in the service of

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197 The Sydney Gazette, 24 September 1822.

198 The Sydney Gazette, 12 February 1824.

199 Monthly Returns of Prisoners Punished at Newcastle from the 1st to the 31st May, 1823 with the Nature of the Offence, ML, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, CY Reel 6023, 4/1718, 149.

200 The Australian, 26 August 1826. A fleam was a small needle use to bleed horses.

201 Monthly Return of Corporal Punishments Inflicted at Newcastle and the Nature of the Offence from the 1st to the 31st April with the Nature of the Offence, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, ML, CY Reel 6023, 4/1718, 203.

202 Monthly Return of Corporal Punishments Inflicted at Newcastle and the Nature of the Offence from the 1st to the 31st April, 203.
his master’. The girl concerned was probably Jane Coulston, a free-born, fourteen year old servant at Glenrose.

In protecting Jane Coulston Middleton demonstrated he had no time for bullies and again, confirmed his propensity to protect those unable to protect themselves. Nor could he tolerate laziness and disrespect for superiors. Arthur Newcombe was assigned to him in 1824. Before long he felt the lash at least twice – on one occasion the Commandant administered 50 lashes for his ‘absenting himself from the Glebe and refusing to work’. On the second occasion he was punished for ‘neglect of work and insolence to his overseer’. By 1828 his uncooperative behaviour found him relegated to Newcastle Gaol. Also punished for not cooperating were William Morris, Neal Allen and Daniel Farrell who each received fifty lashes for ‘neglect of work at the Glebe farm’. There was no place in Middleton’s thinking that he should do good to those who in Prayer Book terminology ‘despitely used him’.

Professor Elkin believed that Middleton may not have felt a call to work

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203 Monthly Return of Corporal Punishments Inflicted at Newcastle from the 1st to the 31st day of July, 1824 with the Nature of the Offence, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, ML, CY Reel 6023, 4/1718, 188a.

204 Monthly Return of Convicts Assigned in the counties of Northumberland and Durham from the 1st to the 31st March, 1824 with the Nature of the Offence, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, ML, CY Reel 6028, 2/8283, 79.

205 Return of Corporal Punishments Inflicted at Newcastle with the Nature of the Offence from the 1st to 30th April, 1824, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, Auchmuty Collection, University of Newcastle, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 1987-1988, 181.

206 Return of Corporal Punishments Inflicted at Newcastle with the Nature of the Offence from the 1st to 31st Day of July, 1824, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, Auchmuty Collection, University of Newcastle, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 1987-1988, CY Reel 6023, 4/1718, 188a.

among the convicts and was influenced by his limited experience of them. Middleton, he claimed, knew the convicts only as assigned servants to the settlers or as workers on the road gangs. One thing, though, is very clear: those who incurred his wrath discovered that there was no forgiveness for their ‘sins, negligences or ignorances’. As has been shown, unlike James Hassall’s father, Middleton could in no way claim that he never had a prisoner flogged. If he believed punishment the appropriate cure for sin, he prescribed the lash. On the other hand, those on whom he believed compassion and mercy should fall discovered that they could put their confidence and trust in his goodness. Barbara Styles and Samuel Dell are outstanding examples of the contrast.

In 1823, in a letter to the Colonial Secretary, Middleton requested that Barbara Styles, a prisoner of the crown in Newcastle, be assigned to him as a convict servant. Having heard her story he instigated steps to alleviate her distress. Barbara, her husband Thomas, and their children, came free to the colony in 1816 in response to her mother’s entreaties. Formerly the servant of an English earl, Mary Oliver, Barbara’s mother, was sentenced to transportation in the early 1800s for theft from her employer. From about 1806 she wrote several letters from Sydney suggesting that Barbara and her family emigrate and pointed out the advantages to be

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208 Monthly Returns of Punishments for 1823, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence 1788 – 1825, ML, CY Reel 6067, 4/1718, 169.
212 Middleton to Goulburn, 17 November 1823, ML, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, Reel 6067, 4/1809, 115.
gained by doing so.213 Almost ten years passed before they acted on the advice and set sail for Sydney. Soon after arriving they settled at Kissing Point on the northern shore of Sydney Harbour. Over the next five years Thomas received land grants and the family prospered. Then, in 1821, a swell of events affected them profoundly and shattered their future. The first occurred when Barbara bore a child on 24 April 1821. It died four months later on 5 August. On 27 May it was baptised at Parramatta and two days later the child’s step-grandfather and Barbara’s step-father, a Mr. McDonald, changed his will to exclude Barbara and to leave his property to his wife.214 No reason for this has been found. A man newly-arrived from England and a relative of MacDonald senior, a Mr George McDonald, was named as an executor. Next followed a current of ‘strange events’ which swept Barbara and Thomas into a very different life.215

In the following July, Barbara and Thomas were accused of stealing mutton from Gregory Blaxland of Blue Mountains fame. Three others were also implicated. At their trial in the following August, these three were indicted for stealing a sheep and the Styles were indicted as accessories and receivers. In a strange turn of justice, Thomas and two of the others were acquitted whilst Barbara and Edward Farrell, one of the three, were found guilty. Farrell was hanged and Barbara was sentenced to transportation for life and sent to Newcastle. At his execution, Farrell confessed that Barbara and Thomas had been the victims of a cruel lie and that the mutton had been placed in their home. An inquiry followed and proved full of inconsistencies but the

214 Barbara’s mother had married McDonald some time between 1806 and 1821.
215 Hartley, The Settlers of the Big Swamps, 34.
outcome brought no relief for Barbara. Her sentence remained. Worse was to come.
In December, Barbara’s mother, stepfather and husband were all drowned while
crossing Sydney Harbour. Barbara now had no-one to care for her three children and
so, Henry, the eldest, at age twenty, became responsible for his siblings. Almost
immediately the children petitioned the Governor for their mother’s return to Sydney
but were unsuccessful. Given the conditions prevailing for women convicts at
Newcastle, their request had a double import - they wanted their mother to care for
them and they wanted her removed from a soulless situation. Kristine McCabe
reveals a clear picture of what convict women endured there between 1830 and 1840.
Firstly, there was the difficulty ‘in attracting persons of good character able to
maintain the institution’.216 Secondly, one of the early regulations decreed that on
arrival, both the men and the women had their hair cut short as an added form of
punishment.217 Further still, recalcitrant women may have been given solitary
confinement for a short time as there was no other form of punishment available.
Flogging of women was not permitted.218 Further, a lack of separate accommodation
in the goal decreed that men and women were housed in the same building with all
the consequent possibilities.219 It is reasonable to assume that in 1826 the conditions
were no better and may even have been worse. As a respectable woman, Barbara’s
life among some of the most hardened female convicts in New South Wales would
have been almost unbearable. Fortunately, she was assigned to Edward Charles

216 Kristine McCabe, ‘Discipline and Punishment: Female Convicts on the Hunter River, 1830-1840’,

217 McCabe, ‘Discipline and Punishment’:, 47.

218 McCabe, ‘Discipline and Punishment’:, 49.

219 McCabe, ‘Discipline and Punishment’:, 51.
Close, at that time the engineer in Newcastle, and he delivered her from her plight. Shortly afterwards, Close moved his family to his new land grant at Illalung, now the village of Morpeth, some thirty kilometres from Newcastle where she lived in circumstances more like those of her former lifestyle in Sydney. While in Close’s employ she applied for, and received, a pass to visit her children and so returned to the farm she had owned with her husband. It was now, by some devious turn, in the possession of the previously-mentioned George McDonald. During her stay she applied to remain in Sydney indefinitely but was unsuccessful and so returned to the Lower Hunter. Dulcie Hartley believes that during her sojourn in Sydney, Close and Middleton, aware of all that had happened to her, discussed her predicament with the result that Middleton wrote and asked for her to be assigned to his care. As a single man, Middleton needed a reliable housekeeper and she came with good references from Close. If one accepts Michael Sturma’s contention that those interested in female convicts acted from a basis of their moral condition rather than the crimes they committed, Middleton’s action is totally consistent with his ethics. The application was successful and she entered Middleton’s service.

The story does not end there. In 1826 Barbara applied for a ticket of leave. Had the ticket not been issued, embarrassing questions would most certainly have arisen. Some of the leading citizens of the lower Hunter, including her former master, Edward Charles Close and the Commandant of Newcastle, Francis Allman, supported her in her quest. Ironically, Gregory Blaxland, from whom she was supposed to have received the stolen sheep, also supported her. This time her

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222 Hartley, *Settlers of the Big Swamps*, 42.
application was successful and she gained her freedom. A short time later she married Samuel Beckett and they set up house in King St, Newcastle.\footnote{Entry 6, Marriages for 1826, Christ Church Register, B7806, \textit{Archives of the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle}, Archives and Rare Books Section, University of Newcastle, N.S.W.}

As well as exercising compassion, Middleton also appreciated good service and was prepared to reward it when rendered. In February 1825 he wrote to the Colonial Secretary on behalf of Samuel Dell, the parish clerk and schoolmaster at Newcastle.\footnote{Middleton to Goulburn, 5 February 1825, \textit{Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825}, 1788-1825, ML, CY Reel 6068, 4/1812, 20b, 20c.} For five years Dell had been a man of exemplary conduct. When Middleton became aware that his allowance was but four shillings a week, he felt it needed raising because it was ‘quite inadequate to the support of that decent appearance which is desirable in an individual holding office’.\footnote{Middleton to the Colonial Secretary, 1 February 1825, Reel 6068, 4/1812, 206.}

As parish clerk Dell was also entitled to fees for the tasks he fulfilled in that capacity. He was required to set up the church for all services but given the paucity of demand in Newcastle for his assistance in respect of weddings, baptisms and funerals, the fees amounted to less than £2 per annum.\footnote{Dell as ‘parish clerk’ may also have been performing the duties of a verger and sexton, each of which functions carried with it a monetary reward. See Footnote 21.} Middleton’s hope was that the Governor would see fit to remunerate him with a salary from government revenue such as ‘he may be deemed to deserve in reference to his two-fold duties performed in a manner reflecting the greatest credit’ on him.\footnote{Middleton to Goulburn 1 February 1825, \textit{Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825}, 1788-1825, ML, CY Reel 6068, 4/1812, 206.} The appeal was
successful. Dell was awarded the same salary as the parish clerks in Sydney. Twenty days later William Cowper wrote to inform Middleton that arrears owing to Dell for past service were to be paid at the rate of £5 per annum and that this was the rate he was to receive in the future.

Of longest duration and the greatest harm to Middleton was his relationship with his convict, James Williams. Middleton had formally requested that Williams be assigned to him and in the same letter asked that Williams’ wife, Catherine, and their children be allowed to sail to Newcastle on the Lady Nelson so that the family might remain together. In the 1828 Census Williams is shown as a ‘farmingman’. If he had previous farming experience in England or had shown himself adept in things agricultural since arriving in the colony, he was, for Middleton, a most desirable acquisition, and he may have used the family unity as an incentive for Williams to work for him. At the time, Williams was working in the government gang in Newcastle while his wife and children were in Sydney. The desired permission came in a letter to Commandant Morisset, along with ‘a list of articles permitted to be sent by this conveyance’. Middleton would soon rue his decision. William’s wife was a duplicitous and scheming individual and her story and that of her husband demonstrates only too clearly the manner in which convicts could and would attempt

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228 Goulburn to Middleton, 9 March 1825, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, ML, CY Reel 6014, 4/3513, 564.

229 Cowper to Middleton, 21 March 1827, Clergy and School Lands Corporation Correspondence (Letters from Clergy), AONSW, 9/2702, 255.

230 Middleton to Goulburn, 14 May 1822, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, ML, CY Reel 6067, 4/1808, 105.


232 Atkinson to Morisset, 10 June 1822, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, ML, CY Reel 6009, 4/3505, 393. “This conveyance” was the convict transport Lady Nelson.
to subvert their masters and mistresses.

In October 1826 Catherine Williams petitioned Governor Darling for her husband to be assigned into her service.\textsuperscript{233} She stated that after his assignment to Middleton, Williams was sent to the Glebe and allowed ‘20 acres to cultivate on a clearing principle’ on which he erected a dwelling, a barn and a four-railed fence over four hundred rods in length. He also burned off eleven acres. On a further agreement he was also supplied with another forty acres and given two bullocks and the services of two of Middleton’s servants. He was to pay Middleton £140 per annum. Over the next nineteen months he worked the land and repaid Middleton £89.10/-61/2d.\textsuperscript{234} He was unable to meet the balance of £90 and more because of blighted crops and robberies by bushrangers. Williams had also been permitted to work ‘off the farm’ in order to earn extra income.\textsuperscript{235} In March 1826, Catherine approached Middleton with a proposal that James be assigned to her as a servant to which she asserted that Middleton agreed on condition that she would pay him £20 and guarantee to pay another £40 more, payable in the following January and her note was to be endorsed by ‘some gentleman of respectability’. Immediately afterward she painted Middleton as an absolute cad. Her contention was that as soon as the agreement was made, Middleton refused Williams permission to work off the farm to complete machinery for sawing which he had been making for Standish Harriss, of Goulburn Grove. Some time later Catherine again petitioned Middleton

\textsuperscript{233} The Humble Petition of Catherine Williams, A Free Subject, Patterson’s Plains, Hunter’s River, 1826, 5 October 1826. Archives Authority of N.S.W., Letters at Shelf 29/1367, unpaged.

\textsuperscript{234} This amount is eighty nine pounds, ten shillings and sixpence halfpenny, or, in modern Australian Currency, $179.05c.

\textsuperscript{235} ‘The Humble Petition of Catherine Williams, A Free Subject, Patterson’s Plains, Hunter’s River, 1826, 5 October 1826’, unpaged.
for the handing over of her husband which request he refused because of the money not paid. Mrs Williams then accused Middleton and William Evans of coming to her residence in mid-March and demanding of her husband how and when the money would be paid. Williams replied that he would give Middleton 100 bushels of maize and the crop which was presently under cultivation consisting of four acres of barley and one of potatoes. He also proffered two working bullocks. Middleton refused the offer on the basis that he would not get any money. If Catherine’s claim of what next occurred is true, Middleton was definitely the cad she claimed. She alleged that he then took Williams to Newcastle and detained him in his house for four days before bringing him before the Bench of Magistrates on a charge of insolence. The Bench ‘was pleased to liberate him’ and gave him seven weeks to prepare to clear and leave the farm on which he was then working and to go to work on a new farm of Middleton’s. She also had claimed that Middleton had ceased supporting her husband off the rations but this was an outright lie. Both George Brooks and Francis Allman attested in a deposition made at the Newcastle Court House that:

Between 7 April and 19 September 1823, James Williams was supplied with sundry provisions such as beef, pork, tea, sugar to the amount of £54/12s/2d, the same being charged against Williams in the audit current.

Middleton received a copy of Catherine Williams’ statements and immediately wrote to the Governor refuting them. Williams, he claimed, had begged to be assigned to

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236 'The Humble Petition of Catherine Williams, A Free Subject, Patterson’s Plains, Hunter’s River, 1826, 5 October 1826, unpaged.

237 This farm would have been the 1000 acres he was at that time leasing.

238 Deposition of both Allman and Brooks 24 October 1826, Archives Authority of N.S.W., Letters at Shelf 29/1367, unpaged.

239 Middleton to Darling, 26 October 1826, Archives Authority of N.S.W., Letters at Shelf 29/1367, 7160-1November 1826, unpaged.
him and he had treated him very generously but had warned him that his character
and behaviour had to be such as would allow the favours to continue. But Williams,
he asserted, was a man who would abuse every indulgence and had done so
repeatedly. The reason he was taken to the Bench at Newcastle was that there was no
magistrate in Paterson at that time. William’s had refused to obey an order to build a
log house which was to be part compensation for debt owing. In Newcastle, Williams
showed sincere contrition and so Middleton forgave him so he did not appear before
the bench as stated in Mrs Williams’ deposition. She had perverted the truth.
Middleton had refused to allow the transfer of Williams to her service because,
resulting from his generosity, Williams had accumulated considerable property at
Middleton’s expense and he expected a portion limited to £60 of the amount
acknowledged to be due to be forthcoming ‘as a qualification for my giving her
husband the requisite testimonials’. In a letter to the Colonial Secretary he pointed
out another reason, stating that:

Mrs Williams having in a variety of instances not only instigated her
husband to disobedience of my positive instruction, but to the use of
most insolent language.²⁴⁰

John Gwillam, William Webster, George Mills and other of Middleton’s assigned
servants attested this claim.²⁴¹ In the same letter he also mentioned that Williams was
known to three magistrates in Newcastle who unanimously condemned the behaviour
of both the wife and husband and declared that ‘neither merited the least indulgence’.

²⁴⁰ Middleton to Mcleay, 13 October 1826, Archives Authority of N.S.W., Letters at Shelf 29/1367, 7160-
1November 1826, unpaged.

²⁴¹ ‘We the undersigned’, Archives Authority of N.S.W., Letters at Shelf 29/1367, 7160-1November 1826,
unpaged. The ‘others’ mentioned above are named in this way because their signatures are unreadable.

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At some time in 1827, Williams was abstracted from Middleton’s service by the Bench of Magistrates at Newcastle on charges from Middleton that he had absconded. And he had. On the pretext of ill health he obtained a pass to travel to the general hospital in Newcastle. At a magistrate’s enquiry held on 20 December 1829, it was revealed that Williams feigned the illness and abused the concession. William Evans, William Dimmock, Ferdinand Auley and Mr E. Evans, the son of Dr William Evans, all free settlers, reported that Williams had been seen wandering the district, had exhibited no sign of any injury and had lived at home with his family for upwards of a week. He did report to the hospital and was admitted for three days but was assessed by Dr Brooks as having an injury ‘of a trifling description’ and was described as a ‘weakly person’. He departed the hospital ‘on stating that he was quite well.’

Still wanting her husband assigned to her, Catherine Williams approached Archdeacon Scott in December 1828, complaining of Middleton’s treatment. She asserted that her children were starving and would have to go to the Orphan School unless her husband was assigned to her and given a ticket-of-leave to work to support his family. Scott told Darling that he believed ‘the conduct of Mr Middleton deserves no leniency, he appears to have acted with great cruelty’. A previous and

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242 Middleton to Mcleay, 29 January 1829, Archives Authority of N.S.W., Letters at Shelf 29/1367, 7160-1November 1826, unpaged.

243 See the Depositions of these men and ‘Questions Proposed to…(each individual)…Together With Replies Respecting James Williams’, Archives Authority of N.S.W., Letters at Shelf 29/1367, 7160-1November 1826, unpaged.

244 Brooks to Middleton, 22 December 1828, Archives Authority of N.S.W., Letters at Shelf 29/1367, 7160-1November 1826, unpaged. Underlining in the original.


246 Scott to Darling, 18 December 1828, 153. See also Scott to Mcleay, 20 December 1828, Archives Authority of N.S.W., Letters at Shelf 28/number indistinguishable - 22 December 1828, unpaged.
similar entreaty from Catherine had been refused on the recommendation of Middleton and for which Scott had rebuked him for acting with ‘great cruelty and oppression’.\(^{247}\) In his letter to McLeay of 20 December, Scott also attested that both magistrates and several prominent citizens had made representations to him, all of whom ‘spoke highly of the man and the woman’.\(^{248}\)

This statement poses an obvious question. Why did these men support Williams against Middleton? In their depositions at the enquiry, J.P. Webber, John Swan and William Boughton stated that they believed Williams industrious and honest.\(^{249}\) But Webber and Boughton are also among those who did not respond to Middleton’s letters requesting statements of his conduct during 1826.\(^{250}\) This points to the possibility of unreconciled differences between themselves and Middleton. That Scott might condemn Middleton is easily explained. His previous treatment of Middleton is known and his bias evident. But the reasons for the others acting as they did are not clear. Ultimately, Middleton won the day. Evidence from the inquiry supported him. Thereafter there is no further mention of Williams, his wife and family.

Middleton could also ‘lose’ his convicts in the system. On 6 July 1818, William Murray was convicted of an unspecified crime and sentenced to Newcastle.

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\(^{247}\) Scott to Darling, 18 December 1828, ML, 153.

\(^{248}\) Scott to Mcleay, 20 December 1828, Archives Authority of N.S.W., Letters at Shelf 28/number indistinguishable - 22 December 1828, unpaged.

\(^{249}\) The Depositions of these men are found in Archives Authority of N.S.W., Letters at Shelf 29/136, unpaged.

\(^{250}\) This matter is discussed later in the thesis.
for three years. After serving out his time he returned to Sydney. He re-offended and on 20 March 1823, Colonial Secretary Goulburn wrote to Middleton requesting to know what had become of William Murray who had been assigned to him in December 1821. Four days later Middleton replied that Murray had never joined him. At the time the arrangement was made, Middleton was in Sydney and Mr. Atkinson, the Principal Clerk, had promised that Murray would be forwarded with the regular assignment of convicts to Newcastle by the first government vessel subsequent to Middleton’s departure from Sydney. When Murray failed to appear, Middleton supposed that he had been retained in Sydney and apparently thought no more of it. Others certainly did. William Hutchinson, the Chief Supervisor of Convicts, stated that at the time of writing, Murray was confined in prison. To explain the mix-up Hutchinson wrote to Goulburn and pointed out that on the day following Murray’s assignment to Middleton he had discharged Murray from his books. At the same time he arranged a pass which allowed Murray to travel to Sydney. On his arrival, Murray presented the pass to Goulburn’s office where it was countersigned by a Mr. Atkinson who then directed him to employ himself until such

251 List of Prisoners to be sent to Newcastle per H.M.CB. Lady Nelson, 17 July 1818, ML, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, CY Reel 6006, 4/3498, 302.

252 Goulburn to Middleton, 20 March 1823, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, ML, Reel 6010, 4/3507, 487.

253 Middleton to Goulburn, 24 March 1823, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, ML, CY Reel 6058, 4/1770, 182.

254 Middleton to Goulburn, 24 March 1823, 182.

255 Middleton to Goulburn, 24 March 1823, 182a.

256 Hutchinson to Goulburn, 8 April 1823, ML, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, ML, Reel 6057, 4/1767, 7.

257 Hutchinson to Goulburn, 8 April 1823, 7.
time as he was summoned to proceed to Newcastle. According to Murray’s testimony, he obtained the above-mentioned pass and subsequently presented it at Hutchinson’s office. With no boat ready to convey him to Newcastle he was told to find useful employment until notified that transport was available. Since that time he had been at large ‘without any authority’. For his pains he was confined in His Majesty’s County Gaol. Middleton’s role in this cannot pass without criticism. As the responsible master he had a duty to be aware of the movements of all those committed to his service and ought to have enquired after Murray when he first failed to appear. The next we read of Murray is on 20 December 1825 when the Colonial Secretary wrote to James Bowman, the Principal Surgeon of the Territory requesting that Murray be received into the General Hospital. After that there is no further mention of him in connection with Middleton.

   Earlier it was stated that the attitude of many towards the convicts was that they were virtually beyond redemption but there was some modicum of hope. When it came to the Aboriginal people, the general consensus was that there was none. Official policy had no place for any proselytizing among them but even so, attempts such as that of Lancelot Threlkeld were made to bring them into the way of salvation. That he failed in his endeavours is not surprising as western evangelising techniques were irrelevant to the indigenous population. As well, the Aborigines rejected Christianity because of their perceived hypocrisy of its

258 Hutchinson to Goulburn, 8 April 1823, 7.
259 Hutchinson to Goulburn, 8 April 1823, 7.
260 Goulburn to Bowman, 27 December 1825, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, ML, CY Reel 6016, 4/3516, 246.
adherents. They could not accept a faith which preached love and brotherhood but which failed to practice it. Further, it was unlike their spiritual system. It did not accept the cycles of life, rather it endeavoured to control them and in some instances, for example, where death was concerned, to avoid them for as long as possible. They saw the hypocrisy of ‘avoiding ’ death when resurrection was the pivotal point of Christian belief.

Others were not so closely identified with missionary work such as Threlkeld’s, preferring less committed activities so that men like Samuel Marsden, in spite of his strong views that they could not be ‘christianised’, maintained an interest in their welfare.

Unlike his colleague Samuel Marsden, Middleton maintained a special interest in the Aboriginal people among whom he was situated. Marsden said of them that they were so degraded that he believed there was little that could be achieved with them. No doubt he was influenced by his reading of the Scriptures and perceived that in many instances, their behaviours, and especially those of the corroborees, paralleled the false gods, the syncretism and the ‘evil’ rituals of the Old Testament. For others, the Aboriginal population was ‘the most wretched of the human race’ because, in their tribal state, they lacked ‘proper’ government and law which would ‘regulate their actions. Little or no attempt was made to understand their beliefs or customs and, according to W.H.S. Reece, the Evangelical Christians

263 Malcolm Prentis, *A Study In Black And White*, Methuen, Sydney, Hicks Smith and Sons, 1975, 34.
264 See Malcolm Prentis, *A Study In Black And White*, Methuen, Sydney, Hicks Smith and Sons, 1975, 12.
266 Marsden to Bickersteth, 2 February 1826, ML, *Bonwick Transcripts* 53, 1602.
bear the ultimate responsibility. They held that Christianity had fostered the rise of western civilisation and when they observed the Aboriginal people they deemed them to be its antithesis. They were convinced that lack of Christian faith was the reason the Aboriginal people lived as they did. Paramount in their thinking was nudity. From their Bible they knew that Adam and Eve had wandered the Garden of Eden in a state of innocence. Only when they disobeyed God and ate of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil did they become aware of their ‘indecent’ or naked state and covered themselves with fig leaves. Lancelot Threlkeld was of this mind and wrote:

It was impossible to permit the blacks to have that free access to any room in the house for the purpose of conversation, as was our practice in the Islands, in consequence of their filthy habits and disgusting appearance, being often in a state of nudity.

On another occasion he further commented on their nudity as a problem. And William Coke recorded that on 10 May 1827 there were ‘numbers of blacks coming for clothes, all naked’. What further proof did respectable Englishmen need that these inhabitants were almost, if not totally, abandoned by God and fallen from grace? Further supporting this concept was the opinion of J. Dredge, who in 1845, could postulate that the Creator, because of their abominations was punishing

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268 Reece, Aboriginals and Colonists, Aborigines and Colonial Society in New South Wales in the 1830’s and 1840’s, Sydney, University of Sydney Press, 1974, 74.

269 R.H.W. Reece, Aborigines and Colonists, 73.


271 Threlkeld to Burder, 25 April 1825, ML, Bonwick Transcripts Box 53, 1492.

them. With such views used as criteria to assess them, it is no wonder that, while the Aboriginal people accepted the material benefits of the settlers such as sugar and flour, they rejected their beliefs, values and culture.

In their first contacts with Europeans, the indigenous people, according to Malcolm Prentis, were not initially violent but rather, adopted a policy of avoidance. By the time Middleton arrived in Newcastle, the Awabakal people, the local tribe, were entirely different, being quite happy to mix. Even though they might have fallen from grace, Middleton was more than happy to see them as people and not as a problem. Unlike his contemporaries, he made an attempt to understand them. Bain Attwood believed there was great importance of ‘kin’ and ‘totem’ in their society and Middleton, it appears, was prepared to acknowledge and work with this reality. Other than a reference in an unsourced letter, no records exist to demonstrate his dealings with the Aboriginal people before 1821. From the hand of an unidentified author, the source mentions his over-land journey with John Blaxland on his first recorded trip to Newcastle and indicates that he had good relations with the natives they encountered during the trip. John Turner and Greg Blyton believed Middleton to be the protector of the Aborigines and implied that until his arrival in the settlement, the local population was at the mercy of the convicts and

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274 Malcolm Prentis, A Study In Black And White, Methuen, Sydney, Hicks Smith and Sons, 1975, 32.
277 Author unknown, undated, portion of a letter in the files of John Blaxland, ML, MSS Ar 39/5, unpaged.
their overseers. They also perceived the Aborigines as ‘allies of the Commandants and their second line of defence against escapees’. Furthermore, they also support the idea that the Aborigines resented the convicts because of their treatment of their women and girls. Frank Crowley agrees. He tells that in many places the convict servants visited women in the camps. Margaret Rule postulated that Newcastle operated on a policy of protection and conciliation but that it failed because of the resentment of the escaped convicts against the native trackers used to trail them and to recapture them. Threlkeld, because of his intervention in an attempt to protect an Aboriginal woman from a convict, himself became victim of an assault from that same convict. He related:

I was much aggrieved at a man receiving 75 lashes some little time since for an assault on me. The fact was (that) he was beating a black woman and Mrs T and myself were returning from a visit to the Clergyman in Newcastle.

Once arrived in Newcastle, Middleton revealed his outlook toward the native population. John Bingle described an excursion to Lake Macquarie in which he and Middleton took part:

Our Parson the Rev. F. A. Middleton (sic), who was an especial favourite with the blacks, started with myself with the whole tribe of upwards of 100 on a walking trip to Lake Macquarie. Our necessary

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281 Reece, Aboriginals and Colonists, Aborigines and Colonial Society in New South Wales in the 1830’s and 1840’s, 19.

282 Margaret Rule, Relations Between the Aborigines and Settlers in Selected Areas of the Hunter Valley and in the Liverpool Plains, 1800-1850, Thesis 915, University of Newcastle, iv.

283 Threlkeld to Jones, 10 August 1826 in L.E. Threlkeld, Australian Reminiscences & Papers of L.E. Threlkeld, Missionary to the Aborigines, 1824-1859, Neil Gunson (ed), Canberra, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1974, 211.
supplies, blankets etc they carried on their heads. On arrival I was enchanted with its beautiful scenery and can never forget it. The whole surrounding country and lake were serene and still; solitude reigned. No tree disturbed; and no trace of white man’s civilisation, but all in its wild state. We enjoyed all the wild sports of Australian bush life in its primitive state as the Aborigines of that day (before they were contaminated with our vices) were accustomed to enjoy them, shooting, fishing kangarooing and hunting. Our game was ample for us all. They supplied us also (by diving) with the finest mud oysters for which the waters of the lake are noted. These we scalloped on our bush fires and we spent five or six days of as much enjoyment as I ever had in any part of the world. 284

John Maynard believed that the Muloobinbah or Newcastle tribes lived in a ‘paradise of plenty’ because of the abundance of food. 285 He also noted that the shell middens located in the district indicated a large population had once existed in the region. 286

Cecily Mitchell condemned the above excursion as a ‘junket’ but there was more to it than that. 287 The knowledge Middleton gained at that time became a useful tool in assisting Lancelot Threlkeld to set up his mission on Lake Macquarie in 1825. In his Diary Threlkeld recorded:

Arrived at Newcastle. Waited on the Revd G.A. Middleton the Chaplain of the settlement. (Though not Evangelical) he takes a lively interest in the Aborigines. Reid’s Mistake at Lake Macquarie was a place strongly recommended by him as there the natives can procure an abundance of fish and kangaroo which with the little assistance we could render in furnishing them with corn meal would induce them to reside there permanently. 288

Through this common interest, Threlkeld and Middleton had regular contact and

284 J. Windross and J.P Ralston, Historical Records of Newcastle 1797-1897, 11.
288 Threlkeld, Aboriginals and Colonists, Aborigines and Colonial Society in New South Wales in the 1830's and 1840's, 85.
Threlkeld supports Turner and Blyton when he recorded that Middleton had no
tolerance for brutality towards the Aboriginal population and had it punished when
he became aware of it. Threlkeld wrote:

Two prisoners, night stock keepers were in the habit of visiting the
native camp at night, and one, an African black, amused himself by
sharpening sticks like skewers and sticking them up in the ground
around the native camp - the Aborigine came in the dark, trod upon
one of them and lamed himself for weeks - Would it have been
remarkable if the fellow had been levelled to the ground whilst the
poor Aborigines was suffering under the torture of his wound! - that
very man was seen not walking after compelling a woman to
accompany him by beating her with a stick and the clergyman of the
Newcastle (G.A. Middleton) saw the assault, appeared against the man
and he was turned into the gaol gang as punishment he justly
deserved.289

That Middleton enjoyed the company of the Aboriginals is again reinforced
from the diary of William Coke. Coke was a soldier stationed in Newcastle during
1827 and he recorded several instances of his relationship with Middleton and the
Awabakal people. He is quite clear that Middleton enjoyed them as people and noted
that on Monday 12 April he and Middleton went fishing with ‘some of the
natives’.290 On the next day Middleton went to an oyster feast ‘with the blacks’. Five
days later both Coke and Middleton went in a shooting party and that night slept at
‘an encampment of the blacks’ near Throsby Creek.291 The natives supplied them
with ‘plenty of mullet’.292 Such was his relationship with the indigenous people that
when Middleton was called on by Archdeacon Scott to account for his unwillingness

289 Threlkeld, *Aboriginals and Colonists, Aborigines and Colonial Society in New South Wales in the
1830's and 1840's*, 205.
291 Throsby Creek enters the Hunter River approximately four kilometres west of Newcastle.
to move around the countryside, he mentioned the danger from bushrangers but made no mention of attack by the natives.\textsuperscript{293} His relationship with them was positive because he was a regular visitor to the local tribes.\textsuperscript{294}

After resigning from Newcastle, Middleton maintained his interest in the Aboriginal population. On 29 July 1845 he baptised ‘Abraham’ a native of the New England district.\textsuperscript{295} The likelihood is that Abraham was one of the very few native people remaining in the area. As tribal numbers decreased, especially during Middleton’s time in Sydney in the 1830’s, he returned to the Hunter in 1837 to find that those whom he had known were all dead or were living as fringe dwellers in locations such as Segenhoe near Scone in the upper Hunter Valley.\textsuperscript{296} In response to a government enquiry of 1846 he responded that in his area there were but twenty three Aborigines consisting of fifteen adult males, five adult females and three male children and this was about one third the number which had existed there in about 1836.\textsuperscript{297} He also commented that births were rare and that the decrease in population, while incorporating that fact, was also due to hostilities among the tribes, disease and a lack of proper shelter. For sustenance they were not dependent on the settlers who paid them for the little work they did because there was abundant food in the rivers.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[293] There are numerous accounts of bushranging in the lower Hunter in the newspapers. Even in his later years of ministry, Middleton face the possibility of an encounter with, for example, bushrangers such as ‘Jew Boy’ Davies and his gang who plundered the people between Newcastle and Morpeth, but especially in the Hexham district, from 1837 until 1840.


\item[295] Morpeth Baptismal Register, B5944, Archives of the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle, A.R.B.S., Auchmuty Library, University of Newcastle. Entry for 29 July 1845.

\item[296] Thomas Mitchell in \textit{Aboriginals and Colonists, Aborigines and Colonial Society in New South Wales in the 1830's and 1840's}, Sydney, University of Sydney Press, 1974, 19.

\item[297] N.S.W. Legislative Council Committee – Select Committee on the Condition of the Aborigines. \textit{Replies to a circular letter addressed to the clergy of all denominations. October 31 1846}. Shelf B9841-B9842, Archives of New South Wales, 553.
\end{footnotes}
and lagoons, but this was decreasing because of land clearance and draining of the lagoons. He also noted that the issue of blankets to the native peoples had ceased in 1844 and strongly recommended that it be re-instituted along with an addition of ‘one frock, one shirt and one pair of trousers’. Insofar as medical treatment was involved, they were not refused it and were rather more disposed to avail themselves of it quite readily. As well, he noted that they were indisposed to manual labour. Concerning those of mixed race, he noted that there were but two in his area and that there was no readiness among the white labouring class to amalgamate with the Aborigines so as to form families. In another answer he also noted that infanticide was practiced on male half-caste babies and that in only two instances had female half-cast babies been allowed to live. Overall the Aboriginal people were very friendly but when affected by liquor ‘there is ever serious danger of fatal results’ (among themselves). But most telling of all is the following response:

I have ever evinced a lively interest in the welfare of the Aborigines and studied their dispositions and habits to the best of my ability, as opportunity presented, during the long period of twenty-four years. The result is a well-matured conviction, that at no very distant period, annihilation (at least in the very densely settled portions of the Colony) is their destiny.298

The total population of the Aboriginal people has been estimated at approximately 300,00 in 1788.299 Consequent upon their contact with the white settlers, disease, war, infant mortality and their altered lifestyle began a rapid decrease in their numbers.300 Turner and Blyton suggest that in Newcastle, the Awabakal population would have numbered only a few hundred before 1788 and that

298 N.S.W. Legislative Council Committee – Select Committee on the Condition of the Aborigines. 560.
300 Prentis, *A Study In Black And White*, 38.
this number would have diminished with the advent of the white civilisation.\textsuperscript{301} Against this, L. Dyall, commenting upon the size of a midden recently discovered at Moonbi Beach, about 20 kilometres south of Newcastle, suggested that the population would, in reality have been ‘some thousands’.\textsuperscript{302} If one accepts John Maynard’s contention mentioned earlier, concerning food supply’, Dyall’s proposal is all the more tenable.\textsuperscript{303} In 1788, before the depradations brought on by the introduction of western culture, the local population could have been very large. In 1821 one hundred went on the above-mentioned excursion to Reid’s Mistake.\textsuperscript{304} In 1827 William Coke recorded that the Aboriginal population in the Newcastle district was 200.\textsuperscript{305} His estimate is supported by The Australian which recorded in 1827 that at a distribution of slop clothing to the native population ‘upwards of 150 blacks were assembled upon the occasion’.\textsuperscript{306} This was not to last. A later count showed the number in both Lake Macquarie and Newcastle to be ‘twenty four men, twenty six women, ten boys and four girls -making a total of sixty four’.\textsuperscript{307} By 1840 Threlkeld could count only fifteen men, seven women, three boys and one girl for a total of


\textsuperscript{304} Reid’s Mistake is the original name given to what is now the Swansea/Blacksmith’s area of Newcastle. It is so named because a Captain Reid, believing the Swansea Heads to be the entrance to Newcastle Harbour, attempted to enter the channel he saw and in so doing discovered the entrance to what is now Lake Macquarie.


\textsuperscript{306} The Australian, 23 May 1827.
twenty-six and only two of the families had children.\textsuperscript{308}

It is entirely possible that by his acceptance of the Aboriginal people and his close relations with them, Middleton engendered resentment and hostility in his early years in the Hunter Valley. There were those such as recaptured convict escapees who resented his behaviour. Any friend of these people would be no friend of the felons. The Evangelicals must also be considered. Middleton’s attitude and behaviour with the Aboriginal people flew in the face of their beliefs about them and defied the paternalism endemic amongst those who would love their sable neighbours. The Establishment, too, would not have been pleased with the reality of a man of the cloth, a man of dignified station, living as one of them, no matter for how short a time. Middleton’s independence was again placing him in jeopardy with the power brokers of the colony.

Chapter 4.

Power, Politics and Prospects.

Between his arrival in 1820 and his resignation from Newcastle in 1827, Middleton’s correspondence with people such as the Governors, the Colonial Secretaries and other significant persons exposed numerous aspects of his character, the unique situations he faced and his ability cope with the expectations laid on him. The first of these occurred shortly after he went to Parramatta and uncovered his ability to, if not ignore administrative matters, then to delay them as long as possible. Hardly had Middleton set foot in New South Wales than he began to upset the colonial administration. In the first instance he was an innocent victim. A letter

\textsuperscript{307} Turner & Blyton \textit{The Aboriginals of Lake Macquarie. A Brief History}, Australia, Lake Macquarie City Council, 1995, 33.

\textsuperscript{308} Turner & Blyton, \textit{The Aboriginals of Lake Macquarie}, 33.
arrived advising him that the returns of Births, Marriages and Deaths for the quarter ended on the 1st March, 1818 for the districts of Parramatta, Windsor and Castlereagh had not yet been sent into the Colonial Secretary’s office. 309 Samuel Marsden was supposed to have supplied them but failed to do so. Middleton was then requested to ascertain the figures and to forward them as soon as possible. 310 On the next day the Colonial Secretary wrote another letter, this time to Thomas Scott, Secretary to Commissioner Bigge and told him that he was forwarding the required returns for 1818 but in which he noted that those for the first Quarter of 1818 were incomplete ‘in consequence of some neglect on the part of the Principal Chaplain’. 311 He also added that he had asked Mr Middleton to find them and that he expected them in a few days. They didn’t arrive as anticipated. Campbell then wrote to Middleton again on 5 July saying that he had received no answer and allowing for the possibility that they had miscarried. 312 Eight days later Middleton received another letter from Campbell stating that the missing returns had still not reached his office even though Middleton had claimed to have forwarded them and he once again requested that they be sent on while at the same time intimating that the matter was urgent: ‘the Honourable the Commissioner of Enquiry having called upon me to furnish him with them’. 313 This incident, though seemingly a minor one was to have long-lasting

309 Campbell to Middleton, 17th February, 1820, ML, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence 1788 – 1825, CY Reel 6007, 4/3501, 56.

310 Campbell to Middleton, 23rd June, 1820, ML, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence 1788 – 1825, CY Reel 6007, 4/3502, 97.

311 Campbell to Scott, 24 June 1820, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence 1788 – 1825 ML, CY Reel 6007, 4/3502, 98.

312 Campbell to Middleton, 5 July 1820, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence 1788 – 1825, ML, CY Reel 6007, 4/3502, 114.

313 Campbell to Middleton, 13th July 1820, ML, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence 1788 – 1825, CY Reel 6007, 4/3502, 132.
ramifications. Thomas Scott, Secretary to Commissioner Bigge and the driving force behind the requested information, was a man fastidious over paperwork and he had observed that the Reverend Mr. Middleton neither shared his views nor his approach to administration. Scott would later become the first Archdeacon of the Australian Church and when he did so, he and Middleton clashed severely over administrative matters involving the church in Newcastle and the Hunter Valley.

Others also felt the effect of Middleton’s reluctance to put pen to paper. He failed to supply forewords to the returns for the schools at Parramatta, Baulkham Hills and Pennant Hills and so had to be contacted to provide them.314 Middleton’s disregard for paperwork became more than obvious.315 So, too, was his perceived ineptitude.

That Middleton delayed remitting the required items is not surprising. Parramatta was a busy parish and the returns to the Colonial Secretary for 1820 reveal that he conducted seventy three weddings and an enormous number of funerals.316 He had more pressing things to do than be involved in a paper chase. Along with his other duties, he had more than enough work to occupy him. Others, however, would not appreciate this and his reputation began to tarnish.

Middleton’s correspondence revealed more of his temperament, especially in what he said concerning his relationship with Brevet Major Morisset, Commandant of the penal settlement of Newcastle. Morisset began to accelerate the process by

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314 Minutes of the Male Orphan Institution, 22 November 1820, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, 1788-1825, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 1987-1988, ML, Reel 6040, 4/401, 12, 13.

315 See Footnote 25.

316 Returns of Deaths, Marriages and Baptisms, 31 March 1820 – 31 December 1820, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence 1788-1825, ML, Reel 6024, Frames 475-499.
which Middleton attracted the attention of others but for reasons different from those prevailing in Parramatta. Morisset was the first to mention Middleton’s absenteeism and given the long history of there being no chaplain in the settlement, he felt a different standard was required. From the commencement of the permanent settlement of Newcastle in 1804 and until Middleton arrived in 1821, all services were conducted by the Commandant or other laymen willing to assist.\footnote{317} John Grant, for example, ministered for some months in 1809. With a theological background, he was held in high regard because of his demeanour.\footnote{318} Another, Assistant Surgeon William Evans, was a faithful lay chaplain for fourteen years. For his diligent service he received the land grant he requested as his reward.\footnote{319} Not until William Cowper, ‘the first regular clergyman who had ever performed divine worship at Newcastle’ was able to minister there did the inhabitants see an ordained man.\footnote{320} In company with Governor Macquarie’s party, Cowper travelled to Newcastle in 1818.\footnote{321} Shortly afterwards, a concerned individual in Sydney, believed to be the Cowper himself, impelled by a sense of urgency, went public and on 15 August, published a letter in The Sydney Gazette urging that a minister be provided.\footnote{322} He lamented that for the ‘most abandoned and unfortunate of our species’ there was no priest. A desperate
shortage of clergy left not just Newcastle, but a very large portion of the colony all but bereft in matters spiritual and Newcastle, with very few free settlers, took lower priority than elsewhere. Three years passed before Middleton was appointed. Only when he completed his term as locum in Parramatta was it possible to assign an incumbent. He then became the first permanent chaplain to serve north of the Hawkesbury River. How he perceived his appointment in not known, but in later years he must have looked back at his time there with very mixed feelings. Newcastle became the rack on which his reputation was broken.

Almost from the time he arrived in the colony Middleton found himself in constant and unrelenting conflict with his military and later, his ecclesiastical superiors and with the Evangelical wing of the church. The latter emphasised ‘sinfulness’ and opposed the traditional expression of Anglicanism current at that time because it lacked a personal and emotional response to the Gospel. At the core of his clashes with the military adversaries and later Archdeacon Scott was the perception that he was too often absent from his parish, that he failed to live up to the standards expected of a man in holy orders and that he was a poor administrator. Major Morisset was the first to criticise his professional standards and his action stemmed from his perception that Middleton was his enemy. Archdeacon Scott attacked him for many of the reasons Morisset promulgated but took particular offence at his refusal to delay, if not obey, instructions. The Evangelicals followed

324 B.G. Worrall, The Making of the Modern Church, 2.
suit but added their own peculiar charge: he was not one of them and so was totally unfit for the position he held.

When Middleton finally set out for his new charge he journeyed overland, the first person to receive permission to do so, because he drove his cattle to the parish glebe at Paterson. In company with John Blaxland, another settler and landholder in the lower Hunter, he traversed what later became known as the ‘Parson’s Road’. Commencing at Windsor and terminating at Wollombi, it soon developed into the major thoroughfare for overland travel to the Hunter Valley and Newcastle. But soon after Middleton’s journey, it also became a boon for convicts escaping from Newcastle to Sydney. Twelve runaways used it to return south by following the blazes marked in the trees by Middleton and Blaxland. Consequently, Major Morisset requested the Governor to issue orders to discontinue its use as a means of bringing cattle to the Hunter. Middleton had come under Morisset’s unfavourable notice by creating added difficulties for a man holding sway over men and women of a recalcitrant nature.

If Middleton had high expectations for successful ministry in his new appointment, he was doomed to disappointment. The convicts greeted his arrival with indifference at best and deep hostility at worst. According to Manning Clark, the protestant chaplains believed that convicts were virtually predestined to their fate and so urged them to endure their lot and strive to become an ‘upright man’. To the felons such exhortation served only to reinforce their repudiation of the clergy,
some of whom, as magistrates, had been responsible for their banishment. The Roman Catholic convicts went even further. They refused entirely the ministry of a protestant minister.  

Only among the small landholders and some of the militia did Middleton find acceptance. At first, Major Morisset welcomed him and on a number of occasions provided both he and Blaxland with hospitality. But, within a few months, a very different relationship existed between the Commandant and the Chaplain. Both men being possessed of strong personalities, a clash between them was inevitable. So bitter became their hostility and so great was Middleton’s disillusionment resulting from it, that in 1822 and some eighteen months after his arrival in the colony he requested and received, permission to return to England. Then, for some reason, he changed his mind. As most of the convicts were about to move from Newcastle to Port Macquarie consequent upon Commissioner Bigge’s report, Middleton must have realised that free settlers, having obtained land grants, would surge into the Hunter. With this new population, one whose interests coincided with his rural leanings, he could find what he had so far not experienced, fulfilment in his vocation through his ministry with fellow agriculturalists. Until that time, he still had to deal with Morisset.

Generally, Morisset has maintained a reputation as a soldier who exerted

328 Note the entry for 28 June 1826: Rosetta Lambe, New Castle 28 June, aged 36, Free by servitude, RC, Services of the Rev Wilkinson were dispensed with. Funeral Register, Christ Church Newcastle, Archives of the Diocese of Newcastle, University of Newcastle, N.S.W.


harsh control over the convicts under his charge. A descendent of a very old
Newcastle family remembered that his father often told him that, even when
proceeding on a pleasure trip to outlying farms along the Hunter and Williams
Rivers, Morisset always carried, in the stern of his gig, a triangle and two scourgers.

Lashings were ordered on the least provocation. Morisset also demanded
obeisance. John Bingle, a free settler and businessmen in Newcastle described the
Commandant’s policy and practice:

I had never visited a convict settlement, nor seen the arbitrary powers
carried to such an extent. Perhaps it was necessary for the safety of
the Settlement they were adopted, but to a stranger’s eye it seemed
very un-English. Walking out with the Commandant to see the
beauties of the harbour, the splendid ocean view, and above all, the
magnificent and unrivalled prospect of the Church Close, and to give
me an idea of the awe in which he was held, I found no convict
passed us walking; all drew up, head uncovered, long before we
reached them, and every coal cart drew up and stopped.333

Middleton adopted a different approach. While he supported the convict
system he believed in an over-riding moral law which existed to modify behaviour
and to ensure that all people followed the Ten Commandments. And he had the
support of the Governor. On 25 January 1822, and possibly as a result of Middleton’s
charges against Morisset late in 1821, Governor Brisbane issued a proclamation
enforcing the keeping of the Sabbath.334

Middleton firmly believed that the Ten Commandments were inviolable and
that, as a priest, it was his duty to ensure that insofar as was possible, they were to be
obeyed by those over whom he held spiritual authority. He also maintained it was the


333 John Bingle, Past And Present Records of Newcastle, New South Wales, Newcastle, N.S.W., Bayley
Son & Harwood, 1873, 7.

responsibility of the temporal authorities to both practice and enforce their authority. That Morisset failed to fulfil this obligation engendered the conflict between the two men. For his part, Morisset believed Middleton, by his action, had betrayed him.\footnote{These charges are dealt with specifically as each letter is addressed.}

In a series of letters sent to the authorities in Sydney, and in those in reply from Morisset, there is revealed a great deal of incidental material as well as some of great import. Of special note is the manner in which both men could retaliate against each other and heighten a dispute to the point where there was a total impossibility of reconciliation. Middleton trumpeted his complaints and in so doing angered Morisset mightily. His letters also reveal the strength of his conviction and the length to which he would go to see the Commandments obeyed. Middleton’s charges against Morisset were quite specific in that he accused him of irreverence for the Sabbath, poor administration, misappropriating government stores and of adultery with a female servant. Morisset, for his part demonstrated that he was in no way happy to have his power undermined. He denied the charges and in return accused Middleton of being lax in the performance of his duties, mixing with the wrong kind of people, being more interested in his cattle dealings than the convicts and for being careless with the truth.

On 24 December 1821, Middleton wrote to the Colonial Secretary and charged Morisset with sanctioning breaches of the Sabbath.\footnote{Middleton to Goulburn, 24 December 1821, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825 1788-1825, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 1989, Reel 6067, 4/1808, 25-28. Middleton also refers to this letter in his letter to the Colonial Secretary of 28 February 1822.} Such breaches were not uncommon in other places but Middleton would have none of it in Newcastle.\footnote{Close to Brisbane, 11 December 1823, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence 1788-1825, ML, CY Reel 6067, 4/1809, 124a.}
According to him, Morisset had allowed work to continue on Sundays and so thwarted all Middleton’s efforts to convert the prisoners and the government’s attempts to reform them. His sin was the worse because not only had he allowed work on the Sabbath, the erection of private buildings in view of Government House, but he had also allowed the work to take place during the time of Divine Service. Middleton argued that both the Fourth Commandment and Governor Macquarie’s instructions were negated by his action. Morisset responded with fury and not without good reason. That Middleton wrote at all was sufficient cause to anger him but the manner of the delivery in Newcastle was unprecedented. Morisset was ‘noticed from the pulpit in terms only commensurate with so serious an evil, the violation of the Lord’s Day’.

For one so consumed with the special sanctity of the Sabbath, it is somewhat incongruous to discover later that he was accused of having driven cattle through the country on the Lord’s Day.

By the rubric in the Preface to the service of Holy Communion in the Book of Common Prayer of 1662, Middleton had the authority to use this form of ‘advertisement’. But what the rubric does not include is a warning about the potential consequences of such action, consequences he was soon to experience.

Morisset responded alleging that Middleton was a liar and underhanded in his

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manner because he had never approached him about the breach. He also added that there had been but two instances in all the time that Middleton had been resident in the settlement. To strengthen his argument he stated that he was responsible for ‘800 to 900 of the worst description of people on the face of the earth’ and suggested that Middleton was over-reacting. Middleton believed otherwise and contended that Riley, a carpenter, in company of two other men, had been repairing a boat on the Sabbath not eighty yards from the Commandant’s residence and Morisset, while walking on his verandah at the time, had made no effort to stop them until Middleton complained. Only then were the Constables ordered to go from house to house to ensure that there would be no further breaches of the Sabbath.

Middleton’s action began to have wider ramifications. As Senior Chaplain, Marsden was brought into the conflict by Governor Brisbane who forwarded to him copies of Morisset’s correspondence. Marsden wrote to Middleton but no copy of the letter has survived. Even so, its general tenor can be discerned from Middleton’s letter in reply. Firstly, he averred that he would be vindicated in any investigation. So confident was he that he supplied the names of people he claimed had been punished for refusing to work on the Sabbath. He then reported that private consultation with Morisset had preceded the public denunciation:

Long ere observations were made from the pulpit regarding an evil pregnant with mischief to the prisoners’ morals I repeatedly admonished many individuals found trespassing and then only

341 Morisset to Erskine, 14 January 1822, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 1989, Reel 6067, 4/1808, 179.
342 Morisset to Erskine, 14 January 1822, 178.
343 Middleton to Marsden 28 February 1822, ML, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 1989, Reel 6067, 4/1808, 33.
344 Middleton to Marsden, 28 February, 1822, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825 1788-1825, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 1989, CY Reel 6067, 4/1808, 35-38.
adopted a determination to act consistently with the dictates of a paramount professional duty in addressing His Excellency the Governor when futility of private remonstrance accompanied by suitable threats held out to the prisoners rendered such reference absolutely necessary.\textsuperscript{345}

Morisset refuted Middleton’s allegations and as a further insight into the manner in which he handled criticism, left no doubt as to a deepening rift.\textsuperscript{346} By pointing out that the Sabbath offence took place without his knowledge and contrary to his orders, he dismissed the charge. Work was stopped as soon as he was made aware of it.\textsuperscript{347}

Middleton next revealed that he could overreact and adopt a view not held by others. His claim was that he had brought order to the town, order which had not existed prior to his arrival. Morisset refuted this, too.\textsuperscript{348} He asserted that visitors to Newcastle were surprised and full of admiration at what they saw, an obvious result of his policies. Commendation for his work had even come from Governor Macquarie.\textsuperscript{349} By comparison, the chaplain had effected no difference in the conduct and behaviour of the convicts and had done little to achieve such an end. He was unfaithful to his high calling and his vocation. His true interest lay in his cattle dealings with the private settlers. Worse still, he mixed in the wrong company, that of the few settlers, mostly ex-convicts, who farmed along the river bank.

The exchange of letters was by now becoming very heated and more and more significant for further insights into both the personalities of the two men and

\textsuperscript{345} Middleton to Marsden, 28th February, 35-38.

\textsuperscript{346} Morisset to Erskine, 14 January 1822, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 1989, Reel 6067, 4/1808, 8.

\textsuperscript{347} Morisset to Erskine, 14 January 1822, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, 7.

\textsuperscript{348} Morisset to Erskine, 14 January 1822, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, 7.

the deterioration of their realtionship. Adultery became Middleton’s next accusation, adultery committed by Morisset followed by a further charge that the Commandant’s behaviour encouraged fornication among the soldiers.\textsuperscript{350} In another letter, this time to Samuel Marsden, Middleton repeated the allegation of Morisset’s adultery and also the claim that the Commandant’s action encouraged similar behaviour among the convicts. In so doing, Middleton undermined Morisset’s claims of his unworthiness because he furnished a clear indication of his commitment to the teachings of the Gospel and to the priesthood he held.\textsuperscript{351} As a garnish he next added a charge that Morisset was defrauding the government.\textsuperscript{352} In this letter he also provided detailed reasons for his taking the stand he had: fornication and other crimes were rife and the trail led to the door of Government House.\textsuperscript{353} Morisset’s adultery was especially damaging to the convicts because it sanctioned immoral behaviour among them, undermined the work of the clergy and dragged down even the moral authority of the Executive in Sydney. He believed he had to speak out because by remaining silent he would have abrogated his responsibility.\textsuperscript{354} He wrote: ‘the prisoners have an opportunity of palliating their own sinful courses by a comparison with the example posed by government officers in such high authority’.\textsuperscript{355}

Morisset was not the first Commandant to behave in this way. According to

\textsuperscript{350} Middleton to Brisbane, 24 December, 1821, \textit{Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825}, CY Reel 6016, 5/5781, 174.

\textsuperscript{351} Middleton to Marsden, 28 February 1822, \textit{Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825}, CY Reel 6067, 4/1808, 35.

\textsuperscript{352} Middleton to Marsden, 28 February 1822, 35.

\textsuperscript{353} Middleton to Marsden, 28 February 1822, 35-38.

\textsuperscript{354} Middleton to Brisbane, 24 December 1821, \textit{Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825}, 1788-1825, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 1987-1988, 175.

\textsuperscript{355} Middleton to Brisbane, 24 December 1821, 175.
Middleton, the previous Commandant had also indulged. Nevertheless, Morisset’s sin appeared to be the greater because he was allowing female housekeepers to be allocated to single men while at the same time defrauding the colony by providing for them from Government stores. Morisset denied the adultery and this letter is especially important because it revealed that he was not averse to handling the truth lightly if it suited his purpose. He claimed his alleged paramour was a servant with responsibility for his keys and his valuables. Middleton, he claimed, knew her position:

I must put it to the candour of this Gentleman to say, if ever he saw, during his residence of upwards of six weeks in the House, or heard anything that could be offensive to modesty, or anything bordering on impropriety, or if ever I attempted to introduce any Female whatsoever to his society or did he ever see me in her company in the House, or walking with her in the streets of Newcastle.

Morisset’s claim that Middleton had resided with him was false. Blaxland’s Journal, his record of the six weeks he spent with Middleton in 1821, is quite specific. He and Middleton often dined with Morisset during July and August of that year but they returned to the parsonage afterward. That Morisset, then a single man, required the services of a housekeeper is beyond doubt. That his housekeeper might also be his mistress is entirely possible because another woman, Jane Deasy, perhaps also his housekeeper, bore him a son in 1826. It was not until 1826 that Morisset married. His wife was Emily Vaux whom he married on the Isle of Wight.

356 Middleton to Marsden, 28 February 1822, CY Reel 6067,4/1808, 35-38.
357 Morisset to Erskine, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 1989, Reel 6067, 4/1808, 178, 179.
Morisset responded by claiming to have a witness. That witness was John Blaxland. However, there is no indication that Blaxland either supported or criticised him. He probably remained silent and for very good reason. With a very profitable salt works near the Newcastle pier and land interests in the Hunter Valley, it appears he would not jeopardise his business interests even for the sake of a friendship. To speak out could have been totally detrimental to his interests. Morisset had absolute control over who could and could not move around the Hunter Valley. By refusing Blaxland access to the settlement and the hinterland, Morisset could have put him out of business. Such was his power.

There was, however, another witness who came forward some years later. John Kertan supported Middleton’s accusation. Formerly a convict in Newcastle, he wrote to *The Sydney Monitor* in 1826 and stated unequivocally that Morisset indulged in illicit sexual relations with his housekeeper: ‘Major Morisset employed me in making bird cages, tables, etc, for Mrs Hayes, his concubine and gave me the King’s rations and slops with the rest of the prisoners’.360 He also supported Middleton’s contention that Morisset was using government supplies to his own ends.

Morisset retaliated and in so doing revealed another instance of his ability to manipulate the truth. Middleton, he claimed, was a hypocrite because had aided and abetted the very same sexual misconduct:

> It must strike all who read this complaint charged against me as very extraordinary that he should permit several couples at this station to live in a state of fornication for the last twelve months and who made application to him to be married to my certain knowledge a year ago. 361

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360 Letter of John Kertan, *The Monitor*, 7 July 1826, 6. Note that in the paper there are several variant spellings of the name: Kertan, Kerton, Kerten.

361 Morisset to Erskine, 14 January 1822, ML, *Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825*, CY Reel 6067, 4/1808, 180.
Middleton denied Morisset’s accusation and stated that within six weeks of his appointment to Newcastle was gazetted, and in the absence of Governor Macquarie in Van Diemen’s Land, he made an official communication to Lt. Governor Erskine for the banns being published between the parties to which Morisset alluded. He also pointed out that he had received no acknowledgment of his letter and that even so, those couples ‘had been married long since’. The ecclesiastical returns to the Government from this time support Middleton.

Whereas Middleton claimed that he spoke out from a sense of duty, Morisset was convinced he acted out of revenge:

He never uttered a complaint or censure until an unfortunate difference was brought on by his violent and disrespectful conduct to me on a point of duty…and…ever since that time his manner changed and has been altogether unfriendly and inveterate.

The historians Windross and Ralston aver that Morisset’s conduct changed because of Middleton’s ‘kindly interest’ in the Aboriginal people.\textsuperscript{362} Whatever its nature, Morisset would not accept interference with his duties and his resentment and retaliation is revealed in the next part of his letter. Middleton’s behaviour was,

Quite different from that mild deportment so amiable and so much expected from a Christian Divine…The Rev. Mr. Middleton returned to Sydney and remained away from his clerical duties for a very considerable period’.\textsuperscript{363}

Here is the first allegation of absenteeism.

Three days after his first letter, Middleton sent off a second in which other aspects of his character are revealed: his ability to look to his material welfare and to


\textsuperscript{363} Morisset to Erskine, 14 January 1822, \textit{Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825 1788-1825},
annoy those with whom he was at variance. The letter contained three requests: the completion of the Parsonage at Newcastle; a piece of ground in the rear of the house ‘essential to his comfort’; and to have a government boat at his disposal so that he could make ‘professional visits to the settlements on the banks of Hunter’s River’. He again wrote on 7 January, this time with a request for permission to fell two or three cedar trees, the timber to be used for the finishing and furnishing of the Parsonage. Morisset responded in two letters to his superior officer, Lt. Governor Erskine. These letters are significant because in them he again revealed his ability to handle the truth with almost careless abandon. In the first he claimed to have ‘no idea what Mr. Middleton can mean’ about the parsonage, asserting that it had been completed long ago:

It consists of a handsome entrance hall, dining, drawing and Bed Rooms, with a study and Store room, extremely neatly finished under the same roof; a Detached Kitchen and two servants’ rooms with a covered passage leading from the dwelling to the out offices, a yard enclosed by a large open shed, a small enclosure at the back of and adjoining the Offices, with two necessaries and a garden at the side… The Parsonage is the best finished house by far in Newcastle.

The intensity of the conflict was mounting. As can be seen from the correspondence thus far, letter by letter, Middleton began to undermine Morisset by displaying him as vindictive while at the same time portraying himself as a martyr to righteousness.

Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 1989, ML, CY Reel 6067, 4/1808, 12.

364 Middleton to Brisbane, 27 December 1821, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825 1788-1825, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 1989, CY Reel 6016, 4/5781, 170.

365 Middleton to Goulburn, 7 January 1822, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-18251788-1825, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 1989, Reel 6016, 4/5781, 171.

366 Morisset to Erskine, 14 January 1822, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-18251788-1825, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 1989, Reel 6067, 4/1808, 176-180.

367 Morisset to Goulburn, 14 January 1822, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, 1788-1825, ML, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 1989, Reel 6016, 4/5781, 172.
As to the request for land, maps of Newcastle reveal that the rear of Middleton’s parsonage abutted the land of Government House.\textsuperscript{368} To Morisset it would have seemed that Middleton had diminished his moral status and now he was aspiring to reduce his physical bounds. If Middleton’s request was granted, Morisset would lose garden space with a subsequent reduction in food production. He left no doubt that Middleton knew the land was ‘required for government purposes’ and had no right to apply for it.\textsuperscript{369} Further, he reminded his reader that Governor Macquarie had ordered Morisset to give the parson a piece of land ‘outside the town’.\textsuperscript{370}

Not one to give up, Middleton again wrote to the Colonial Secretary.\textsuperscript{371} He repeated his request for the land and added a claim not previously made: the land was ‘essential to my comfort’ because he was compelled either to live upon salt provisions or allow his poultry to run in the bush exposed to the prisoners’ rapacity.\textsuperscript{372} Morisset, he argued, had no understanding of how he was affected because he had a large tract of land on which he grazed a flock of sheep safe from the prisoners’ depredations. If he obtained the land and used it for his poultry they would be safe and his food supply improved. He then further accused Morisset of working against him. Morisset had barred him from fishing and hunting with those who ensured the settlement’s food supply.\textsuperscript{373} Consequently, he was unable to share in the provender and his diet was limited to salt meat and such poultry as he was able to

\textsuperscript{368} \textit{Draft of the Town of Newcastle}, NLD 811, Newcastle City Library, Newcastle, N.S.W, 251, undated.

\textsuperscript{369} Morisset to Goulburn, 14 January 1822, \textit{Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825}, ML, CY Reel 6067, 4/1808, 21.

\textsuperscript{370} Morisset to Goulburn, 14 January 1822, 21.

\textsuperscript{371} Middleton to Goulburn, 28 February, 1822, CY Reel 6067, 4/1808, 31-39.

\textsuperscript{372} Middleton to Goulburn, 28 February 1822, 32.

\textsuperscript{373} Middleton to Goulburn, 28 February 1822, 32
rescue from ravages of the convicts. This allegation is particularly significant for both men. It highlighted how Morisset might retaliate and revealed Middleton’s increasing predicament. In 1821 food was so scarce that game-keepers hunted kangaroos and ducks to provide a sufficient supply of meat for the Commandant and the Officers’ quarters. Selected from among the convicts, the game-keepers considered themselves privileged. Most had been transported for poaching at home and were therefore well-adapted to the work. Each day they were expected to bring in food while those who had been farmers were allowed allotments on the riverbank at Wallis’ Plains, Nelson Plains and Patterson (sic) Plains.

Middleton’s next accusations concerned the matter of the boat. Water transport being the easiest and safest means of inland travel at that time, Middleton needed a boat to perform his professional duties. On previous occasions a boat was made available. Morisset quite rightly believed the request was unnecessary because Middleton had always had access to transport. He also added that he intended to have a boat constructed which would be available for both Middleton and the acting engineer to use in their professional capacities. Middleton would surely have known this and his petition can only be construed as suggesting that Morisset was deliberately hindering him in his sacred task. The emphasis on ‘professional duties’ is interesting. Charges of absenteeism were increasing and by this wording Middleton may have attempted to cover past indiscretions.

Morisset responded by ensuring that Middleton’s journeys were as unpleasant

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374 J. Windross and J.P. Ralston, Historical Records of Newcastle, 1797-1897, Newcastle, NSW, Federal Printing and Book-Binding Works, 1897, 10.

375 J. Windross and J.P. Ralston, Historical Records of Newcastle, 1797-1897, 10,11.

376 See Blaxland’s Journal.
as he could make them. When Middleton rowed up-river to minister, the boat supplied to him was an insult to his dignity. He wrote:

On several occasions I have proceeded to the Lime Burners in a common fishing boat containing not only many inches of matter but the refuse itself of the net and that a government gig was only afforded me upon the former accommodation unworthy of, as insulting to my public character, being remonstrated against last September.377

If this remonstration was that ‘violent and disrespectful behaviour on a point of duty’ to which Morisset referred, Middleton’s objection was legitimate and demonstrates that the relationship was now even more soured.378 Morisset was frustrated and angered by Middleton and he summed up his feelings when he wrote:

I have done every thing in my power to make each individual, resident at this settlement as comfortable and promoted their convenience as possible.379

Morisset believed this statement to be correct but Middleton’s next complaint calls it into question. He protested that for four months after his arrival had been forced to pay three shillings a bushel to grind his wheat. This was slightly more than sixteen percent of his stipend and therefore exorbitant.380 No wonder he was upset. Even if some of Middleton’s claims are exaggerated, this evidence shows that Morisset victimised him. There is no record of others being charged at the same rate.

Morisset continued to attempt to disgrace Middleton. He claimed that while Middleton was in Sydney he made no allusion to the claims mentioned in his letters. On the contrary, had spoken highly of Morisset in a conversation with Governor

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377 Middleton to Goulburn, 28 February 1822, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, Reel 6067, 4/1808, 33.

378 Middleton to Goulburn, 28 February 1822, 31-34.

379 Middleton to Goulburn, 14 January 1822, ML, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, Reel 6016, 4/5781, 171-173.

380 Middleton’s stipend at this time was £250 per annum.
Macquarie and upon his return to Newcastle continued to accept Morisset’s hospitality. He enjoyed it until ‘his own conduct…deprived him of that friendly intercourse which formerly subsisted between us’. 

Middleton took an enormous risk by speaking out. Samuel Marsden, in a letter written in 1826, gave an insight into one of the conditions under which the chaplains operated. Commenting on the arrival of the new Archdeacon he stated that the clergy were now ‘free from military law and they cannot be dismissed at the will of the governor’. Such was the danger Middleton faced.

But more immediately, Middleton could also be isolated. As has been demonstrated, Morisset’s position was powerful in respect of his control over the movement of people in the Hunter Valley. But he had an even more potent weapon at his disposal. The free population consisted mostly of army personnel, none of whom would hazard the disfavour of his commanding officer, especially Morisset, by being on friendly terms with that officer’s adversary. Nor would the other free settlers. The same could be achieved in Sydney. Morisset had the support of his army colleagues and superiors. The Governor and many of the high-ranking authorities were army personnel and they could be called on to work against the chaplain. In a letter to Governor Brisbane, James Erskine, Colonel Commanding the 48th Regiment and Morisset’s superior officer, showed that this actually happened: ‘I have no hesitation in declaring that I look upon Major Morisset to be strictly a man of correct honour in

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381 Morisset to Erskine, 14 January 1822, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 1989, ML, CY Reel 6067, 4/1808, 13.

382 Morisset to Erskine, 14 January 1822, ML, CY Reel 6067, 4/1808, 12.

383 Marsden to Bickersteth, 9 April 1826, ML, Bonwick Transcripts 53, 1621.
every respect’.384

No letter exists showing similar support for Middleton. More significantly, Governor Macquarie visited Newcastle in 1821 and praised Morisset’s work:

I was highly gratified with everything I saw, and expressed my unqualified approbation to Major Morisset of the manner in which he conducts his arduous duties here, and the excellence of the system he has laid down and pursues so successfully.385

While there he also attended Divine Service and in his diary mentioned only that fact. Usually, he commented on the sermon, but not this time.386 One reason may have been that Middleton was a good friend of John Blaxland and John Blaxland was a noted enemy of Macquarie.387 Commissioner Bigge also praised Morisset. In his Report, he supported Macquarie’s comment when he wrote, ‘his attention to the complaints of the convicts, his investigation of them, and his efforts to maintain discipline, are equally conspicuous and successful’.388

If Middleton was pushed to the fringe of society, his absenteeism is obviously explained. As persona non grata in Newcastle, departing the scene was his escape from isolation. He also needed to be in Sydney trying to mend fences and shore up

384 Erskine to Goulburn, 17 January 1822, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, 1788-1825, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 1989, Reel 6011, 4/3509, 389. Also found in 6067, 4/1808, 24.


his position. Nor can young George be ignored. He was not living in Newcastle. These factors coupled with his dealings in cattle provide obvious motives for being absent from his place of duty. Add to this the fact that he had his glebe to maintain and he had more than sufficient motivation to avoid his dreadful predicament. That he wrote from Sydney and Parramatta over the Christmas period is a clear indication that all was not well. Self-preservation drove him back to where former friends and acquaintances would receive him. Given this understanding, Morisset’s charge of Middleton’s laxity in the performance of his duty, while no doubt truthful, reveals a different perspective. Middleton was a man under siege and enduring great stress.

Such was this stress that Middleton isolated himself in an attempt to avoid a repeat of past events. He decided that he would have no association with Morisset other than that demanded by their professional relationship. Whether intended as policy or not, Morisset’s responses and their reception in Sydney had produced, for Middleton, a firm decision. In the past the two men had met socially. There would be no such meetings in the future: he would avoid all future social connections with the Commandant, having already declined invitations to Morisset’s home because such visits would have left him unhappy and have diminished his dignity.389

What began for Middleton as an act of righteous indignation worked against him. He believed he had no choice other than to act as he did. He also maintained he acted reluctantly:

The respect due to an officer enjoying a commission from His Majesty would operate most powerfully on my mind in restraining any official communication involving serious responsibility on the Commandant at New Castle.390

389 Middleton to Goulburn, 28 February 1822, ML, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, 1788-1825, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 1989, Reel 6067, 4/1808, 33-34.

390 Middleton to Marsden, 28 February 1822, CY Reel 6067, 4/1808 34.
Middleton had to be true to his scruples and to the general good because others beside himself had witnessed repeated occurrences of the events against which he railed.\textsuperscript{391} He believed himself vindicated in his actions. He also maintained that Morisset had confessed to his adulterous relationship and that no further justification of his behaviour was necessary. ‘The Commandant having tacitly admitted his adulterous intercourse renders it quite unnecessary for me to add a single word on the subject’.\textsuperscript{392}

Middleton must have felt that by this letter he had gained the upper hand. His next comment was a smug riposte that in spite of all that had happened he bore no resentment against Morisset for the lies he believed had been perpetrated against him. His reasoning was that to do so would be ‘incompatible with my profession which teaches me to love one’s enemies’. The letter finishes somewhat naively:

I cannot conclude without expressing regret that Brevet Major Morisset should misinterpret my motives when only conforming with a sense of public duty.\textsuperscript{393}

Middleton had every right to act as he did. Professionally, all that he held dear was trampled under foot and his efforts to fulfil the obligations of his vocation were thwarted. The improvement of the spiritual and moral welfare of the settlement was being negated by a man who should have been his ally. This same man, knowing the status of the clergy in colonial society, acted most imprudently. He maintained a conflict which neither man could win. Middleton, on the other hand, is not entirely

\textsuperscript{391} Middleton to Marsden, 28 February 1822, 36. Ultimately Middleton was forced into taking action because of his scruples and because others had also witnessed such events occurring repeatedly.

\textsuperscript{392} Middleton to Marsden, 28 February 1822, CY Reel 6067, 4/1808 34.

\textsuperscript{393} Middleton to Marsden, 28 February 1822, CY Reel 6067, 4/1808 39.
blameless. His manner brought him undone. His letters indicate he could be self-righteous if not priggish in his concern for his ‘rights’.

For the next eighteen months the two men co-existed until Morisset departed Newcastle in November 1823 to take up a position of Commandant at Bathurst. In that time no sign of reconciliation was apparent. Morisset’s transfer reveals that the Governor deemed him a competent and worthwhile administrator whose talents could better be used in his new appointment. Middleton, on the other hand, had sown the seeds of his destruction. By alienating himself from the military and by absences from his post, he captured the attention of many observers, not the least among whom were the Evangelicals.

Eleven months after Morisset departed for Bathurst, the ecclesiastical authorities in England planned the arrival in Sydney of Middleton’s future professional nemesis. On 2 October 1824 they appointed the first archdeacon to the growing church in the colony of New South Wales. That he was given the post demonstrates most clearly the function and importance of networking. His family was well-connected. His father was a priest who had been a Chaplain in Ordinary to King George III. And through his sister’s marriage, he had J.T. Bigge as an in-law.394 Thomas, through these connections had obtained a position as a Consul in Venice, and he also had business skills, having been a wine-merchant. Most significantly, his association with the Bigge family obtained him the position of secretary to J.T. Bigge during the latter’s inquiry into the state of New South Wales.395 As Grose remarked:


‘he was in the right place at the right time’. During Bigge’s investigation, the chaplains had pressed on him the need for education and religion to be promoted across the settlements and so emphasised the need for a senior churchman to be appointed in order that their voice might be heard at the highest level of government. Their plea was heard and the first archdeacon appointed to the antipodean church arrived in May 1825. Middleton’s next battle with authority was about to begin.

On 16 June 1825, *The Sydney Gazette* reported that a week earlier in St James Church there had taken place the Primary Visitation of the Venerable Thomas Hobbes Scott. In the presence of Governor and Lady Brisbane, the colony’s civil and military officers and the Anglican clergy, the service demonstrated the conjunction of church and state. The ceremony was ‘grand and auspicious’ with the Archdeacon’s address being ‘gracious and well-received’. Appointed in consequence of the Bigge Report, Scott’s arrival signalled that the Home authorities acknowledged that the colonial church stood at the cusp of a new era. Prior to 1825 it lacked a recognisable local structure and seat of ecclesiastical authority. With Scott’s appointment it now had a figurehead and administrator through whom change would be effected. His commission directed him to influence both state and ecclesiastical policy as the church and colonial administration endeavoured to cope with a severe shortage of clergy, a rapidly expanding population and a burgeoning economy.

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396 Kelvin Grose, ‘Why Was Hobbes Scott Chosen As Archdeacon of N.S.W.?’, 260.


398 *The Sydney Gazette*, 16 June 1825.

399 *The Sydney Gazette*, 16 June 1825.
Scott’s impact would be felt across the colony but especially would it impinge on the clergy, and particularly Middleton.

Scott’s induction was a grand affair with special theological significance for the clergy. At the appropriate time they moved up to the altar with their new Archdeacon and stood with him as he celebrated the Holy Communion. Herein was signified the outward and visible sign of Scott’s authority and his sacerdotal bond with the assembled priests. But, eighteen months after Scott’s induction that authority was wielded against Middleton, the unity dissipated and in less than two years his resignation crossed the Archdeacon’s desk. The conflict between the two revealed the extent to which ecclesiastical authority could be used and abused and Christian charity denied. For Scott, Middleton was both unreliable and lax in the performance of his duties, was self-serving, was an intolerable administrator and also was quarrelsome and cantankerous.

That Scott and Middleton would clash was inevitable. In many ways they were alike. Scott was definite and unwavering in his convictions. He was strong-willed. He acted from conviction without considering consequences and was perceived to be arrogant, dictatorial and over-ambitious and he made immense demands on his clergy. John Dunmore Lang believed that ‘his conduct soon showed his total unfitness for the post improperly created for him, and to which he was most improperly raised’.400 Lang also wrote:

I verily believe that if Mr Scott had held office in the reign of Charles the Second, he would have obtained a bishopric on the special recommendation of Judge Jeffries.401

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By 1829, Samuel Marsden said of him that he and the clergy were not getting on and that a family man would have been better than the unmarried Scott.\(^{402}\) Scott was a difficult character and his writings support both Lang and Marsden. They make absolutely clear his belief that he was too good for the majority of the populace.\(^{403}\)

Very soon after his arrival he wrote to the Bishop of London and his letter says more about himself than it does about the people. He claimed that the majority of the population was ‘vicious to the extreme’. He had decided to disassociate himself from the greater part of society because it was ‘too bad and too horrid to have anything to do with’.\(^{404}\) If the people were ‘too horrid’, so also was the culture:

> The air of these colonies certainly affects the people who come here with a roguish manner although their intentions at first might have been good and for fear I should catch this disease the sooner I go the better.\(^{405}\)

Middleton, too, as has been demonstrated, was a man of definite and unwavering conviction. While not believing the population in general to be ‘vicious to the extreme’, he most assuredly believed certain individuals within it were. He was also ambitious. Determined to become wealthy, he aspired to live the life of the ‘scurvsvn’. He, too, was conscious of both his position in society and the respect and concessions to which that position rendered him due.\(^{406}\) Middleton, like Scott, also

\(^{402}\) Marsden to Bickersteth, 24 February 1829, ML, *Bonwick Transcripts 54*, 1837.

\(^{403}\) Scott’s feud with Hall, Editor of *The Monitor* is an excellent example of his tendency and it is discussed later in this chapter.


\(^{406}\) Note his conflict with Commandant Morisset in respect of the condition of the boat he was offered for use in his ministry. See Middleton to Goulburn, 28 February 1822, ML, *Colonial Secretary’s*
came to be disliked, but for different reasons. Whereas Scott imposed his not-inconsiderable authority to gain his ends, Middleton did not. He resisted men such as Scott, men who would impose power on him. He was not one to conform. Independence and self-assurance stamped his make-up. On the other hand, as has been shown earlier, to those to whom he did not have to answer, he offered gracious service and was held in high regard.

Once arrived in the colony, Scott took little time to disapprove of most of his clergy. In another letter to the Bishop of London, written two weeks after the first, he said that they made his task difficult because they were ‘gloomy’ and had such notions of purity that ‘their flocks are much affected by it’.\footnote{Scott to the Bishop of London, 1 July 1825, ML, \textit{Scott Letterbooks}, \textit{CY Reel 3435}, 1512-1513.} He later wrote that these same clergy could be guilty of ‘underhand, intrigue, misrepresentation and disobedience’.\footnote{Scott to Arthur, 15 July 1828, \textit{Papers of Sir George Arthur, Vol. 13, Letters From Archdeacon Scott 1824-1838}, FM4 362, A2173, unpaged.} He would have liked ‘a different caste of clergy’ but realised that it was difficult, if not impossible ‘to get clergymen who have any expectation in England to come to this place’.\footnote{Scott to the Bishop of London, 1 January 1826, ML, \textit{Scott Letterbooks}, \textit{CY Reel 3435}, \textit{Vol. 1}, 1571. Emphasis in original.} Scott viewed his priests as uninspiring and second-rate men forced to minister in the colony because, for the most part, there was no place for them in England. That he believed this demonstrates how little he knew or understood them. Many, like Cartwright and Cowper, were faithful servants of their God and were men who had held previous incumbencies in England. As far as Scott was concerned he could do nothing with his clergy even though he had powers which exceeded those of the Bishop of Calcutta, the bishop in whose jurisdiction the colony
lay. In 1828 Scott wrote to Colonel Arthur, the Lieutenant Governor in Van Diemen’s Land:

I would rather be a curate than the head of the church here… I shall officially announce to the Archbishop unless he can or will place more power and the means of enforcing it in the hands of my successor he may as well have no church here at all.

Scott’s dislike of the clergy also extended to their performance of their duties. He took exception to the liberties they introduced into liturgical practice and objected to any variation from the Book of Common Prayer. Some had composed their own catechism instead of using that of the Prayer Book and had also used a version of the psalms produced by a Mr. Goode whose doctrinal slant Scott found unacceptable.

He was especially critical of the Evangelicals yet, when later occasion demanded, he was happy to use them to suit his ends. The nub of his objections is found in what he wrote to Archdeacon Hamilton, an acquaintance in England:

Upon my arrival I found the services administered much more after the manner of a Methodist Chapel than of the Church, nor can I by all the private hints I have given or example I have set, get the better of such practices… their sermons are delivered ‘extemporare’, or at least unwritten, with a Bible in their hand ‘full of bookstrings’, placed in the texts they intended to use by way of illustration - now and then they look at their watch as if they ought to continue a given time whether they have matter or not - and they usually continue an hour and sometimes more delivering the most unconnected sentences in a violent ranting manner to the little edification of their audience who in this hot climate are often asleep more than half the time.

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412 Scott to the Bishop of London, 1 January 1826, ML, Scott Letterbooks, CY Reel 3435, 1513.

Scott was adamant that the Prayer Book standard should be the norm. Ransome Wyatt claimed that he ‘slavishly adhered’ to the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer.\textsuperscript{414} The relevant rubric insisted that all things should be done ‘in a seemly and due order’ to which Scott added his personal amendment – by clerics who were seemly and orderly. \textsuperscript{415} And what if these clerics were unseemly and disorderly? When occasion demanded, his reprimand was fast and severe. Thomas Reddall of Campbelltown was censured for the delivery and subjects of his sermons and because he neglected his duty and was extravagant in his farming.\textsuperscript{416} In one location he had had taken no services in five months.\textsuperscript{417} On another he attended a public meeting not connected with his clerical duties.\textsuperscript{418} Thomas Hassall was taken to task for absenteeism resulting from his failure to occupy his position at Bathurst in what Scott deemed to be a reasonable time.\textsuperscript{419} By his Instrument of Patent, Scott was given clear guidelines as to what constituted unacceptable behaviour and the action he should take if it occurred. He could suspend clergy if they ‘created a public and notorious scandal or for any gross neglect or abuse of ecclesiastical duties’.\textsuperscript{420} Yet it appears he felt unable to act as it stipulated. He submitted that his authority was not episcopal and in New South Wales no ecclesiastical court existed through which he could assert his authority. Even so, he had been required to set up an Archdeacon’s

\textsuperscript{416} Scott to Reddall, 3 July 1826, \textit{Scott Letterbooks}, ML, CY Reel 3435, A850-851, 275.
\textsuperscript{420} Bathurst to Brisbane, 21 December 1824, \textit{Historical Records of Australia, Vol. XI}, 421.
Court by his Letters Patent.\textsuperscript{421} From his standpoint, there was nothing he could do to punish clergy for unacceptable or uncanonical behaviour. Historian, Ross Border, contended that Scott’s disciplinary powers were ‘exceptionally wide’ and equal to the Governor’s.\textsuperscript{422} Scott apparently didn’t believe so. He was of the impression that he could not legally restrain any clergyman from committing an offence no matter how that priest contravened the doctrine and the discipline of the Church because he had no episcopal power to punish them for ‘gross irregularity of conduct’.\textsuperscript{423}

That Scott wrote in such terms shows that he intended to come out as a new broom and sweep mightily clean. Such was his temperament. On the other hand, he also had to consider the serious shortage of clergy. He could not afford to lose a priest. In a letter to Colonial Secretary McLeay he stated his dilemma: ‘It is impossible for me to place a clergyman at present at either Port Macquarie, Illawarra, Moreton Bay and Norfolk Island there being so few in the colony’.\textsuperscript{424} To the Governor he wrote that because of the clergy shortage there was a ‘great deficiency’ in spiritual support for the people, ‘if not a total absence’, and that the people were ignorant of the forms of worship and that the dead had been buried close to their homes without any funeral service.\textsuperscript{425}

Stemmming from his business background, Scott adopted a methodical approach to running the church. He brooked no dissension from cleric or layman and

\textsuperscript{421} Ross Border, \textit{Church and State in Australia, A Constitutional Study of the Church of England in Australia}, 44.

\textsuperscript{422} Ross Border, \textit{Church and State in Australia, A Constitutional Study of the Church of England in Australia}, 43.

\textsuperscript{423} Scott to Horton, 14 June 1824, \textit{Bonwick Transcripts 53}, 1430-1431.


\textsuperscript{425} Scott to Darling, 31 July 1827, \textit{Scott Letterbooks II}, ML, CY Reel 3435, A850-851, unpaged.
his high-handed tactics left him no room to manoeuvre. With some justification, he was convinced that as far as the clergy were concerned, the heart of the problem lay in the selection process. Ironically, he had not experienced it himself because of his connections, and it is obvious that the process by which he was selected was no better. Without proper examination he was made Deacon in Wells on 9 December 1821 and two weeks later, on 23 December 1821 after having dined with the Bishop of the Diocese, he was ordained Priest in Gloucester Cathedral.426

In a letter to Sir George Arthur in 1827, Scott outlined his objections to clergy selection and his belief that a recent and newly-introduced system for appointing priests would bring about desirable and necessary change. He also revealed the depth of his feelings against Middleton, with whom, at this time, relations were abysmal and from whom he had but a few days earlier received a resignation:

The Ecclesiastical Board has been constituted to superintend the affairs of the Colonial Church instead of the Colonial Office at which latter place they knew nothing and did worse than nothing and also to examine personally all the clergy who are appointed to the colonies instead of them having a five minutes interview with some subordinate clerk in Downing St who imagined because he saw Clerk with Letters of Orders he was one of his own chaps! - they all now appear before the two Lord Bishops and Bishop (Harrison?) and character is enquired into as well as qualifications - thus a Mr. Flockton has been stopped and thus would Mr. Middleton have been stopped.427

Scott was convinced that clergy should be chosen ‘with the greatest caution’. 428 (He


428 Scott to Darling, 1 September 1829, Historical Records of Australia, Governors Despatches to and from England, Series I, Vol. 15, 215. The italics are those of Scott.
obviously overlooked the manner in which he had been appointed). His belief was that the Church had been ‘brought into disrepute’ and ‘attachment to the Church had diminished’ because of the actions of clergy ‘amongst whom there were few exceptions’. Some had pursued ‘secular aggrandizement’ and in so doing absented themselves from duty, neglected their cures of souls and associated with men ‘in whom they witnessed the most licentious and depraved conduct’.\(^{429}\) Frederick Wilkinson, for example, was willing to travel large distances to partake in a dinner ‘where the most disgraceful and degrading scenes’ had taken place while at the same time objecting to travelling similar distances to baptise, even though he was paid a travelling allowance to do so. Thomas Hassall alone received Scott’s approval. Of him he said that,

> Mr Hassall is a very prudent young man, lives in great retirement, and does his clerical duties with the greatest decorum and punctually throughout a very large district, and entirely to my satisfaction; nor have I had any instance of negligence.\(^{430}\)

Hassall could do no other than appeal to Scott. He exemplified the clergyman who was decent and orderly in all things.

> That Scott was orderly and efficient is evidenced in a circular letter to all clergy by which he initiated the first comprehensive, but also long and tedious survey of church life.\(^{431}\) Over a period of several years he sent out a number of circular


\(^{430}\) Scott to Darling, 1 September 1829, *Historical Records of Australia, Governors Despatches to and from England*, Series I Vol. 15, 216.

\(^{431}\) Scott: ‘Circular Letter to All Clergy, 26 May 1825’, *Scott Letterbooks Vol. II*, ML, CY Reel CY Reel 3435, A850-851, 72-79. The information sought related to clergy and other church-related employees’ incomes as well as close information concerning parsonages, glebe houses and glebe lands and the persons who had the use of them. He asked when stipends were paid and by what means, what fees were exacted for the Occasional Offices (weddings, funerals and baptisms) and the number of men and
letters to the clergy. His language was as complex as the detail he required.

The following is a typical example of his style.

On the other side I beg to transmit to you two forms which I request you will follow in making your quarterly returns to me of the bills and expenses attending repairs of the Church and School together with salaries of the Masters - each bill must be numbered progressively and correspond with the numbers on the return and I beg that they may be forwarded to me within one week after each quarter day if possible otherwise the bills can not be paid before the ensuing quarter. The bills must be sent to you in duplicate and receipted one of which you must keep yourself. 432

Given the detail required, this survey and those that followed, imposed a great time burden on his clergy, one which had the potential to tie them to the desk and take them away from other duties. Middleton, as has been shown, was not of this mould. He was far more comfortable in the saddle than in the seat of scribes. For example, in letters written to Scott on 15 and 18 August 1825 Middleton asked the whereabouts of communion wine and altar linen he had requested for use in Newcastle. 433 Scott was not impressed. Two weeks elapsed before Middleton indicated that the items had not arrived. 434 Scott wrote expressing his surprise and no little anger that Middleton could be so lax:

I am extremely surprised that you should be so little acquainted with your clerical duties as to expect me to state to you the number of Bibles and Prayer Books you should require for your district. If I did not desire you to specify the number it was because no other clergyman within the archdeaconry has made so extraordinary an application to me as you have for ‘some Bibles and Prayer Books’. 435

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433 This letter is known only by Scott to Middleton, 5 September 1825, ML, Scott Letterbooks, Vol. I, 91.
Of more immediate significance was Scott’s information that Middleton would receive a book in which to keep a register of births, marriages and deaths. It concluded with a none-too-subtle warning that ‘you had better make a correct copy of such as you have already performed’.\textsuperscript{436} In February of the next year, the first of these entries would be used by Middleton’s enemies to begin to bring him down.

Further controversy raged over the state of the Newcastle church yard. Middleton ignored Scott’s request for information about it in a letter dated 26 May 1825.\textsuperscript{437} In the intervening time a Grand Jury had investigated the state of Newcastle and published a report.\textsuperscript{438} Governor Darling read it and made special mention of the burial ground because it was unfenced with the result that it had become a pedestrian thoroughfare. Even worse, pigs were able to wander in and were rooting up the graves. That the churchyard ought to have been properly fenced was, apart from the emotional considerations, mandatory.\textsuperscript{439} Scott had no hesitation in finding further fault with the chaplain, laying the blame squarely, but unfairly, on Middleton.\textsuperscript{440}

According to Scott, Middleton’s neglect was a violation of Governor Macquarie’s order that crops and other areas of land should be fenced to keep stock out and by failing to do so, Middleton had brought both himself and the church into shame.


\textsuperscript{437} This was in 1825.


\textsuperscript{439} See footnote 433.

\textsuperscript{440} Scott to Middleton, 24 August 1826, 300.
in the public arena. Scott also accused him of being ‘so little acquainted with your clerical duties’. He conveniently overlooked the fact that Middleton had previously informed him of the difficulties he faced in having the fence erected because of problems obtaining quotes for the restoration. Middleton, however, would not let the matter go without comment and wrote to Scott telling him that he had done as much as he could and stated that he was perfectly content that in having reported the absence of the fence and that he was not in the least concerned about official correspondence. Others could look after that.

The church and burial ground stood then, as they do today, on one of the highest points of inner Newcastle and also, as now, were then exposed to violent storms. Ten days after receiving Scott’s letter, Middleton informed William Cowper, Secretary of the Clergy and School Lands Corporation, that consequent upon ‘a storm of wind and rain’ the church had been ‘so seriously injured’ that in consultation with Captain Allman, the Commandant, a decision was made to find an alternative building to use as both church and school. They agreed that if people entered the church they might endanger their lives. Lt. William Coke of the 39th Regiment recorded that services were then held in the soldiers’ barracks. That the storm wreaked such severe damage is not surprising. One commentator remarked that the church was ‘one of those flimsy

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442 Middleton to Scott, 10 September 1826, *Clergy and School Lands Corporation Correspondence, (Letters from Clergy)*, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 4/320, 153, 154.

443 Middleton to Scott, 10 September 1826, *Clergy and School Lands Correspondence*, 154.

444 Middleton to Cowper, 20 September 1826, *Clergy and School Lands Corporation Correspondence, (Letters from Clergy)*, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 4/320, 157. It appears that Cowper was acting as Archdeacon while Scott was absent in another part of the colony.

erections, ran up for show without any regard for durability’. Another said that it was ‘a monument to the truth of the old adage, penny wise and pound foolish. Given the exposure to the elements, any building, and especially a fence erected in such a position needed to be very strong, not only to resist the gales, but because the pigs and goats which roamed unrestrained would not be deterred by anything less substantial. He had called for tenders to remediate the problem but the tender itself became the real problem. Only one was received and it quoted eleven shillings per rod. As there were more than ten acres in the burial ground, the cost of fencing would be enormous and so Middleton, rather than accept the tender, was waiting for advice from Sydney. He believed that the cost ought to have been nearer to eight pence per rod. The tender was grossly inflated and he was justified in not proceeding with it. Scott’s response to Middleton’s information, if there was one at all, is not known.

Middleton was next reprimanded for failing to go through proper channels. On one occasion he wrote to the Governor but forwarded his correspondence through the Commandant. Scott was angered because Middleton ought to have known his Letter of Patent stated quite specifically that all ecclesiastical matters were to pass through him. Scott then fired his first shot across Middleton’s bow. Inadvertently, Samuel Marsden may have influenced his action. Governor Brisbane received a letter from him in June 1824 urging the necessity for a chaplain to be sent to Port Macquarie to cater to

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448 Middleton to Scott, 10 September 1826, *Clergy And School Lands Correspondence*, 153. In Metric measurement a rod equals 5.03 metres.

the needs of the ‘more than fifteen hundred souls’ living there. He argued that there was no clergyman to instruct the ignorant, to reclaim the wanderer, or to console the sick and dying and that without reformation ‘they were not fit for this world nor for that which is to come’. Scott also acknowledged the need for a chaplain at Port Macquarie and had written to the Governor in April 1826 informing him he was waiting for the imminent arrival of another chaplain from England. Once he arrived, new placements would be made. In a later letter he wrote defining the qualities such a man should possess. Like all clergy, he needed to be ‘of a peculiar turn of habits.’ He had to possess zeal, be active in his duties and to be capable of enduring great fatigue. Given this definition and Scott’s low opinion of Middleton, his statements serve only to strengthen Middleton’s later charge of victimisation. Governor Darling also had pointed out the need for a chaplain for Port Macquarie so Scott indicated to Middleton that his name would go forward as soon as he could make ‘due arrangements’. Scott also informed others and the news became public. The Sydney Gazette published a sarcastic statement from another of Middleton’s adversaries revealing that there were moves afoot to deal with him:

Mr Middleton’s arrival at Port Macquarie will be hailed with delight by the prisoners there, some of whom are said to be serious, and of course need the consolation of a faithful and Evangelical pastor.


452 Scott to Darling, 24 April 1826, 244.

453 Scott to Darling, 5 May 1826, Scott Letterbooks Vol. II, ML, CY Reel 3435, A850-851, 244.

454 Scott to Darling, 5 May 1826, 267.


456 The Sydney Gazette, 30 August 1826.
Scott’s frustration had reached the point where he would no longer tolerate what he perceived as Middleton’s dilatory behaviour. It is revealed in the following excerpt of a letter:

Unless I immediately receive what I have required I shall be compelled to proceed according to the King’s instructions which I shall do very reluctantly and with much regret.457

Given Scott’s attitude by this time, it is difficult to believe he would be either reluctant or regretful to act as he threatened. Relations between the two men were deplorable.

Even more deplorable was the action of the Evangelicals through the pages of The Sydney Gazette. By the end of July 1826 Middleton’s world was caving in around him. On one side he was involved in his dispute with The Sydney Gazette and on the other he was under attack from the Archdeacon.458 The Gazette publicly denounced him as neglectful of his pastoral duties and the Archdeacon was accusing him of incompetence and more. Much as Scott might have liked to dismiss Middleton, he believed himself unable to do so. His only alternative was to remove him as far away from the centre of government and from himself as was then possible. He made up his mind that Middleton would go to Port Macquarie. Middleton knew nothing of this until he received Scott’s letter of 30 August 1826.459

So keen was Scott to destroy Middleton that he abandoned his principles. He had once written to the Governor:

The principle which guides me in recommending to Your Excellency the stations to which chaplains are to be assigned is that of giving preference to a population composed of free persons and children leaving the


458 For the matters relating to The Sydney Gazette, see the following Chapter.

convicts to the care of a catechist’.\textsuperscript{460}

Now he was prepared to resort to any measure, no matter how detrimental to the man or the populace, to achieve his aim of isolating Middleton.

Middleton, too, had had enough and was ready to abandon something, namely his ministry. He informed Scott of his wish ‘to be relieved from his clerical duties after the month of December next’.\textsuperscript{461} He also indicated that he would write to Earl Bathurst and submit his formal resignation. Once more he managed to follow an improper course of action. According to Scott, his plan was not in accord with the ecclesiastical laws and so, before any reply could be given, he specifically recommended that the Governor ask the Attorney General for legal opinion.\textsuperscript{462}

Middleton may have believed that his threat to resign would have scared the Archdeacon to the extent that he would desist from his campaign. If so, he was completely mistaken. Scott pursued him further.

Contiguous with Scott’s list of indiscretions was Middleton’s perceived absenteeism. He had been asked to provide dates of travel around his parish and had done so.\textsuperscript{463} Scott challenged them and demanded that Middleton make corrections to them.\textsuperscript{464} He also noted that Middleton solemnly denied certain charges made against him and pointed out that he would have to forward all the evidence to his ecclesiastical


\textsuperscript{461} Scott to Darling, 8 September 1826, \textit{Scott Letterbooks}, Vol. 1, ML, CY Reel 3435, A850-851, page number not shown.

\textsuperscript{462} Scott to Brisbane, 8 September 1826, \textit{Scott Letterbooks}, Vol. 1, ML, CY Reel 3435, A850-851, 372.

\textsuperscript{463} This letter is known only by Scott’s reply of 11 April 1826.

superior for a decision. The nature of the charges has not come to light and the probability is that they related to the enquiry instigated during the time *The Sydney Gazette* published its attack. Scott also sought answers from Middleton regarding his times away from Newcastle but considered the replies ‘far from very satisfactory’. He noted serious gaps in the timing Middleton provided for his movements and as well, Scott’s instructions to Middleton to proceed once in every two months to the upper districts were treated loosely and the details of these journeys were unsatisfactory. The first trip having been ordered for 16 August 1825, Scott reckoned that Middleton ought to have set out again on 14 October and 16 December but the Chaplain had not kept to the timetable. Furthermore he had disobeyed specific instructions. On the first trip Middleton left Newcastle on Wednesday 24 August, reached the ‘Second Branch’ on 25 August but did not ‘perform Divine Service until Sunday 28th on Paterson’s Plains’, some three days later. Furthermore, he didn’t leave there until 31 August, arriving back in Newcastle on 2 September. Obviously Middleton had remained away from Newcastle for longer than necessary but for reasons unknown. Blaxland’s *Journal* shows quite plainly that the trip to Paterson could be made in one day, not two or three. Scott was more than specific in his condemnation of Middleton’s behaviour as the tone of his writing displays:

> If you found a Sunday’s service sufficient for the Inhabitants and could reach your place of destination in two days, and of course return in the same time, I must beg to be informed why you left Newcastle so much earlier than was necessary and delayed returning so many days after you had finished your Sunday duties.

He made no allowance for the possibility of Middleton’s being delayed by calls on his

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466 The ‘Second Branch’ is an early name for the Paterson River.
services, nor for any other contingency which may have delayed him. More and more obvious from Scott’s letters is the fact that his disdain was increasing apace and that he was not prepared to give Middleton the benefit of any doubt. Further evidence is seen in the following: Middleton had been asked to baptise the child of a family named Frankland. No details are available concerning the circumstances but there is certainty as to Scott’s opinion on Middleton’s behaviour: ‘I am desirous of knowing why the child could not have been christened on Sunday the 28th or at farthest the following day’.

Scott continued his harassment when he questioned the time involved in the second trip beginning 9 November 1825, a journey which, according to his instructions, ought to have been undertaken a month earlier. He noted that only one day’s travel had been required for Middleton to reach Patterson’s Plains and pointed out that it was not until Sunday 13th, four days later, that he conducted worship and then was another four days returning to Newcastle. The third departure of Wednesday 28 December was criticised even more strongly. Scott apparently saw it not as a legitimate act of ministry but as a way of leaving the settlement for whatever purpose his Chaplain had in mind. The reality is that Middleton had gone to baptise privately a child of the Singleton family, presumably at their residence at Patrick’s Plains. Private baptisms were not permitted unless the child were in serious danger of dying and Scott virtually demanded to see the medical certificate respecting the baby’s health or if that were not available, an ‘unquestionable assurance’ that the child was in danger. Such was his distrust of Middleton.

As part of his duties, Scott was expected to perform a visitation to each of the

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‘stations’ once each year. Newcastle’s turn came in October 1826. The *Gazette*,
continuing its assault on Middleton, hoped that he would be prepared to receive the
Archdeacon and would inform him of the manner in which religious truth was
disseminated and of how much ‘practical piety’ existed in that ‘respectable and
populous neighbourhood’.\footnote{The Sydney Gazette, 18 October 1826.} No outcome of the meeting has been found.

Further friction occurred during November 1826. A Mr. Gill came to an
‘untimely end’ and Middleton refused to bury his corpse because the inquest into Gill’s
death was certified by a magistrate and not a coroner. Middleton believed the certificate
was invalid. Once more Scott had cause to contact him, this time to advise him that a
magistrate’s certificate was acceptable if the Coroner were not available.\footnote{Scott to Middleton, 25 November 1826, *Scott Letterbooks, Vol. II*, ML, CY Reel 3435, A850-851, 326, 327.} This letter
also indicates Scott’s disdain of Middleton in that he wrote down to him by including a
condescending sermonette on his own practice in such matters.

In spite of the prevailing situation, Middleton continued to expand his ministry
and in so doing reveals his commitment to his ordination vows. Early in January 1827
he offered to open a new field of ministry and to travel to Soldiers Point on Port
Stephens where a garrison had been set up to intercept convicts in their escape attempts
from Stroud, Carrington and other places along the Karuah River. His offer met with
Scott’s approbation and he was asked to arrange the details.\footnote{Scott to Middleton, 15 January 1827, *Scott Letterbooks Vol. II*, ML, CY Reel 3435, A850-851, 350,351. Middleton’s offer is known only by Scott’s reply.} At the same time Scott
informed him that Mr. William Brooks had been appointed Catechist for the upper part
of Hunter’s River and that Middleton was to confine himself to the parishes on an
enclosed list. He instructed Brooks that in cases of danger, he was to administer the rite of private baptism and also to officiate at the burial service and then he was to transmit to Middleton certificates which were to be preserved and copied into his register. Middleton was also to attend at Morpeth and Whittingham once every two months on a date to be fixed and he was to give due notice to the population and the date was not to be varied. This was so that baptisms and marriages might be performed. Marriages requiring to be celebrated at times other than this day were to be conducted in Morpeth but the banns were to be published in Newcastle. By these instruction Scott demonstrated that as much as possible, Middleton was to be confined to his station. At the same time, they make good sense. By 1827 the population of the lower Hunter, and especially in the Wallis Plains district, was growing apace and the demands on Middleton were becoming such that he could no longer afford absences from his post.

Shortly after this Scott informed Middleton that his offer was accepted and that he was to proceed to Port Stephens in time to officiate on the first Sunday in every month commencing on 6 May. He was also determined to ensure that matters Middleton had overlooked in the past would now be brought to completion and so he issued added instructions that he was to gain estimates for the construction of a schoolhouse at both Morpeth and Warkworth. In all these matters Scott was leaving nothing to chance. Middleton could no longer plead ignorance or uncertainty as to what was required of him, nor could he neglect to follow instructions.

The conflict came to a head on 1 May 1827 and Middleton’s fate was sealed. Scott informed him that as he had stated ‘in my former letter’, he was to move to Port Stephens. The parishes Scott listed are as follows: In the County of Durham, Stockton, Seaham, Butterwick, Eldon, and Wolflingham. In the County of Northumberland: Alnwick, Gosforth and Newcastle and in the County of _________: Port Stephens. The gap before ‘Port Stephens’ is in the original.

Macquarie.\footnote{Scott to Middleton, 1 May 1827, \textit{Scott Letterbooks Vol. II}, ML, CY Reel 3435, A850-851, 383.} A house was ready and he was to proceed there after the close of the ‘present quarter’.\footnote{Scott to Middleton, 1 May 1827, 383.} The decision is logical but was in reality, an act of vengeance. Middleton was the obvious choice because of his familiarity with the military and the majority of the convicts. Had Scott included words to this effect in any of his correspondence, his determination would have been seen to be all the more fair and less as a blatant act of victimisation. The effect on Middleton was literally sickening. On the following Saturday, the 5 May, he wrote his letter of resignation and the next day was unable to conduct Divine Service in Christ Church because he was ‘unwell’.\footnote{William S. Coke, \textit{The 1827 Newcastle Notebook and Letters of Lieutenant William S. Coke, H.M. 39th Regiment}, Cynthia Hunter, (ed.), 38.}

Believing himself to be greatly injured by Scott’s behaviour, Middleton wrote to Colonial Secretary McLeay pointing out that he felt that since the end of February last, the time of \textit{The Sydney Gazette’s} attack, he had been especially harassed. He then asked whether or not the newly arrived Governor Darling had set in train any charges for breaches of church discipline against him. If he had, Middleton wanted to know the nature of the charges, the dates on which the alleged offences had occurred and the names of those by whose oaths the charges had been laid.\footnote{Middleton to McLeay, 7 May 1827, A.O.N.S.W., Shelf 4/1931, Letter 27/4417.} Affixed to the letter in Scott’s handwriting was a recommendation to the Governor that answer be given to Middleton informing him that he had not instigated charges against him and that Scott knew of no proceedings against him in the Ecclesiastical Court which apparently had been set up according to his Letters Patent. That no charges existed supports Middleton’s argument that Scott’s resolve to send him north derived from malicious
intent. Middleton would have none of it. In the letter in which he submitted his resignation he confronted Scott over his decision:

In justice to the feelings naturally arising from the communication made in your letter dated 1 May, and reviewing the subject of my immediate removal, or more correctly speaking, banishment, to Port Macquarie, I am painfully compelled to enquire whether there is a power vested in your commission to accept my resignation of office now tendered at the termination of the present quarter.477

Middleton also wrote to Governor Darling arguing that he was ‘the only chaplain in New South Wales who had for any length of time experienced the privation necessarily connected with a Penal Settlement’.478 He was convinced that a less senior priest should be sent there instead and he made very clear his stand on Scott’s decision and its implications for he and his family.479 Darling was not swayed. An annotation at the bottom of the letter dated 11 May reveals he saw no reason to interfere with the assessment made by the Venerable the Archdeacon in this case and declined Middleton’s request.

Scott could only have been exhilarated. A resignation was far more acceptable than a dismissal. It freed him from criticism and reflected solely on Middleton. It relieved him of someone he viewed as an incompetent administrator and peripatetic pastor and both reflected and supported his view that Middleton was totally unsuited to the ministry. Further, it gave added weight to his belief that Middleton ought not to have been ordained in the first place.480 He wrote to the Governor and recommended

478 Middleton to Scott, 7 May 1827, Archive Authority of New South Wales, Shelf 4/1931, Letter 27/4437.
479 Middleton to Scott, 7 May 1827, Letter 27/4437.
Frederick Wilkinson as Middleton’s replacement.\textsuperscript{481} So keen was he to be rid of Middleton that he acted with indecent haste.\textsuperscript{482} But then Middleton changed his mind and wrote a retraction which Scott disallowed, countering that there was no qualification attached to the resignation and that it was ‘positively tendered as to take place at the termination of the present quarter’.\textsuperscript{483} Seven days after writing his letter of resignation, he wrote to Scott and made very clear his belief that Scott had acted in a manner unbecoming to one in his position and once more accused him of victimisation. In another letter written on 13 June he informed Scott that he intended to resign as of 1 July and then threatened action against him.

The exceptions which I deem unnecessary to advance against the nature of your conduct towards me shall ere long be formally communicated to you; and I take the liberty of expressing a conviction that the explanation repeatedly demanded as due to justice and as often refused will eventually be afforded in compliance in the peremptory order from England.\textsuperscript{484}

Scott replied in a most off-handed manner:

If you have been aggrieved by any fault of mine you have the undoubted right of appealing to the Bishop of the diocese for redress.\textsuperscript{485}

Whether Middleton wrote to Calcutta is not known.\textsuperscript{486} Also unclear is the significance in the last portion of his letter of ‘the peremptory order from England’. In the same


\textsuperscript{482} Notice of Wilkinson’s appointment appeared in \textit{The Australian} on 23 May 1827 eight days after Middleton wrote his resignation.


\textsuperscript{484} Middleton to Scott, 13 June 1827, \textit{Clergy and School Lands Corporation Correspondence, (Letters from Clergy)}, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 4/321, 187.

\textsuperscript{485} Scott to Middleton, 22 May 1826, \textit{Scott Letterbooks Vol. II}, ML, CY 3435, A180-181, 261-263. Middleton’s letter of complaint is lost and its tenor is known only by Scott’s reply.

\textsuperscript{486} The writer’s contacts with the Church in India revealed that the archives of the Diocese of Calcutta for this period are no longer extant.
letter Scott also informed him that Wilkinson’s appointment had been made public and Middleton’s place on the Church and School Lands Corporation was to go to the next senior chaplain and that he was expected to give Wilkinson access to the house and premises and the Glebe ‘at the time above specified’.

‘The time above specified’ didn’t eventuate. Frederick Wilkinson was delayed in taking up his appointment and so Middleton stood in for him until 22 July. On 2 July, two days after his resignation took effect, Middleton wrote to Scott forwarding the Church and School Returns for May and June and pointed out that Frederick Wilkinson had not presented himself to receive the formal transfer of Newcastle and added, ‘A fact which will of course confer upon me an indisputable claim for one quarter’s salary’. 487 The Clergy and School Lands Corporation responded pointing out that Scott had not required him to perform any duty and so the Committee could not recommend his claim to the Grand Court. 488 Middleton could not, and would not, allow the decision to go unchallenged. He politely acknowledged the Committee’s decision, reminded it of Wilkinson’s delay in arriving and then claimed that he had no part in Wilkinson’s delay and felt responsible for the Settlement until Wilkinson arrived. He felt the Committee should re-assess his claim. 489 He also offered to forward an attested copy of Scott’s letter as proof of his assertion. No record has been found to show whether or not his claim was successful.

Despite the fact that he no longer had Scott’s licence to officiate as a priest Middleton remained active and continued his ministry to his former parishioners.

487 Middleton to Scott, 2 July 1827, Clergy and School Lands Corporation Correspondence, (Letters from Clergy), Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 4/321, 217.
488 Clergy and School Lands Corporation to Middleton, 2 August 1825, Clergy and School Lands Corporation Correspondence, (Letters from Clergy), Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 9/2702, 317.
489 Middleton to Cowper, 17 August 1827, Clergy and School Lands Corporation Correspondence,
Given Scott’s comments on the shortage of clergy, it is easy to understand the needs. Middleton would continue to practice as a priest in order to meet the demand for spiritual services. With two shepherds in the Hunter Valley, Middleton and Wilkinson, problems soon arose. Middleton took umbrage at what he interpreted as Wilkinson’s interference. At some time between May and November he wrote to Scott complaining of just that and Scott’s reply drove home the reality of his resignation:

I am not aware you have any licence or authority to exercise any Ecclesiastical Duties in this Diocese. I see no irregularity in the conduct of the Rev. Mr. Wilkinson.

Scott also wrote to Archdeacon R.A. Hamilton in England and pointed out that Governor Darling brought this conduct to his notice and said: ‘he continues officiating occasionally in private houses pursuing a vocation and forming associations disgraceful to his order’. The nature of the ‘disgraceful associations’ in not known but an assumption can be made that it was with former convicts. Licence or no licence, Middleton would not be deterred. Those who sought his ministry received it and ample evidence is provided in the registers of Christ Church, Newcastle, and St James Church, Morpeth.

If Wilkinson could not stop Middleton from ministering, he could at least remove his influence from Christ Church. On 6 August 1827 he wrote to William Scott to Middleton, 10 November 1827, Scott Letterbooks Vol. II, ML, CY Reel 3435, A850-851, 456. Scott to Hamilton, 8 April 1828, ML, Scott Letterbooks, Vol. II, Cy 3435, A850-851, 525, 526. Middleton’s ‘interference’ was not as great as Wilkinson makes out. Only one funeral is entered in the Christ church Register (Entry 49 for 20 November 1827 – J.W Nichols) and there are only a few baptisms.
Cowper, Secretary of the Clergy and School Lands Corporation, to inform him that the repairs to the church tower had been effected. He also wanted to know if there was a clock and a bell available. Then he asked what to do with two paintings which had been taken down during the repairs. He had not replace them because he regarded them as ‘most irreverent and disgusting’. Regrettably he gave no indication of their subjects but did recommend that they should be painted over with black paint and the Lord’s Prayer and Ten Commandments printed on them in white characters.  

Two months later, on 8 October, he wrote requesting two surplices be sent to him because they could not be made in Newcastle. He also commented on the clerical vesture used to perform Divine Service:

> At present the service is performed in the black gown which is not usual and I fear would be much disapproved of by the Archdeacon.

Another string to Scott’s bow? In wearing the black gown, Middleton had followed the tradition he learned at Cambridge. The origin of the paintings is, like their subjects, unknown, and the question arises as to whether Middleton introduced them. If so, given his altercation with Wilkinson over continuing in ministry, Wilkinson’s comments might be construed as some sort of retaliation at least and at worst, an attempt to remove any trace of Middleton and his years in Newcastle. By acting in this way, Wilkinson effected what others, notably the Evangelicals in the colony, wanted desperately to happen. They began their assault on him in February 1826. and turned it into his annus horribilis’.

Published as a news item, a denunciation of Middleton’s ministerial performance inflicted immense personal and professional damage. Un-named

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494 Wilkinson to Cowper, 6 August 1827, Clergy and School Lands Corporation Correspondence, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 4/321, 275.
conspirators, fuelled the columns of *The Sydney Gazette* with slanderous and misleading accusations couched in contemptuous and odious language. After an attack on Richard Hill in *The Australian* on 30 December 1826 and following the attack on Middleton in *The Sydney Gazette*, Archdeacon Scott was so outraged at what he saw as articles with no purpose other than to bring the clergy into contempt, hatred and ridicule, he wrote to Governor Darling protesting and suggested that strong measures should be taken to ensure that the church should be protected.495

In the five years after Middleton arrived in the colony he gained increasing notoriety. His condemnation of Morisset and his disputes with Archdeacon Scott diminished his reputation and attracted adverse attention. Measured against the long, mostly non-controversial, and respected careers of William Cowper and Robert Cartwright, he was viewed as remiss. These men graced the office of chaplain with respectability. Kenneth Cable suggests that part of the hostility to Middleton originated from the belief that he was undermining that office.496 If so, there were those who believed he had to be stopped. To do so, an anonymous conspirator resorted to underhanded tactics to achieve his end. With allegation based on news item printed in *The Australian*, the *Gazette* fired its first salvo:

> We have been informed by authority which is unquestionable, that when the Reverend Gentleman who is the Officiating Chaplain at Newcastle, is absent from his estate, between 30 and 40 miles from the capital of the Hunters River district, that the dead are interred without any funeral service.497

Middleton’s response was fast and furious. No-one was left in any doubt as to his

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495 Scott to Darling, 8 January, 1827, *Scott Lettebooks*, 343.


497 *The Sydney Gazette*, 8 February 1826.
feelings.\textsuperscript{498} He wanted ‘public justice due to myself’, to know the identity of his accuser and if not provided, it would mean the paper had printed a malicious lie. He then accused the \textit{Gazette} of being a paper ‘more calculated for purveying slander than communicating useful instruction’. Printed with his comments, and bearing the same date, was an affidavit from Samuel Dell, Parish Clerk at Christ Church. Witnessed by Commandant Francis Allman it attested that, ‘on no single occasion has an interment taken place in the Burial Ground without the performance of the funeral rites’.\textsuperscript{499} This was true. But what Dell didn’t mention was that while Middleton was absent from Newcastle it was he who had conducted these funerals. The Burial Register for Christ Church contains two significant entries for January 1826 signed by Dell. James Mitchell, an elderly Prisoner of the Crown from Wallis Plains had, on 1 January been buried by Dell, by reason of ‘the Chaplain at a distant Settlement’.\textsuperscript{500} Four days later, on 5 January, James Innes, also of Wallis Plains, a younger Prisoner of the Crown, was likewise buried by Dell in circumstances similar to those of Mitchell.\textsuperscript{501} The \textit{Gazette’s} insinuation was contemptible in its timing and purpose. Its motives against Middleton were all the more suspect because, along with the other newspapers of the day it supported the concept of religion as being important to society.\textsuperscript{502} This is not to say that it didn’t attack the Church and its ministers. Samuel Marsden, for example, denounced its attitude and policies in

\textsuperscript{498} This letter is known only by those parts printed in the \textit{Gazette’s} response to it.

\textsuperscript{499} \textit{The Sydney Gazette}, 18 February 1826.

\textsuperscript{500} \textit{Christ Church Burial Register, N.S.W. Entry 1, 1826}, B7806, Archives of the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle, University of Newcastle.

\textsuperscript{501} \textit{Christ Church Burial Register, Entry 2, 1826}, B7806, Archives of the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle, University of Newcastle, N.S.W.

1825. Its harassment of Middleton was particularly severe and underhanded. Its chicanery is seen in the following: Until 1 January 1826, no formal ecclesiastical record of those officiating at baptisms, marriages and funerals was required. On the other hand, clergy were obliged to forward government returns to the Colonial Secretary for baptisms and weddings but not for funerals. Only after Archdeacon Scott instituted compulsory parish recording were funerals noted. Prior to the introduction of the registers, no written evidence of Middleton’s or anyone else’s alleged failings was extant for times when professional services were required and the priest was not in his parish. Now the evidence was there for all to see and Middleton’s detractors wasted no time in using it against him. Perhaps he hadn’t realised this possibility until the *Gazette* brought Mitchell’s and Innes’ cases to light. Having made sure that the circumstances of these two burials were advertised and knowing full well the answer to the question it posed, the *Gazette* then asked:

Have these duties been performed by the Minister or by the clerk? This is the point on which the mighty case hangs and this is the point it now becomes our duty to ascertain.  

Unexplained is the emphasis on the word ‘mighty’. It is possible that Middleton had been reproached privately prior to the *Gazette*’s revelation and that this word had been used in some context now lost. Thinly veiled as a news item were accusations of absenteeism, non-residence at the penal settlement and of the population being the victims of pastoral neglect in their time of greatest need. The *Gazette*’s informant acted with impeccable timing and political skill.

Middleton saw the article not only as an assault on himself, but on the

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503 Marsden to Coates, 8 November 1825, ML, *Bonwick Transcripts 53*, 1548.

504 *The Sydney Gazette*, 18 February 1826. Emphasis in original.
Government as well and responded vigorously through both the newspaper and the Archdeacon. His letter in reply to the Gazette was very strongly worded and this in itself was dangerous.\textsuperscript{505} His propensity to act from impulse rose to the fore once again. The Gazette was the Government’s official organ and in writing as he did Middleton ran the risk of alienating the establishment as well. His anger and outrage were the responses of one who was targetted with a deliberate and sustained character assassination undertaken in an unethical manner by scurrilous detractors. Quite hypocritically, further down in the article and in subsequent editions, the Gazette itself claimed to be the target of insult and innuendo at the hand of its victim. It claimed to have been insulted by Middleton and wondered how it could find justice for itself for his claim that it was ‘propagating a malicious falsehood’ which it claimed was what Middleton was doing.\textsuperscript{506} Two barbs concluded the article, both designed to maximise the damage. Firstly, it called for another clergyman to be based at either Patrick’s Plains or Newcastle and secondly, insisted that such a person should be a convinced Evangelical in order that the people might be better served.\textsuperscript{507}

Once again, Middleton rose to the occasion. Letters went to Scott on 3 March, 10 March and 25 March to which Scott replied on 30 March.\textsuperscript{508} In his letter he intimated that as soon as he received the charges which Middleton felt had affected his character he would investigate them and gave the assurance that he would do so with ‘strict scrutiny and impartiality’. He then asked for a statement of the dates Middleton had departed from Newcastle and for the places he had visited along with the

\textsuperscript{505} This letter is known only by those parts printed in the Gazette’s response to it.

\textsuperscript{506} The Sydney Gazette, 18 February 1826. Emphasis in original.

\textsuperscript{507} The Sydney Gazette, 18 February 1826.

marriages and baptisms he had performed. He also asked for his dates of return. Such
information would be useful to assist him in understanding Middleton’s response. But
at the same time it could, and later, was used against him. He also demanded to know
whether any person other than Middleton had officiated at Newcastle and in the
district and why. More particular was his demand to know whether any person other
than Middleton had administered any rites and ceremonies and the reason why, if such
occasions had taken place, he had not officiated. Scott was leaving nothing to chance
in collecting evidence against his chaplain. In a series of letters written between 1
April and 4 April, Middleton replied to Scott’s queries and then turned his attention to
the Gazette. In his response he demanded public justice or else the paper would stand
convicted of propagating a ‘malicious falsehood’ and went on to add his own
vituperation. He asserted that the Government would not take any notice of a
newspaper ‘which is more calculated for purveying slander than communicating useful
instruction’. 509

What becomes increasingly evident as the charges and counter charges
increase is that ecclesiastical politics fuelled the fight. The Gazette writer knew that
with the then desperate shortage of clergy, no possibility existed for an ordained
appointment to Patrick’s Plains be he Evangelical or otherwise. But who was this
writer and why was there such vitriol in his articles? Archdeacon Scott is not above
suspicion but James Reid of Rose Brook is the real possibility. Among those who had
taken up land in the Hunter Valley were many former soldiers and mariners of strong
Evangelical persuasion. 510 Reid was from this background, having been a Lieutenant

509 The Sydney Gazette, 18 February 1826.
510 Brian Fletcher, ‘Christianity and Free Society In New South Wales, 1788-1840’, Journal of the Royal
and by this time, retired on half-pay. 511 The Sydney Gazette claimed him to be a gentleman of ‘known veracity’. Scott’s demands to Middleton and the demands of the Gazette are remarkably coincidental and couched in almost identical language. Scott may not have fired the gun but he certainly could have made the bullets. The vitriol is easily explained by Scott’s increasing loathing of Middleton. He could easily ensure him a bad press.

Regrettably for Middleton, the article achieved its aim. He sustained very significant damage. His Majesty’s Government did take notice. By another insertion in the Gazette dated 5 April, Middleton was brought to humiliation:

It is reported that the Reverend Mr Middleton, Assistant Chaplain at Newcastle, has received instructions not to leave the Settlement without permission first being obtained of the Commandant. 512

No other priest had been subjected to such a regulation. As a final flourish the article then added that there would be an increasing supply of Evangelical clergy ‘in all the dependencies’ which policy would be promoted by the government. 513 After such a comment there is little doubt that the major ingredient in the recipe for Middleton’s disaster was that he was not of the Evangelical persuasion. 514

Middleton responded to this latest onslaught with further outrage. 515 The Gazette used even that to attempt to destroy him once and for all. 516 Quoting from its rival, The Australian, through which Middleton had sought vindication, it reported


512 The Sydney Gazette, 5 April 1826.

513 The Sydney Gazette, 5 April 1826.

514 See for example, Threlkeld and Marsden: ‘stranger to religion’.

515 The Australian, 26 April 1826.

516 The Australian, 29 April 1826.
that he had called for an examination into his conduct since 1820.\textsuperscript{517} His intention was to refute the \textit{Gazette’s} charges and have its editor provide the evidence for his claims. Thus far, none had been forthcoming. Middleton not only called the \textit{Gazette} to account, he threatened it with legal action. By its next ploy the newspaper indicated it believed that attack to be the best form of defence. Rather than provide the evidence Middleton sought, the paper weighed in with an even mightier condemnation. Middleton, it said, used a tone ‘that would do well for one of the primitive Popes’ and stated that it \textit{valued} his ‘puny threats’ with the same level of disregard it would have ‘in being anxious for his praise’.\textsuperscript{518} The underlining of the word ‘valued’ further demonstrated the paper’s scorn for its target. In denying that it had done anything to defame Middleton it lied. Language contemptuous in tone and intent flowed from its pages in obvious contrivance to continue the process of humiliation. It highlighted his ‘spotless character’ and insinuated that he knew less of the Bible than he did about the law while accusing him of ‘miserable pretences’ and of being a ‘rhodomantade’.\textsuperscript{519} The assault continued with allegations that Middleton was vainglorious, arrogant and boastful. It trumpeted what was obvious to even the most disinterested party, which was that it had ‘no good opinion of Mr Middleton’ and again called for an answer to the question as to who had conducted the two funerals. Throughout May, June and July Middleton heard no more from the \textit{Gazette} but he was certainly hearing from Archdeacon Scott. He also began fighting on a

\textsuperscript{517} \textit{The Australian}, 26 April 1826, 2.

\textsuperscript{518} The emphasis is in the original.

third front, that of his health.

Beginning on 1 April and continuing on 2, 3 and 4 April, Middleton wrote to Scott, who, by this time, had drawn the Governor into the dispute. He apparently attempted to explain his absences and why he had not informed the Governor of Scott’s instructions concerning his pastoral movements. In his reply to these letters, Scott stated that had he

> Acquainted the Governor with my instructions on 16 August (1825) it would have satisfied His Excellency and at least would have exonerated you from any blame by absenting yourself from your residence on duty.

What constituted ‘my instructions’ is unknown as the letter has not been found. What is known is that Scott now ordered Middleton to remain in Newcastle. He needed him to be easily accessible because his presence may have been required in Sydney. The *Gazette’s* charges were producing more and more serious ramifications. Also revealed in the letter is Scott’s increasing hostility to Middleton and action designed to highlight his mistrust of him. He expressed a desire to see a medical certificate for Middleton’s health from 29 December 1825 until 5 January 1826, the time when Dell had buried the two convicts mentioned earlier.

Absenteeism was only one item on Scott’s agenda. He demanded more and more documentary evidence from Middleton in support of the latter’s claims against Commandant Allman. Middleton had alleged that he had ordered convicts not to attend church and Scott demanded written evidence to corroborate this charge. The inference is that on the strength of that order, Middleton had not opened the Church or celebrated Divine Worship for anyone. Scott also wanted evidence that Middleton

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had baptised more than the two children previously mentioned and that he had visited ‘the Inhabitants’. He further required submissions which he had requested, but which had not yet been provided by Middleton. These related to recommendations for building a schoolhouse to serve as a small chapel. Middleton was the only clergyman not to have forwarded such advice. Scott’s dissatisfaction is quite obvious and understandable. Middleton had also cavilled at using for worship a building which was intended to be used as a Church because it was not consecrated even though he knew that for some time it had been put to just that use by others on orders from the proper authority. More was to come. The Governor had, by now, become personally involved and ordered Middleton not to leave his station and he didn’t, certainly not to baptise a child 18 miles up country which may have been in danger. Petulance prevailed over common sense and in so doing added to the list of ministerial indiscretions.

Within a few months the strain on Middleton began to show. He wrote to Scott requesting a temporary exchange away from Newcastle.⁵²² In reply he was told that there was no objection but that he had to conform to the rules laid down in the Residence Act. He was also required to provide for ministry to the people during his absence and that he would have to bear any expenses incurred.⁵²³

Middleton had also written asking for clarification in respect of the Governor’s orders. He had been constrained not to leave Newcastle without the permission of the Commandant and he interpreted this to mean for no reason whatsoever when it was more than likely intended to prevent his working on the

⁵²¹ Scott to Middleton 11 April 1826, 220.

⁵²² This letter is lost. Its existence is known from Scott’s reply.

Glebe or taking extended absences. His spiritual duties were not meant to be included. Scott replied with a very angry letter dated 22 May berating him about his interpretation in the strongest possible terms:

The construction you have put upon the Governor’s orders to the Commandant relative to your remaining in Newcastle is very different to mine, nor could any person unless determined to cavil at forms suppose that your Spiritual duties were to be stopped by such an order. \(^{524}\)

Scott was further angered by Middleton’s failure to answer ‘my several questions’. His letter outlines a litany of the chaplain’s misunderstandings and alleged failed ministry. Middleton attempted to explain that on one occasion he had been unwell and had supplied a medical certificate and a statement from the Commandant in respect of the weather which Scott did not acknowledge. Instead, Scott accused him of having confused the dates involved. Essentially, Scott repeated his demands for information required previously but which, as yet, had not been supplied and then informed him that Mr Wilkinson would arrive in Newcastle so that he could travel to Sydney. He was then was told:

I must hold you responsible for your return to that Settlement unless I should see good reason to alter your destination.

The implications are obvious. Scott had begun to plan Middleton’s move out of Newcastle. The letter then concluded with an order that when he arrived in Sydney he was to pay his respects to the Governor and then he was to report to the Archdeacon.

In a letter written on 6 March, Middleton made comments to Scott which were definitely not appreciated. He claimed himself to have been aggrieved by Scott’s actions and reminded Scott that he had certain obligations placed on him by

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\(^{524}\) Scott to Middleton, 22 May 1826, 260-261. Emphasis in original.
his duties and position and that he ought to ‘maintain the dignity’ of his office. In reply he was told in very blunt terms that Scott was aware of his responsibilities and that if Middleton felt he had been treated unjustly he had an ‘undoubted right of appealing to the Bishop of the Diocese for redress’.525

Shortly after this, Middleton removed from Newcastle as he had requested. Where he went during this time is not known but once he returned the Gazette continued its assault with renewed and relentless determination. On 26 August, and again, in cynical tone and purporting high praise, it attacked once more. Prior to this date Middleton had called on the Executive Authority for an investigation into his conduct.526 He also sent circulars to a number of settlers in the Hunter district in which he asked for their opinion concerning his behaviour. He wanted to ascertain if in his ministry or private life they had noticed anything unbecoming to the character and function of a Clergyman. In derogatory tone the paper then suggested that such an enquiry might ‘set off his character in the highest way’ and that if it did so ‘it would be of great benefit to all’ and that ‘his was the action of a courageous and patriotic man’. In ironic tone and again, quite hypocritically, it wrote ‘This is a terrible country for slanderous reports’ and then in the next few words indulged in trenchant slander with:

It cannot be expected that, when the most illustrious men are attacked in every quarter and in every shape, such an unassuming, retired, devout and unbusiness-like man as Mr Middleton should altogether be exempted from the common fate of public and even religious men. 527

Middleton was neither unassuming nor retired. His dispute with Morisset was clear evidence of that. Nor was he unbusiness-like. His business dealings were a

525 Scott to Middleton, 22 May 1826, 261.
526 The Sydney Gazette, 26 August 1826.
527 The Sydney Gazette, 26 August 1826.
major factor behind the attack. By 1826 he was well established on his Glebe and on Glenrose and had amassed considerable income. His difficulty lay in his administrative ability. Nor did it help that he was not considered devout. His non-Evangelical position made him, in certain quarters, *persona non grata*. Such language was, on the part of the newspaper, both defamatory and inflammatory. In sneering tone it next urged him to ascertain the identity of his opponents while calling on him not to go to law but to produce the documentary evidence from the investigation which would ‘bid defiance to, and forever set at rest the, the foul voice of calumny’. At the same time it printed the content of Middleton’s circulars, noting that ‘they are different forms’. The implication was that his motives were suspect and that Middleton’s ploy was deliberate in order to manipulate a result. Then, in a final attempt to harm, it announced that it knew something he probably didn’t. He was the man,

who we understand, is on the eve of being directed to proceed to do Clerical duty at Port Macquarie, where, we all know, the labours of a faithful minister are much needed.  

To publish this last paragraph the *Gazette* had to know it was on very sure ground. The copy it used came from the previously mentioned James Reid of Rose Brook.

Middleton’s devastation from these events was obvious. He had been held up to public ridicule as a worldly, neglectful and faithless pastor and finally told of his impending move before the Archdeacon had seen fit to write and inform him of it. Worse was to come. Four days later, on 30 August, the *Gazette* sustained its persecution when it inserted a small article in informing its readers that:

528 *The Sydney Gazette*, 26 August 1826.

529 *The Sydney Gazette*, 26 August 1826.
This Reverend Gentleman has not been favoured with replies from several of the most respectable Gentlemen in the Settlement of Hunter’s River to whom letters were addressed. 530

It relished the fact that in its view, Middleton was not supported by those on whom he had called. Yet another blow was rendered when it insinuated that their silence arose from a lack of respect for their pastor. 531 Three days later Middleton was again assailed. Once more, on 2 September, in very mocking tone, the newspaper informed its readers that no word had been received from its victim and derisively supposed it was because of the slowness of the mail and expressed certainty that Middleton would communicate with it when replies were received. It also added that it was at a loss to understand why the ‘gentlemen parishioners’ had not answered his ‘manly and pastoral epistles’ and continued, with a blunt suggestion for his removal or demise, that ‘this is a strange land in which we are destined to pass away our pilgrimage’532 In double entendre it was re-expressing its none-too-subtle wish for Middleton’s future. That wish was soon to be granted. Middleton was informed officially that the Governor had drawn Archdeacon Scott’s attention to the lack of spiritual aid at Port Macquarie and in consequence Scott intended to submit Middleton’s name for the post. He would be given adequate notice of when to move there. 533 In the meantime, Middleton had written to Scott on 6 September protesting his innocence to an as yet unspecified charge to which Scott replied:

As you have solemnly denied the charge it will remain for your Ecclesiastical Superiors to judge of the circumstances to whom my Instructions direct me to transmit all the matters of this nature for his

530 *The Sydney Gazette*, 30 August 1826.

531 *The Sydney Gazette*, 30 August 1826.

532 The heavy type is the Gazette’s emphasis and the underlining is the writer’s.

decision. 534

Throughout this entire conflict *The Sydney Gazette*, and most likely the Archdeacon, had been fed information by an agent in the Hunter Valley and as has been suggested, the prime suspect is James Reid. He had good reason to dislike Middleton. Middleton had supported Commandant Gillman when Reid was under threat of prosecution and Gillman was the magistrate. 535 At the subsequent hearing in the Magistrates court, Reid and a Mr Vicars Jacob had been subjected to what Reid deemed as humiliating comments from Gillman. Reid had attempted to justify the action for which he faced prosecution and wanted affidavits issued on his behalf. Gillman refused to hear him, because he was named in the affidavits. 536 He was also alleged to have indulged in improper tactics and insulting remarks as to the two men’s personalities. James Williams, Middleton’s very troublesome convict who, at that time, was in the courtroom, overheard these comments. An hour or so later, Williams, whom Reid believed had the confidence of the Magistrate, approached Reid without showing that due deference expected from a convict to a free settler and told him that he thought Captain Gillman was right in refusing to issue any affidavits. Reid was furious over this incident and so decided to complain. 537 On face value it appears that he had every justification for doing so but there is more to the complaint than is at first revealed. A week prior to this incident Gillman refused to allow Reid

534 Scott to Middleton, 8 September 1826, 313. Middleton’s letter is not extant.

535 Reid to Goulburn, 29 June 1824, ML, *Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825*, CY Reel 6068, 4/1811, 127-128.

536 Gillman to Reid, 22 June 1824, 129

537 Reid to Goulburn, 29 June 1824, *Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence 1788-1825*, ML, CY Reel 6068, 4/1811, 127, 127a.
the services of a carpenter.\textsuperscript{538} By complaining, Reid was obviously attempting to find some way of retaliating.\textsuperscript{539} A week or so later Gillman softened his approach concerning the affidavits and wrote to Reid. He was now prepared to waive his objection.\textsuperscript{540}

Gillman’s letter was not the only one Reid received. On 11 August 1826 Middleton wrote to Reid:

   I shall feel obliged to your favouring me with a reply to the following query, ‘Whether in my ministerial or private life you have noticed anything unbecoming to the character and function of a clergyman.’\textsuperscript{541}

For some reason the letter went unsigned so Reid ignored it. Middleton wrote again, expressing ‘sincere regret’. Again, Reid did not reply. He had no need to do so. His opinion had been printed in the \textit{Gazette’s} pages.

   By 2 September the \textit{Gazette} was still waiting for evidence of support from Middleton and so yet another item appeared. This time it informed the readers that no word had come from Middleton and mockingly suggesting that it was because there was slow communication between the Hunter and Sydney. Urging the readers to therefore be patient, and with yet another swipe, it proclaimed that, ‘we know Mr Middletown too well to suppose, for an instant, that he will not communicate with us on the subject’.\textsuperscript{542} Further contempt for Middleton was expressed in a declaration of a loss to understand why the settlers had not replied. The paper’s tactics were well-

\textsuperscript{538} Gillman to Reid, 22 June 1824, \textit{Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence 1788-1825}, ML, CY Reel 6068, 4/1811, 128.

\textsuperscript{539} Gillman to Reid, 22 June 1824, 128.

\textsuperscript{540} Gillman to Reid, 22 June 1824, 129.

\textsuperscript{541} \textit{The Sydney Gazette}, 26 August 1826.
planned. Over a prolonged period it kept the controversy alive.

At the end of September yet another news item informed its readers that Mr Reid stated that he never authorised the publication of ‘those letters that were addressed to him by the Rev. Mr Middleton’.

Unable to resist the temptation to further malign Middleton, it added that he ‘has never yet communicated with us on the subject’ but supposed sarcastically that as he had ‘succeeded in establishing the purity and sacredness of his ministerial character on a basis not to be shaken, we are not worthy of regard’. It then garnished its attack by adding ‘a gratifying increase lately in the Parsonage has, we presume, prevented the Rev. Gentleman from proceeding to Port Macquarie’. Earlier, to emphasise its belief in the rightness of its case and with a lofty flourish it added, ‘we are satisfied that the Gentleman who is our authority for a good deal more than we have said only informed us of what he believed to be the truth’.

In the same column, after having castigated Middleton, the writer accused him of ‘meanness’ and then claimed to have ‘spoken of him with tenderness and respect’.

The February attack altered Middleton’s pastoral movements. Twenty-eight people were buried in 1826. The twenty-six recorded after January occurred from 6 March onwards and thereafter all funerals are annotated. If Middleton was unable to officiate, his specific whereabouts and the reason for his absence were written into the Register. On those occasions the Commandant, Francis Allman, filled in for him and during his time in Sydney, Wilkinson officiated. Only with funerals such as that

542 The Sydney Gazette, 2 September 1826.
543 The Sydney Gazette, 30 September 1826.
544 The Sydney Gazette 18 February 1826.
545 The Sydney Gazette, 18 February 1826.
of Rosetta Lamb, a Roman Catholic, buried on 28 June, was there no chaplain present, the reason being that ‘the services of the Rev Mr Wilkinson were dispensed with’.546

That the Gazette’s claims were false is obvious from the evidence available. Settlers alleged to have been neglected by Middleton were not neglected. The two funerals registered in January 1826 were for convicts, not free settlers. In Archdeacon Scott’s correspondence there are no complaints from the people of Hunter’s River of Middleton’s ministerial transgressions. Nor are there any in the Colonial Secretary’s correspondence. If Middleton were as remiss as portrayed, it is incomprehensible that complaints from well-connected settlers had not reached Sydney long before 1826. Middleton was vindicated by Sir William Burton. Only fifteen years later he described to all and sundry the conditions affecting clergy which Scott obviously refused to consider:

With respect of the country clergymen, also, should be taken into account, as forming no light part of their labours, the time necessarily occupied in travelling from place to place to perform their duties, with their limited means for travelling, and poor accommodations on the way, in a climate like that of New South Wales, especially during the summer season, when without regard to the scorching sun, or the suffocating atmosphere of an oppressive sirocco, the humble minister of religion has to perform his journey at a fixed time, in order to meet his expecting congregation. A glance at the annexed schedule will show, that no clergyman performed a single duty; none rested at his post; but the whole were so disposed to occupy the widest field, to afford the greatest possible increase of religious reproof, instruction, and consolation to those at a distance; and all were actively so employed; a single glance will also show their inadequacy to produce more than a passing impression upon those who heard them; since all the best arrangement, and the most active exertion could accomplish, was to perform the rites of religion, in some places indeed every Sunday, but in others, only occasionally and monthly and half yearly.

546 Christ Church Burial Register, B7806, Archives of the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle, A.R.B.S., Auchmuty Library, University of Newcastle. Entry No.11, 1826. Another objection is found at Entry No. 44 for 1827. The convict was James Fallon.
This appreciation was published in 1840 and encapsulates Middleton’s exertions during the 1820’s as much as that of any other country priest. When compared with Middleton’s ‘failures’, the reality is that Scott harboured, and possibly even savoured, intense personal and professional dislike for Middleton based more on poor administration and independence of spirit than pastoral failures. On this basis, Middleton stood no chance. Anything and everything he did was misconstrued. No allowance was made for mitigating circumstances such as those outlined by Burton. That the *Gazette’s* condemnations were true became the basis of belief. Those who accepted this interpretation aligned themselves with a scurrilous newspaper and believed that Middleton’s behaviour was deplorable and injured the Church’s reputation. They added to the damage to Middleton’s reputation, damage which has existed ever since.

**Chapter 5.**

**Clergy, Commerce and Consequences.**

Essential to an understanding of the factors influencing the lives and ministries of the early clergy is an insight into their finances and their attitude to wealth. In the period under review and consequent upon the influential teaching of

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Richard Whately, Archbishop of Dublin, political economy did not conflict with religion and wealth was not an evil.\textsuperscript{548} Their faith also moulded their ideas and practices. On arriving in the colony the first clergy were convinced that the Lord would provide with a little help from the governing authorities. Before long they discovered that the Lord more readily helped those who tried to help themselves. Some, such as Samuel Marsden, Thomas Hassall, George Middleton and Robert Reddall found that their God led them into very green pastures. So, too, did John Youl in Tasmania. When he died in 1827 he was possessed of 400 acres of land, 500 sheep and cattle.\textsuperscript{549} Others, however, wandered into a financial wilderness. Benjamin Vale arrived in 1814. Disgusted that conditions were so different from those he had experienced in his homeland, he returned to England in 1816. With no house provided and no glebe, he saw himself as the ‘errand boy’ of the more senior chaplains and all for 10 shillings a day and without additional government assistance.\textsuperscript{550} Others such as William Cowper, Robert Cartwright, Henry Fulton, Charles Wilton and especially Frederick Wilkinson, all found themselves in serious difficulty.

In letters written circa 50 – 65AD the Christian apostle St Paul enunciated two principles for remunerating clergy. The first was that they should be supported by their congregation.\textsuperscript{551} The second was that the support should be regular.\textsuperscript{552}


\textsuperscript{549} Phillip Blake, \textit{The Forgotten Chaplain, A Biography of the Reverend John Youl, 1773–1827, First Chaplain to Northern Tasmania}, Launceston, Tasmania, Regal Press, Undated, 42.

\textsuperscript{550} Ross Border, \textit{Church and State in Australia, A Constitutional Study of the Church of England in Australia}, 34.

\textsuperscript{551} I Corinthians 9. 13-14. (N.R.S.V.)

\textsuperscript{552} I Corinthians 16. 1-2. (N.R.S.V.)
Whilst appropriate for a well-defined and flourishing community, in the foundling colony of New South Wales, fiscal support from the congregation was impossible. All that could be provided on a regular basis was a stipend paid from the government coffers supplemented by other means.

Faced with a constantly increasing demand for social relief, most clergy found themselves in continuing straitened circumstances. Considering the sources of income available to them, such ought not to have been the case. They received a stipend paid from government funds. As well, they had access to a glebe and if they so desired, could receive land grants on which to practice agricultural enterprises. Where it suited government policy, some were appointed as magistrates, a duty which brought considerable financial and other benefits. ‘Surplice Fees’ – the amounts charged for baptisms, weddings and funerals provided another strand of income. For those close to larger population centres these amounts could be considerable but those located in the remote regions obviously earned less by virtue of lower demand.553 As has been shown, Middleton conducted seventy-three weddings in his one year in Parramatta but in Newcastle, this same number was taken between 3 August 1818 and 21 November 1825.554 The overall effect of these policies was that, despite the potential for income, they had insufficient revenue to provide for their families and to satisfy other calls made upon them.

The clergy needed to be assured that they and their families could live a

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553 E.W. O'Shaughnessy, *Australian Almanac and General Directory, for the year of Our Lord, 1835*, Sydney, Gazette Office, 1835, 120. For a wedding by licence, the parson could expect to be paid three guineas. If it were by banns the cost was ten shillings and sixpence. For a baptism the fee was one shilling and a funeral was five shillings.

lifestyle commensurate with their position in society. The most obvious solution was to pay them a stipend but the amount provided was insufficient for their needs. As late as 1840 Judge Burton acknowledged they were not remunerated adequately. The highest paid clergy still received less than civil officers. Before 1840 the situation was no different and was, for some men even worse. There was no equality of stipend. The amount varied from priest to priest. William Cowper, in 1809, for example, was contracted to a stipend of £260 per annum whereas Robert Cartwright received only £240. It was not until Archdeacon Scott’s proposal of 1827 that stipends were standardised.

Also standardised were the ‘Surplice Fees’ which derived from the Occasional Offices. Governor Macquarie directed that records were to be kept and stipulated the amounts to be charged. But as has been demonstrated, not all clergy conducted the same number. In 1820 Samuel Marsden claimed that over the course of fourteen years his fees amounted to less than £1 per annum. In St Phillips, Sydney and St Johns, Parramatta, the income from baptisms, the churching of women, marriages and funerals was well in excess of those received by, for example, Middleton in Newcastle and Cartwright in the Nepean where there was less demand.


558 The Occasional Offices are the services of Baptism, the Churching of Women after Childbirth, Marriage and Funerals for which a fee was paid to the incumbent priest.

559 Border, Church and State in Australia, 30.

560 Marsden to Bigge, (date not shown) 1820, ML, Bonwick Transcripts, Box 51, CY 1556, Missionary Vol. 3, 779.
As has been shown, while in Parramatta, Middleton officiated at many weddings which netted him a reasonable income. Once removed to Newcastle, weddings were far fewer and he felt the effect on his pocket. Surprisingly, another smaller and somewhat surprising source existed. Non-Anglican clergy were required to register their baptisms, weddings and funerals with the local Anglican priest and to pay a ‘small fee’. Middleton received such a fee when the Reverend Lancelot Threlkeld had to pay to register the baptism of his own son whom he baptised at Lake Macquarie. By an Act of the Colonial Government he was required to pay a shilling for every person he baptised and the money was to go to the parish clergyman. If he failed to pay, the penalty was $20 colonial. He was far from happy about it and blamed its instigation on Archdeacon Scott.

At the Bigge Enquiry, Cartwright, when asked about the sufficiency of his income attested,

My salary is two hundred and forty pounds per annum and the whole amount of surplice fees for the last twelve months is four pounds, twelve shillings which is very little more than half the amount of what I have expended in necessary things about the church.

One element of the English church’s financial organisation which might have

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561 Registers of St Johns Church, Parramatta, ML, SAG 55, 220-225.

562 Ross Border, Church and State in Australia, A Constitutional Study of the Church of England in Australia, 47.


564 Lancelot Threlkeld, Canberra, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1974, 197. See also Scott to Middleton, 23 March 1827, ML, Scott Letterbooks, CY Reel 3435, A850-851, 377.

565 John Ritchie (ed.), The Evidence to the Bigge Reports: New South Wales under Governor Macquarie, 156.
made a difference was the tithe but in New South Wales it did not exist. Had it done so, the inadequacy of clergy incomes might not have been so glaring. The offerings of parishioners, usually in the form of the tithe, had long been a major source of English clerical income. Although often resented, tithes were important. But in New South Wales from 1788 and for several years afterwards, they were unavailable. Very little money existed and so little food was produced that no-one, in a colony which almost starved within two years of its founding, had anything to spare.

To help supplement their incomes, many clergy were appointed as magistrates. The Governors in New South Wales aimed for a quiescent society and to obtain it used parsons as magistrates, especially those serving in the more distant locations. The position carried lucrative pecuniary benefits but as it was not available to all, it created further disparity in incomes. The magistrate was provided with four convict servants fed and clothed by the government. While fiscally beneficial, the policy was deleterious to the church. Clergy magistrates were viewed as oppressors and were despised. Cowper refused to hold such a position and Middleton, as far as can be ascertained, was not offered one. Marsden, Cartwright, Fulton and Reddall all accepted the position and held it until they relinquished it or until clergy participation was discontinued in 1827.

Another government policy which had supported the clergy was discontinued in 1814 and the loss of income connected with it created enormous difficulty for Cowper and Cartwright, both of whom had left desirable circumstances.


567 Ross Border, Church and State in Australia, A Constitutional Study of the Church of England in Australia, 32.
to come to Australia.\textsuperscript{568} They had been promised rations and provisions and fuel for themselves and their families together with one convict servant, clothed and fed, in addition to their stipulated salaries.\textsuperscript{569} The salary for Cartwright was £240 per annum.\textsuperscript{570} That for Cowper was £260 per annum. But, an instruction from Lord Bathurst, Secretary of State for the Colonies, ordered that these allowances be terminated for all civil officers. He was convinced that although the favour had been necessary in the early days, the colony was now prospering and there was no further need for it.\textsuperscript{571} Governor Macquarie published Bathurst’s instruction in the following October.\textsuperscript{572} The effect on Cowper was devastating. He was forced to borrow money to cope.\textsuperscript{573} Marsden remonstrated on behalf of his colleagues and Macquarie took it upon himself to continue granting the rations ‘for a period of twice eighteen months longer’.\textsuperscript{574} When these finally ceased in 1818, no compensation was forthcoming and Cowper especially began to endure the effects of economic want.\textsuperscript{575}


\textsuperscript{574} Darling to Goderich, 9 February 1828, \textit{Historical Records of Australia. Series 1, Vol. 13, Governors' Despatches to and from England}, Sydney, Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1914-
By 1821, Richard Hill suffered in like manner. Benefits promised before he departed England were not forthcoming. In letters sent to both Commissioner Bigge in Sydney and the Bishop of London, he made it very clear that three years after his arrival in the colony he had not been provided with the ‘advantages’ which were promised, and like his clerical colleagues, was ‘unable to subsist’ on his pay and emoluments.\(^{576}\) One of these promised advantages was a glebe.\(^{577}\) But, because abuse had crept in, a blanket decision was made in England that the issuing of such land to ‘any officer’ was to cease. Certain of these ‘officers’ had received their land but then sold it immediately and left the colony ‘without in any way benefitting’ it.\(^{578}\) Hill, as an officer of the Crown, had inadvertently been included among these profiteers. He was convinced he needed the land. It was essential for the grazing of cattle which were ‘indispensable’ for all the clergy to supplement their incomes.\(^{579}\) In an effort to overcome his disadvantage he was forced either to depend on friends to allow him to graze his stock on their land or else to pay an annual rent to others until his glebe was granted.\(^{580}\) As with so many of his counterparts, Hill was a poor financial manager. He died suddenly in 1836 and in spite of his annual income of £600 he also had ‘a mountain of debts’ including an obligation to Samuel Marsden for £610 ‘which

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\(^{576}\) Hill to Bigge, 29 January 1821, ML, Bonwick Transcripts, Box 51, CY 1556, Missionary Vol. 3, 730.

\(^{577}\) Hill to Bigge, 29 January 1821, 731.

\(^{578}\) Hill to Bigge, 29 January 1821, 731.

\(^{579}\) Hill to Bigge, 29 January 1821, 732.

\(^{580}\) Hill to Bigge, 29 January 1821, 732.
could never be repaid’.  

Housing, too, could be inadequate. Johnson had to provide as best he could. Marsden did likewise until a parsonage was erected in Parramatta. William Cowper arrived to find himself adequately housed but Robert Cartwright, on arriving in Windsor, became totally disillusioned. His ‘house’ was also a storeroom, a school and his church. As such it was totally inadequate for his family’s needs because of constant intrusion into their private life. He wrote that it was,

a large brick building, the upper part of which had been used as a government granary, and the lower part as a public school and place of worship. The one end of this building was fitted up for Your Lordship’s Memorialist and his family, where they resided about two years. But finding the part that was appropriated for Divine Worship much too small for his increased congregation, Your Memorialist was unable to remain there any longer and moved to a small farm of 90 acres in the neighbourhood of Windsor which he was obliged to purchase.  

No other priest was forced to take such drastic and expensive action. By contrast, in 1824, Cartwright described his situation before arriving in the colony and said that his family, ‘resided in a very comfortable manner, and was much respected by the principal inhabitants of that populous town and neighbourhood’.  

Middleton, too, faced difficulties over his accommodation. He deemed it as inadequate and it caused friction between he and the Commandant. Morisset maintained it was in excellent condition. Middleton held that the parsonage needed bricking between the house and the kitchen, as well as requiring weatherboards on


583 ‘Memorial of Rev. R. Cartwright Soliciting Relief’, 372.
the rooms to the east and south because of the rain which was gaining entry. Morisset, he claimed, was aware of these deficiencies and also knew of doors improperly hinged and of one which had been off the hinges for several months. Nor was there any security stronger than a common latch. But more pertinent was the claim that it was missing two essential elements of any house of that era, a dresser and an oven.\textsuperscript{584}

In a country with so much available land, the one model from England which could be implemented was the granting of parish glebes of 400 acres.\textsuperscript{585} Further to that, land grants could also be issued. With such assets as these, theoretically, the clergy could farm and end their financial woes. The theory in no way matched the practice. Very few clergy found their glebe a benefit. Generally they saw it as a burden and when asked by the Clergy and School Lands Corporation to surrender them, they did so with little regret. The practice began with Richard Johnson. His glebe was 400 acres and he also received a land grant of 350 acres. In 1794, Samuel Marsden was granted 326 acres in addition to his stipend, but interestingly, was not allocated a glebe until some time later. When finally granted it was 400 acres ‘a mile from Parramatta’ and ‘of bad and middling land, unenclosed and not cleared’.\textsuperscript{586} Over the ensuing years Marsden immersed himself in both his spiritual and agricultural pursuits and in the latter became a skilful farmer, pioneer of the wool

\textsuperscript{584} Middleton to Goulburn, February 28 1822,\textit{Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825, 1788-1825}, ML, Reel 6067, 4/1808, 31-34.

\textsuperscript{585} 400 acres is 153.6 hectares.

industry and ultimately, very wealthy.\textsuperscript{587} He was an exception among his colleagues. When later challenged over his pastoral interests, he justified himself on the basis of both colonial and personal need - his stipend was often in arrears and so he had to find other alternatives to support himself.\textsuperscript{588} As a committed Evangelical he understood his commercial success to be the sign and seal of God’s approval of his work.\textsuperscript{589} Secure in this conviction, he became, for the next twenty years at least, mentor and exemplar to all clergy who arrived after him.

Immersing clergy in agriculture evolved into the standard practice of the settlement even though it flew in the face of their ordination promises that they would forego ‘all worldly pursuits’. Glebes and land grants were bestowed upon application. In his report, Commissioner Bigge supported the policy.\textsuperscript{590} He also encouraged a ‘squarson’ system by which he hoped for an increase in the number of priests who would be attracted to Australia. It would relieve the clergy shortage and solve the dilemma of their payment.\textsuperscript{591} The Presbyterian cleric, John Dunmore Lang, a severe critic of landholding clergy, had to admit that the origin of these grants was based in necessity. But he also added that its prolongation was harmful to the clergy and the church:

Grants of land were accordingly given to clergymen but the practice once admitted continued to subsist long after its necessity had ceased and the genuine son of Aaron stood forth before the Australian

\textsuperscript{587} S. Judd and K. Cable, \textit{Sydney Anglicans}, 5.


\textsuperscript{590} John Thomas Bigge, \textit{Report of the Commissioner of Inquiry into the State of the Colony of New South Wales Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed, 19 June 1822}, Adelaide, Libraries Board of South Australia, 1966, 40.

\textsuperscript{591} Stephen Judd & Kenneth Cable, \textit{Sydney Anglicans}, 8. ‘Squarson’ is a fusion of both squire and parson.
community as illustrious in the list of colonial graziers, as their brethren of the tribes of Reuben and Gad and of half the tribe of Manasseh.592

Adequate as this model was for the British scene, it could not prevail against the vastly different conditions dictated by the Australian environment. The long dry spells and droughts, the lean earth and the extremes of heat and cold prevalent in the colony were not conducive to successful cropping or grazing except in river valleys so long as flooding remained at bay. Insofar as animal husbandry was concerned, lack of fencing required shepherds and thus, a heavy labour commitment. Of these shepherds, few had any agricultural knowledge or experience and even fewer could be trusted to exert themselves to any great extent for the benefit of their reverend or other masters. The masters, in their turn, varied little from the convicts in their knowledge. Marketing posed another challenge. Most glebes were distant from the markets and land grants even more so.593 With virtually no experience or skills other than those required to minister to their congregations and little time to spare to oversee their ventures, the clergy, for the most part, were in no way suited to successful agricultural enterprises. The squarson system delivered most of its participants to enduring financial want. In reality, it was, at the time, the only possible course of action. The colonial authorities adopted it in an attempt to remove themselves and the clergy from a pressing dilemma, but it proved unsuccessful and two other of its earliest victims were William Cowper and Robert Cartwright.

Cowper claimed his glebe ‘was only valueless land and rock’ and so provided


593 Hill had a farm at Milbrodale near Wollombi at the end of the Great North road and both Middleton’s glebe and land grant were some 30 miles (approximately 65 km) from his parsonage in Newcastle.
little income.594 It had also cost him, ‘£160 for fencing and the erection of a small weather boarded cottage which shortly afterwards disappeared through repeated depredations.595

Cartwright received a grant of 600 acres soon after his arrival, but was forced to sell it for £200.596 As a reward for his ministerial work, he was later given another 600 acre grant and six head of cattle to be paid for in kind after three years on condition that he neither sold the land nor alienated it from his family. He was also given four men to be victualled from His Majesty’s store for eighteen months because ‘he had not before enjoyed that part of a settler’s indulgence’.597 But, as happened with his colleagues, the grant became more of a liability than an asset, partly because it was subjected to constant deprivations.598 As a result it was under-utilised and not the boon it was meant to be. When in evidence before the Bigge Inquiry, Cowper was asked if he and the other chaplains’ found their incomes were insufficient, he replied, ‘we have been compelled to turn our attention to grazing or cultivation to keep our families from starving’.599 He also added that William Cowper earned much more than he did because he had a much larger salary and was paid ‘from the Troops, surplice fees etc, and was not obliged to keep a horse for


597 Earl Bathurst to Governor Brisbane, 25 September 1824, 371.

598 Earl Bathurst to Governor Brisbane, 25 September 1824, 371.

Richard Hill asserted that he was forced to be an ‘Agriculturalist’, something he did not particularly want because it would draw him away from his ‘public duties’. Nonetheless an agriculturalist he became and an extensive one at that. He owned suburban land at Darlinghurst in Sydney and purchased 2000 acres, some of it in the Hunter Valley at Milbrodale near Bulga. He later expressed regret that he had taken possession of it. His glebe was next to worthless. The soil was of inferior quality and it was so thickly timbered and badly watered as to be useless for cattle. In an attempt to acquire supplementary income he attempted to farm a small portion but suffered failure while at the same time bearing the cost of three assigned servants who worked it. Consequently, he found himself deeper in debt and without any prospect of profit. It was nine miles from Sydney and he could not spare the time to travel to it on a regular basis. This meant he was ‘exposed and subjected to the peculations of his servants’ and the huts he had built on it afforded ‘harbour for bushrangers’ who stole his cattle and his pigs. On one occasion his men were stripped of their clothing by a gang of runaways. He was not alone in his predicament. Between 1819 and 1824, for example, one hundred and sixty one men...
were accused of the theft of cattle. Additional to his woes was his attempt to lease it to tenants who ‘failed’ and so he was forced to take his rent in a manner which compromised his feelings. In 1826, he wrote to Archdeacon Scott requesting that he be relieved of ‘this burthensome and ruinous possession’ and allowed some other form of compensation from which he might expect to derive benefit.

Governor Darling, on becoming aware of the clergy’s plight, wrote to Viscount Goderich, the then British Secretary for Colonial Affairs. His message was that the salary of £250 allotted to newly arriving chaplains not possessed of glebes or allowances was ‘totally inadequate’ and would not permit them to maintain ‘that respectable station in society which their position renders it desirable’.

Over and above travel and domestic expenses, calls were made on clergy ‘such as they could not avoid and from which they could not, nor should not, shirk’. With no social security system to support the needy, the clergy were expected to be leaders in all kinds of works of benevolence (and were) the first people applied to in cases of distress.

Richard Hill also contended that the laity offered them very little financial or any other kind of support. He summed up the clergy dilemma when he wrote, ‘those little matters of kindness which are so frequently experienced in England from the People,

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607 Hill to Scott, 10 July 1826, in Darling to Goderich, 1 February 1828, 754.


609 Hill to Bigge, 29 January 1821, 761.
here cannot be expected’. The outcome of this disparity was only too clear:

if a Clergyman wishes to fill up properly the rank in society which he holds he must look to some other means beside his pay and the most eligible is by keeping a herd of cattle.

The servant of God was, by necessity, constrained to serve mammon as well.

Richard Hill was not alone in his contention. Samuel Marsden, expressed an almost identical view to Hill’s when, in 1820, he wrote to Commissioner Bigge during Bigge’s investigation into the state of the colony. He maintained that the clergy in England lived in the ‘bosom of their friends’ who ‘esteemed them’ and ‘ministered to their wants’ whereas in New South Wales, if a clergyman required food he had to grow it himself or starve. Even so, he might still starve because felons would steal the fruit of his labours. He also agreed with Hill that the people failed to support their pastors.

If I wanted a cabbage or potato I must plant them with my own hands. If I wanted a bushel of wheat I must grow it or starve – I had never one given to me since I have been in the colony, nor so much as a barn’s fowl. This is not the case in England. The clergy have often the first-fruit of the earth, here they have none.

It must be noted, however, that the wealthier laity did assist the clergy with support both financial and ministerial. The Macarthur family, for example, and Edward

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610 Hill to Bigge, 29 January 1821, 761.
611 Hill to Bigge, 29 January 1821, 762.
612 Hill to Bigge, 29 January 1821, 763. See also Hill to Bigge, 29 January 1821, 732.
613 Marsden to Bigge, (date not shown), ML, Bonwick Transcripts, Box 51, CY 1556, Missionary Vol. 3, 779.
614 Marsden to Bigge, (date not shown), 778.
615 Marsden to Bigge, (date not shown), 779.
Charles Close of Morpeth, are just two examples of people who were very generous toward the church and its pastors.\textsuperscript{616}

In 1824 Cartwright wrote seeking compensation and in his letter detailed the promises he had received from Marsden which had persuaded him to leave the security of England. He also outlined what he had relinquished to do so.\textsuperscript{617} He had turned down ‘several advantageous offers’ made to persuade him to remain in England. He rued the day he did so. Marsden’s promise of a glebe had not been realised and without the glebe attached, his move was even more costly. With a glebe he could have erected a residence at a much lower cost because he would not have had to pay for timber. To make matters worse, Governor Macquarie was reluctant to pay him a rent allowance. He reasoned that Cartwright’s re-location had been voluntary. To Cartwright, Macquarie’s action was a breach of contract and one which he could not and would not accept. For eight years he endured until accommodation was made available to him. He aimed to rectify his situation and in 1824, in an attempt to gain compensation, he wrote:

\begin{quote}
Your Lordship will consider your memorialist justly entitled to House rent for the eight years during which he resided on his own premises. More especially when Your Lordship learns that other clergymen have been furnished with suitable residences at an expense to Government of one hundred pounds and upward per annum. \textsuperscript{618}
\end{quote}

He received the compensation he sought. Earl Bathurst authorised the payment of £10 per annum from the 1 January 1818 to the 1 January 1825, on which date his

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\textsuperscript{618} ‘Memorial of Rev. R. Cartwright Soliciting Relief’, \textit{Historical Records of Australia. Series 1, Vol. 13, Governors’ Despatches to and from England}, Sydney, Library Committee of the Commonwealth
stipend would also increase to £300 per annum. He also authorised the payment of
twelve shillings sterling per week ‘from the time of his quitting the Glebe house at
Windsor until his removal to Liverpool’. Regrettably, Cartwright did not achieve
all his demands. At the same time, Bathurst disallowed his request for remuneration
for a horse.

In 1826 the Clergy and School Lands Corporation asked the clergy to
surrender their glebes and they were willing to do so on the basis that they were next
to useless. The Corporation’s Trustees acknowledged this:

From the uncertainty of the time which the clergyman maybe in
possession of their glebes, they are unable to appropriate them so
advantageously as if they were at once vested in the Corporation, and
by which means they are in some instances nearly, if not entirely
useless.

In place of their glebes the clergy were offered an annual sum equal to the value of
produce derived from the land were it of moderate quality.

As with their produce, the clergy themselves needed transport and it was a
major addition to their financial burden, especially for those priests not residing in
Sydney. To reach their glebes and land grants, as well as to perform their normal
duties, they needed to be able to travel. To do so was a heavy drain on their purse.


619 Earl Bathurst to Governor Brisbane, 25 September 1824, Historical Records of Australia. Series I,
Governors’ Despatches to and from England, Series I, Vol. 11, Sydney, Library Committee of the

620 Trustees of the Corporation to all Clergy, 21 March 1827, Clergy and School Lands Corporation
Correspondence, (Letters from Clergy), Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 9/2702,
258,259. See also Hill to the Bishop of London, 20 February 1821, Bonwick Transcripts, ML, Box 50,
CY1556, Missionary Vol. 3.

621 Trustees of the Corporation to all Clergy, 21 March 1827, Clergy and School Lands Corporation
Correspondence, (Letters from Clergy), Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 9/2702, 259.

622 Clergy And School Lands Corporation to Middleton, 21 March 1827, 255.

623 Hill to Bigge, 29 January 1821, ML, Bonwick Transcripts, Box 51, CY 1556, Missionary Vol. 3, 732.
In a colony requiring movement over considerable distances, horses were indispensable. Funerals were frequent, being the most common pastoral task. To be deprived of transport to them brought on both inconvenience and potential health problems. Hill had to walk four miles from his parsonage to the cemetery and the burden on him was excessive. Not only was he required for ‘frequent attendance’ at the burial ground but in each instance felt compelled to make himself readily available to the bereaved in their homes as well. The consequence was that his health suffered because of the physical exertion involved. He could not ‘bear the fatigue’. Hill’s colleague, William Cowper, endured a similar fate. He also was unable to afford to keep a horse. In spite of the obvious need for most of the clergy to possess one or more horses to traverse their parishes, no allowance was provided. Each priest had to purchase, feed, stable and meet all costs associated with equine ownership at a time when horses were scarce and consequently, expensive to buy. Cartwright was certainly more disadvantaged in comparison to Cowper. His jurisdiction extended over a large and ‘inhospitable district in the interior which required him to travel through a ‘thick forest’ both in daylight and darkness. He also had to provide himself with a horse to travel the nearly 50 miles to his outposts. For the horse he paid £150, his stipend at that time being £240.

Until the time he could save sufficient funds to purchase one, Cartwright was forced

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624 Hill to Bigge, 29 January 1821, 732.
625 Hill to Bigge, 29 January 1821, 732.
626 Hill to Bigge, 29 January 1821, 732.
627 Hill to Bigge, 29 January 1821, 762. See also Hill to Bigge, 29 January 1821, 732ff.
628 Scott to Darling, 1 September 1829, 217-218.
to rent his horse for £17 per annum.\textsuperscript{629} By comparison, Cowper’s city parish was nowhere near as far flung as Cartwright’s country domain and, for most of the time, he could, if necessary, walk to the destinations he sought. According to Richard Hill, Cowper had no choice. He had to walk to the burial ground as many as five and six times a week and in all weathers because, ‘because with the utmost economy he cannot afford a horse to convey him.’\textsuperscript{630}

For Cartwright, the effect of the dishonoured promises was so severe that it occasioned his desire to return to England in 1818. He remained in New South Wales only because permission was refused. Macquarie wrote to him and told him that he could not afford to lose a chaplain.\textsuperscript{631} Cartwright saw this decision as most unfortunate for he and his family. Had he been allowed to embark for England he would have been able to procure a ‘comfortable living’.\textsuperscript{632} Worse still, Cartwright, at the time of writing his Memorial, found that he could not defray the enormous expense of removing his family back to England. Difficulties faced in Australia compounded by the dishonesty of his agents in England meant that he was so heavily in debt that he would have to exert himself to the utmost to pay his creditors and ‘preserve his reputation pure’.\textsuperscript{633}

Governor Macquarie’s refusal to give Cartwright the leave he requested had ramifications far beyond his imagining. The Governor could not place the same

\textsuperscript{629} ‘Memorial of Rev. R. Cartwright Soliciting Relief’, 373.

\textsuperscript{630} Hill to the Bishop of London, 20 February 1821, 765.

\textsuperscript{631} ‘Memorial of Rev. R. Cartwright Soliciting Relief’, 375.

\textsuperscript{632} ‘Memorial of Rev. R. Cartwright Soliciting Relief’, 375.

\textsuperscript{633} ‘Memorial of Rev. R. Cartwright Soliciting Relief’, 375.
restriction on Cartwright’s wife and so she returned to England where she remained for some two to three years. Cartwright said of her that she took this step because ‘she was compelled by such distress’. Given the financial privations the family was enduring and the vast difference between English and colonial culture, it is easy to understand her reaction. Archdeacon Scott, writing to Governor Darling, made it absolutely clear that:

the pastoral duties of a chaplain in a convict colony, if rightly and conscientiously performed, bear no resemblance whatever to those of a parish priest or a chaplain of a gaol in England.

The same conditions obviously also applied to the clergy wife and given the later fate of their son Richard, it is possible that Mrs Cartwright, with great foresight, took her children with her to remove them from the influence of the convicts, their crime-ridden world and her fear of how it might affect them. In 1836, Richard, by then a married man, was convicted of receiving stolen sheep and was sent to Van Diemen’s Land.

The common bond between a cleric and his wife was commitment to the cause of their Lord. Reinforcing that bond was the scriptural injunction, which, at that time, no-one contested, that a wife should obey her husband. In so doing, the clergy wife could expect security of home and social status. She could also expect that her children would be better placed in society and able to take advantage of the connections made through her husband’s ministry. But she had to be an extraordinary woman as well. Walter Lawry, no doubt speaking from experience, advised his

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634 ‘Memorial of Rev. R. Cartwright Soliciting Relief’, 375.
635 ‘Memorial of Rev. R. Cartwright Soliciting Relief’, 375.
seniors in England, ‘if you send more missionaries, send good and zealous partners with them or I advise you to keep them at home. 638

Anne O’Brien wrote that these women had a ‘motherhood’ vocation, by which, as the clergy wife, they modelled the epitome of ‘domestic christianity’ and shaped religious and moral values.639 Elizabeth Cartwright found little of this. She came to a land where clergy status was often attacked by a hostile press and ignored by an indifferent people. She came to a land in which her children were reared amongst felons, many of whom had been freed but not necessarily reformed. Conjoined with her husband’s financial situation and the government’s lack of support, she could endure no longer - her spirit broke and she left the colony.

Elizabeth’s removal to England added further to Cartwright’s burden. Her sojourn cost him around £600.640 He summed up his circumstances by stating that he was in danger of insolvency. 641

Contrary to Allan Grocott’s assertion that these and other reverend gentlemen were greedy, it is now obvious that they were not avaricious.642 They came to Australia expecting, after having received assurances, that they would experience a basic standard of living such as befitted their standing in society and the obligations of duty and service laid upon them. Sadly they discovered that a strong commitment to vocation coupled with a government’s capricious behaviour did not, in all

638 Graeme Griffin, They Came To Care, Pastoral Ministry in Colonial Australia, Melbourne, Joint Board of Religious Education, 1993, 57.
640 ‘Memorial of Rev. R. Cartwright Soliciting Relief’, 375.
641 ‘Memorial of Rev. R. Cartwright Soliciting Relief’, 375.
642 Grocott, Convicts, Clergymen and Churches, 248.
instances, put food on their table, clothes on their back or a roof over their head.

Shortly after his arrival, Governor Ralph Darling developed a great respect for both Cowper and Cartwright. He saw them as zealous men nearing the end of their life and they received his fulsome praise for the manner in which they had selflessly offered their lives in the service of their God and all to whom they were sent to minister. He wrote of them:

I must respectfully and earnestly beg leave to call the attention of His Majesty’s Government to the state of some of the Senior Chaplains whose age and infirmities cannot but be a source of great anxiety to them, when, from the length of their service, they might reasonably hope for more peace and comfort than they have hitherto enjoyed.643

He also supported both their claims that ‘they had relinquished comfortable provisions’ and suffered the breaking of promises for which they received ‘but a very inadequate remuneration’. He also mentioned their families whom they had fed, clothed, and educated and emphasised that for many years they had suffered privation and had even been forced ‘to forgo the use of meat and flour and subsist on a less substantial diet’.644

Archdeacon Scott agreed with Darling and acknowledged that conditions had altered since the arrival of the first four clergy in the colony. Prices and duties and travel had all increased. He was prepared to admit that they were at risk of going into debt ‘and being bounden to people from whom they should be distanced’. He felt they had an image of ‘the most spotless nature’ which had to be maintained.645

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644 Darling to Murray, 1 September 1829, 217. Italics in original.

reply, Earl Bathurst wrote to Governor Brisbane to inform him that he had increased stipends so that Marsden received £400, Cowper and Cartwright each received £300 and Fulton received £200. 646  

Of the other clergy, Henry Fulton fell out with Samuel Marsden over the salary he was to receive as Marsden’s locum at Parramatta when Marsden voyaged to England in 1807. 647 Thomas Reddall, because of his lust for land ‘rushed madly into rural pursuits’ and before long found himself victim to very severe financial embarrassment. 648 He was heavily in debt to creditors but yet continued to purchase stock. According to Alan Grocott he received ‘lavish’ amounts of land, cattle and finance. 649 As well, on top of his priestly stipend he received the salary of a schoolmaster and his income as Director of Schools. He also held a magistracy. With this wealth he was able to erect ‘Glen Alpine’ close to Campbelltown where he ‘essayed a social status somewhat beyond his means’. 650 Like others, he too was censured by Scott for neglect of duty originating from his extravagance in farming. 651 Joseph Docker endured but five years at Windsor before resigning from the ministry and becoming a full-time pastoralist. He, too, failed to benefit from his glebe but became eminently successful as a farmer and grazier. There were also others who prospered. Thomas Hassall succeeded eminently no doubt because he had the  


648 Grocott, Convicts, Clergymen and Churches. 248.  

649 Grocott, Convicts, Clergymen and Churches. 248.  

advantage of Samuel Marsden as his father-in-law.

Having been raised in a society where land ownership was the basis of wealth, it is easy to understand the clerical desire to resort to agriculture even without the necessity of supporting themselves. Some historians appear to have overlooked this important distinction. Alan Grocott designated the clergy’s agricultural pursuits as ‘the Botany Bay Disease’.652 Richard Hill and Robert Cartwright especially belie his claim. They demonstrate quite clearly that clergy involvement was based, not on greed, but on necessity.

Already demonstrated was the disparity in incomes brought about by the amounts in fees received from the Occasional Offices. Another reality which must be considered is that a change of appointment might also seriously deplete their income. Middleton experienced this upon his move to Newcastle. In Parramatta he officiated at many weddings which would have netted him a reasonable income.653 Once removed to Newcastle, weddings were far fewer and he felt the effect on his pocket. Only the amount the clergy accepted would have been consistent.654

By 1826 it was obvious that new measures were necessary to provide for clergy. Governor Darling wrote to Viscount Goderich suggesting that glebes not be granted to newly arriving chaplains because of the temptation provided to engage in activities other than their spiritual duties.655 No doubt, Archdeacon Scott, through his

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652 Grocott, Convicts, Clergymen and Churches, 248.
653 Registers of St Johns Church, Parramatta, ML, SAG 55, 220-225.
negative experiences with men like Reddall and Middleton, influenced his thinking. Also included in the correspondence was a letter he received from the Archdeacon written in August 1827 outlining Scott’s conviction that clergy were at a financial disadvantage because of being obliged to pay high prices for goods, and especially imported goods, which others, by various ploys, were able to avoid. Whereas all clergy, irrespective of denomination were involved, it was the Anglicans who were the most deeply affected. As early as 1820, Samuel Marsden had written to a friend in England outlining their predicament:

A preacher cannot clothe himself in this colony for at least less than double what he could in England, a coat in this country will cost more than an entire suit with you.  

Walter Lawry pointed out the difficulties faced by those of other denominations:

It is most painful to the missionaries at this very important station to have any occasion to draw at all upon the low funds but the necessity of it arises principally from the incredibly high prices of almost all the articles of English manufacture.

In May 1826 Archdeacon Scott complained about the prices charged to the clergy and schoolmasters and protested to the Governor at the profiteering. He said the settler sells meat at twopence halfpenny a pound and flour at twopence per pound but the parson and the schoolmaster are charged sevenpence and fourpence while clothing is ‘full 100% on the price in England’. For the clergy especially, the consequence was that to keep up ‘appearances’ was difficult and worse still, in attempting to do so they, could:

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656 Marsden to Pratt, 24 February 1820, *Bonwick Transcripts 51, ML, CY Reel 1556, ML, CY 1556, 61.*

657 Lawry to Holly, 17 August 1820, *Bonwick Transcripts 51, ML, CY Reel 1556, 709.*

Fall unwillingly, but necessarily into debt...and...place themselves under the obligations to persons whom they ought to keep at a distance’.  

As a final thrust he pointed out that the Wesleyan Missionaries, John Dunmore Lang, the Presbyterian leader and Mr. Terry, the Roman Catholic Chaplain, were better paid while experiencing little in the way of demands for assistance. Therry received £100 a year. This was more than ample for a celibate priest who, unlike his Anglican counterparts, received generous support from his parishioners. It must also be noted that these clergy, with the exception of Lang, also indulged in similar fiscal flirtations as did their Anglican counterparts. Grocott particularly mentions the Presbyterian clergy as men who ‘especially tended to become full-time or part time graziers’. David McKenzie, like Joseph Docker, became a squatter and Henry Carmichael took on farming and wine production. Father Therry, the Roman Catholic chaplain was possessed of a similar bent. His reasoning is interesting and his aims noble. He obtained a number of properties either by gift or purchase and ‘which he tried to develop for the provision of more schools and


660 Scott to Darling, 2 August 1827, 777.

661 Earl Bathurst to Governor Macquarie, 1 September 1820, HRA Vol. X, 204.

662 Patrick Francis (Cardinal) Moran, History of the Catholic Church in Australasia from Authentic Sources, Sydney, Oceanic Publishing, 189-?, 95. (Note that the incomplete date of publication is copied from the catalogue of the library of the University of Newcastle, N.S.W.).

663 Grocott, Convicts, Clergymen and Churches, 248.

664 Grocott, Convicts, Clergymen and Churches, 248.

665 At the Census of 1828 Therry held 1715 acres on which he ran 4 horses, 150 cattle and 25 sheep. See Malcolm R. Sainty & Keith A. Johnson (eds.), Census of New South Wales, November 1828, Sydney, Library of Australian History, 1980, Index 3, entry T0346.
churches for the growing catholic community’.  

In replying, Goderich ignored Darling’s suggestion and continued granting of land while limiting the amount to 1280 acres ‘as sufficient in addition to their Glebes for all domestic purposes’. At the same time he forbade any further grants of land to, or purchases of land, by the clergy then in the colony. At the same time he stopped free land grants to all and sundry, including the newly-arriving clergy. He did not want any of them, old or new so involved with their farming pursuits that they neglected their spiritual functions.

From the above it is easy to understand that Middleton developed a penchant for land ownership and the benefits it might bring. He commenced his involvement within a short while of arriving in Parramatta. On 5 August 1820, Governor Macquarie issued an order for several people to receive a grant of cattle from the Government herd. Among these was Middleton who was given six head ‘on a credit of three years, to be them paid for in kind and who are to execute bonds with the Deputy Commissioner General’. Previously, in April, he had applied for ‘a few cows’ using as his reason ‘my having a little boy of tender age’. These six were the result of that application. Where he grazed them is not known but the most likely possibility is on Marsden’s land. Wherever they were, he put them to very good use.

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668 Governor Macquarie, General And Government Order, 5 August 1820, ML, Colonial Secretary's Correspondence, 1788-1825, ML, CY Reel 6007, 4/3502, 185. Underlining in original.

669 Lachlan Macquarie, 5 August 1820, List of New Free Settlers and other persons who are to receive Cattle from the Government Herds on a Credit of Three Years to be then paid for in kind and who are to execute Bonds for the same with the Deputy Commissioner General, Colonial Secretary's Correspondence, 1788-1825, ML, CY Reel 6007, 4/3502, 185.
Later that year, on 15 August, a Mr Thomas Wylde went security for him on six head.\textsuperscript{670} Again, where he grazed them has not been ascertained but it was obviously in a fair and pleasant land because five months later, on 13 January 1821, he was number sixteen on a list of vendors who sold meat to the Government Store in Parramatta. He received £6, 14/-, 7d for 323 pounds of fresh meat at 5d per pound.\textsuperscript{671} His venture, even though only small-scale had, at this stage, proven very successful. More and larger successes were to come.

Confidant and self assured as he was, he felt that he could be successful where others were failing. Despite being reared in London, he had a talent for things agricultural and he put that talent to good use. Apart from Samuel Marsden and his son-in-law Thomas Hassall, Middleton, of all the clergy was the only one for whom his glebe brought long-term benefit. Situated on the Paterson River approximately three kilometres south of the present village of Paterson, it is, in part, now the site of the southern portion of Tocal Agricultural College. In the years Middleton possessed it, the southern boundary abutted the original settlement of Paterson. It was river-front land with rich alluvial soil and was covered with lush rainforest. Another section of it, today, it is a resting paddock for cattle.

Middleton’s stewardship of his glebe illustrates clearly what was required of the holder and where many were unable to meet the requirements demanded for success. The first task he faced was to clear it. Early drawings of the Paterson district show a very different topography to that which exists today. In 1821 it was thickly

\textsuperscript{670} List of Persons Who Have Been Applied to by Letter to fulfil their Bond for Cattle Become Due Between 23\textsuperscript{rd} August 1824 and 16\textsuperscript{th} October 1825, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence 1788-1825, ML, CY Reel 6057, 4/1766, 146a.

\textsuperscript{671} Abstract of State Receipts paid in cash by Deputy commissioner Drennan between the 23\textsuperscript{rd} March and 24\textsuperscript{th} May, 1821, ML, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence 1788-1825, CY Reel 6051, 4/1748, 175.
wooded and was home to a multitude of birds and animals. On taking possession, he set his assigned servants to clear a path through brush in order to move his cattle onto the land after which he then set them to clearing it for pasture. It was slow and tedious work. By late 1822 they had managed to clear only the 14 acres on which he was growing nine acres of wheat and a garden/orchard. He was also running 54 head of cattle and 52 hogs. Government regulation required that it be fenced and in Middleton’s case, one hundred acres had also been cleared by the end of 1827. It was no small task. The cost, too, was great, but fortunately was redeemable as a charge against the Government. Nevertheless, he had to pay for the work until his claim was serviced in Sydney. Archdeacon Scott acknowledged Middleton’s right to compensation when he wrote stating,

With regard to any remuneration to you for expenses you have incurred on your Glebe I conclude that if you have cleared one hundred acres and fenced the whole Glebe at your own charge you are entitled to the remuneration for that or such proportion as it would have cost the Government since all the other clergy have had that quantity cleared and fenced for them.

Middleton continued to clear, farm and graze with ever-increasing success. The Census of 1828 reveals that he had increased his holding to 2400 acres of which 130

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675 Scott to McLeay, 3 October 1826, Scott Letterbooks, ML, CY Reel 3435, A850-851, 319.


677 Scott to Middleton, 5 September 1825, 91.

678 Scott to Middleton, 5 September 1825, 91.
were cleared and 32 were cultivated.\textsuperscript{679} He had 6 horses, 337 cattle and 285 sheep. The extra 2000 acres was a land-grant situated four miles due west from the original Paterson and which abutted the glebe.\textsuperscript{680} It comprised portion 30 in the Parish of Houghton, County Durham.\textsuperscript{681} Granted on 19 April 1829 by Sir George Gipps, it is referred to as \textit{Glenrose Farm} in the grant register and was the land promised to Middleton on or before 28 February 1828. He was authorised to take possession on 18 September 1828 as a primary grant in place of the 2000 acres he had requested to buy and for which approval to purchase had been given.\textsuperscript{682} The reason Middleton had sought to purchase extra land demonstrates his success. As he noted:

\begin{quote}
The glebe being quite inadequate to the support of my stock which now amount to the number of one hundred and twenty independent of eight horses I beg leave to solicit from His Excellency the Governor the indulgence of a reserve with permission to purchase to the extent of two thousand acres of Land. \textsuperscript{683}
\end{quote}

After he had relinquished the glebe by his resignation, Middleton sought remuneration for work carried out but for which he had received no monies. In August 1828 he wrote to the Colonial Secretary to seek advice on how he could apply for that which he believed was owing.\textsuperscript{684} Goulburn’s reply was that the Surveyor General would supply a certificate stating the amount of work accomplished and the amount to be remunerated. It appears the government could

\begin{footnotes}
\item[679] This is an error in the Census. By 1828 Middleton had ceded the Glebe to Wilkinson. One possibility is that he leased it back and could therefore include it in his total holdings.
\item[680] Four miles is approximately six kilometers.
\item[681] Note that the ‘Paterson’ referred to is the original site of the settlement, not the present township.
\item[683] Middleton to Goulburn, 28 April 1825, \textit{Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788 – 1825}, ML, Microfiche 3144, 9/2652, 114.
\item[684] Middleton to Cowper, 13 June 1827, \textit{Clergy and School Lands Corporation Correspondence, (Letters from Clergy)}, Sydney, Archives Authority of New South Wales, 4/321, 191.
\end{footnotes}
not or would not trust landholders to supply the figures themselves.\footnote{Goulburn to Middleton, 5 September 1828, \textit{Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825}, ML, CY Reel 6015, 4/3515, 247.}

As the population of Paterson began to expand after 1823, another use for the glebe land was ordered. There being no local cemetery Archdeacon Scott instructed Middleton to fence off a quarter of an acre ‘in as convenient a situation as possible’ for that purpose and charge it to his quarterly account. He was to inform Scott when this had been done so that Scott could register it in the Court and until Scott was able to consecrate it as a cemetery he had permission ‘to bury any corpse there’.\footnote{Scott to Middleton 11 December 1826, \textit{Scott Letterbooks}, ML, CY Reel 3435, A850-851, 327.}

Concomitant with a clergyman’s resignation from his chaplaincy was the transfer of both the parsonage and the glebe to his successor. Soon after Middleton’s letter of resignation reached Scott, he wrote informing him that he was to hand them over to Wilkinson, which he duly did.\footnote{Scott to Middleton 11 December 1826, 409.} His glebe, his launching pad, was gone but he had no need for concern. He simply moved his stock next door to Glenrose where he had constructed a dwelling and from there continued his pastoral interests free from the limitations put on him by the ministry and the Archdeacon.

As has been shown previously, almost immediately after arriving on Australian soil Middleton began his involvement in agriculture. What began as a small enterprise flourished after he moved to Newcastle. His enterprise expanded and he continued trading with the local government store, a trade which proved very profitable. One sale of 4000 pounds of fresh meat made £75, slightly less than a third
of his salary of £250 per annum. Another of 4300 pounds of meat gained him in excess of £66. A final sale recorded to him profited by over £80. In these three sales his income came to slightly less than his income of £250 as a chaplain. Compared to the 323 pounds he sold in Parramatta, these sales, each of more than 4000 pounds clearly evidence the extent to which his flocks, his herds and his fortune flourished.

If, by 1827, Middleton perceived himself as an archetype of an Old Testament patriarch, he was close to the truth. Under the leading of his God he had come to distant land, had set down his roots and began to experience its abundance. His flocks and herds grew and if he had dreamed in Cambridge of becoming wealthy, he had succeeded eminently. His cup was truly running over in what he could only have believed was a land of milk and honey. Unlike so many of his colleagues, he had succeeded in business perhaps beyond his dreams and now sat secure surrounded by his family and friends and supported by his increasing fortune. Consistent with Whately’s teaching, for Middleton, political economy did not conflict with religion and wealth was not an evil. Perhaps he would have summed up his position in a paraphrase of a scriptural verse, ‘This is the Lord’s doing and it is marvellous in my eyes’. But within only a few years his situation would change and he would walk a different path his. By 1827 the dead hand of drought was moving across the land and Middleton, like so many of the Paterson district, would suffer immense loss.

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688 The Sydney Gazette, 21 April 1825.
689 The Sydney Gazette, 14 June 1824.
690 The Sydney Gazette, 21 April 1825.
CHAPTER 6.

Pastoralist and Priest.

In 1830, John Dunmore Lang visited Middleton at Glenrose, and described his home.

His house was well enough for the bush...half shingled and half covered with bark. The furniture was rude in the highest degree; but the plain and substantial repast, of which I was invited to partake before resuming my journey, was all the produce of the farm.\textsuperscript{691}

And the land on which that farm stood was very good indeed. Robert Dawson of the Australian Agricultural company was convinced that the Hunter Valley was by far the richest and most important in the colony and called it ‘the garden and the granary of New South Wales’.\textsuperscript{692} And Paterson had two other very attractive characteristics: its distance from the convict settlement at Newcastle and its potential for lifestyle.\textsuperscript{693}

One settler described both the lifestyle and the productivity which could be achieved:

The winter is mild - just cold enough to make a fire comfortable, while the fine frosty mornings do great good to one who has arrived from India. I used to enjoy them exceedingly, and invariably walked out before breakfast to breathe the fine, clear air. The river abounds with wild duck as well as with perch and a small fish here called herring, from its resemblance to that fish. The settler may thus not only find amusement for himself in shooting or fishing, but may make a very agreeable addition to his bush fare by his morning’s ramble. Speaking of a garden, we had an excellent orchard, which supplied us with abundance of apricots, peaches, nectarines, figs, green-gages, apples pears and oranges, while the garden furnished many a dish of strawberries: for gooseberries, the climate is not cold enough. In March and April, the farmer is busied in preparing his fields for wheat-sowing which ought to be finished by the middle of May.\textsuperscript{694}

\textsuperscript{691} John Dunmore Lang, \textit{An Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales Both as a Penal Settlement and as a British Colony}, London, A.J. Valpy, 1837, Auchmuty Library, University of Newcastle, N.S.W., Microfilm 2950 (Segment 2) Reels 1670-3380, 252-254. See also John Dunmore Lang, \textit{An Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales, both as a Penal Settlement and as a British Colony}, London, Cochrane and M'Crone, 1834, 202-203.


For another:

Hunter’s River, without any flourish, is a fine settlement: the whole country appeared as if it wanted mowing – large flocks and herds are fast accumulating and many settlers are investing considerable property in building, fencing and clearing. All are rising into that desirable condition of having bread enough and to spare.⁶⁹⁵

Now resigned from the ministry, it was into this lifestyle that Middleton wholeheartedly enjoined himself. Paul Robertson wrote of Middleton during these early years at Paterson that he was one who ‘chose his own place of banishment’ and pictures him as ‘lying fallow on his farm near Morpeth’.⁶⁹⁶ Nothing could be further from the truth. The parish registers for Christ Church, Newcastle and later, St James’ Church, Morpeth show that he was active in ecclesiastical ministry as well as other matters. One instance was his performance of the nuptials of ‘one of the ladies’ at Castle Forbes.⁶⁹⁷ The reality is that Middleton’s freedom from ecclesiastical responsibilities and the predations of Archdeacon Scott enabled him to indulge his passion for, and exercise his skills in agriculture and to participate in community affairs. Respectability and gentility became his attributes as he settled among people who were respectable and genteel. Peter Cunningham, a former naval officer and early settler in the Paterson district described the settlers as mostly very respectable, being naval and military officers, or free immigrants living on land which, when barely improved, was selling at record prices.⁶⁹⁸

If the quality of the settlers and the land was high, so too was its produce. Middleton entered competitions and on one occasion was awarded the five pound

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⁶⁹⁵ The Sydney Monitor, 23 June 1826. Unpaged.

⁶⁹⁶ Robertson, Proclaiming Unsearchable Riches, Sydney, 21.

⁶⁹⁷ The Sydney Gazette, 22 August 1827.

prize for cheese. He became a subscribing member of the Agricultural Society. He also became a Justice of the Peace. And he extended his enterprise by requesting and receiving a grazing licence on 8 May 1829. In doing so he added another 1000 acres to his holdings. Prosperity’s golden embrace enfolded him. The successes of previous times continued.

An old proverb says ‘Neither a borrower nor a lender be’. Middleton ignored it to his detriment. On 31 January 1825, as a lender he wrote to W.G. Wentworth enclosing a promissory note from a Mr. George Mitchell for £100 sterling and directing Wentworth to demand payment by letter. The letter was sent 22 February and Mitchell replied that he had paid Middleton on ‘the 7th of last month’ and Middleton was to pay 11 shillings sterling for Wentworth’s services. Middleton was then to tell Wentworth if Mitchell had paid. Such was his enterprise and his expectation of better things to come that he sought to expand his operation even more. He became a borrower. In September 1827 he applied for more land and the annotation on the letter states that ‘he will be considered on his testimonial’.

Prosperity was smiling on him and he intended to take full advantage of all that was before him. With the 1000 acres he was leasing, he now had a depasturing capacity

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699 *The Australian*, 1 August 1828. Whilst Middleton gained the credit, it would be interesting to know the role played by Sarah in this enterprise.

700 *The Australian*, 26 September 1828.

701 *The Australian*, 14 August 1829.

702 *The Australian*, 8 May 1829.

703 Government Notice in The Sydney Gazette, 2 May 1829. This notice was repeated on 7, 9 & 12 May 1829.


705 Middleton to McLeay, 25 September 1827, AONSW, *Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 1788-1825*, Index 2929, 5/2339, 6006, 6007.
of 3000 acres. As his estate grew, so too grew his prominence in the community, no
doubt aided by his continuing involvement with the Agricultural Society of New
South Wales. In 1821 he had accepted the role of a correspondent member of its
Committee as did also J.P. Webber, William Dunn and Edward Charles Close, three
of the most substantial settlers of the Wallis and Patersons Plains districts.\textsuperscript{706}
Furthermore, on the local scene he had, by December 1828, attained membership of
the committee of the Farmers Club.\textsuperscript{707} Formed in 1827 to promote local agriculture,
it was unsuccessful in accomplishing the ‘necessary formalities’ and so decided to
hold a general sale to dispose of the stock on hand. The date was set for Tuesday 22
January 1829, the location was Paterson’s Plains and the items were maize, wheat,
wool, tobacco, cheese and butter.\textsuperscript{708}

Times and seasons change. By 1829, the drought which commenced in 1826
and which Crowley regarded as ‘the first great drought in the history of European
agriculture in Australia’, began to have severe ramifications.\textsuperscript{709} Rain had not fallen in
three years with the obvious consequence of pasture and crop failures. Grain had to
be purchased at high prices while at the same time Middleton and the other settlers
were unable to gain good prices when selling stock purchased on loans with high
interest rates. Many were ‘suddenly and unexpectedly ruined’.\textsuperscript{710} That Middleton
didn’t begin to sell off his stock until 1832 indicates that his previous success and
high income had cushioned him longer than most others were able to stand. George

\textsuperscript{706} The Sydney Gazette, 12 July 1821.
\textsuperscript{707} Cecily Mitchell, Hunters River, 144,145.
\textsuperscript{708} The Australian, 23 December 1828 and 2 January 1829.
\textsuperscript{710} Crowley, Colonial Australia, 1788-1840, 375
Wyndham, a prominent local landholder, reported that in October 1832 had attended ‘Middleton’s sale’ and had bought ‘212 sheep with lambs afoot and some cattle’.\footnote{George Wyndham, \textit{Diary}, ML, B1313, unpaged.}

He also noted that on 5 September ‘Mr Marsden called’ but no reason is given for his visit. Thomas Crawford clearly indicated the prevailing circumstances:

\begin{quote}
Times look gloomy here, no such thing as cash to be had, indeed if things don’t change for the better, a general bankruptcy will be the result over the whole colony. Cattle are now sold for a song, indeed not worth keeping.\footnote{Richard Crawford, (ed.), \textit{Young And Free. The Letters of Robert and Thomas Crawford, 1821-1830}, Macquarie, A.C.T, Richard Crawford, 1995, 157.}
\end{quote}

Like many others, Middleton was affected and found himself in increasing financial difficulty. John Dunmore Lang recorded:

\begin{quote}
In the year 1826 his stock of sheep and cattle was very considerable for the colony, and quite sufficient, if he had only been content with it, to have rendered him completely independent; but being seized like many around him, with the colonial mania, he had purchased a number of heifers at ten pounds each on credit ten percent, interest being paid on the whole amount of his purchase till the final payment made of the principal.\footnote{John Dunmore Lang, \textit{An Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales Both as a Penal Settlement and as a British Colony}, London, A.J. Valpy, 1837, Auchmuty Library, University of Newcastle, N.S.W., Microfilm 2950 (Segment 2) Reels 1670-3380, 252-254.}
\end{quote}

Middleton purchased these cattle acting on a gentleman’s agreement.\footnote{John Dunmore Lang, \textit{An Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales}, 252-254.} The compact was that if he were unable to make the payments he would receive special consideration much to his advantage. But the agreement was dishonoured. His creditor, a local settler, Tom White Melville called in the money through a lawyer and so Middleton was compelled to sacrifice his stock to satisfy the demand. When Lang visited him he had four hundred head of cattle penned up ready to drive to
Sydney for sale.\textsuperscript{715} Many years later, Middleton’s son, Osman, in a letter to the
\textit{Maitland Mercury}, quoted Middleton as saying ‘they are Marsden’s breed. They will
at all events fetch two pound a head and that will set me safe again’.\textsuperscript{716} Regrettably,
he was wrong as is evidenced by his next move.

Middleton had to act. He had a young family and so, to provide for Sarah
and the children, he rented a house at Phoenix Park while he turned to his former
profession of teaching and moved to Sydney to open a school. As a husband and a
father, the separation must have been a great wrench. That he might have opened a
school in the local area is a possibility and why he did not is not known. With a
growing population there was certainly potential in the number of children being
born and growing up locally as was shown later when a Mr Walker opened a school
in 1843 for which Middleton was a referee.\textsuperscript{717} The most likely reason is that there
was greater scope for financial benefit in Sydney than existed locally and so he
moved back to the colony’s capital some time before August 1831. An advertisement
appeared in \textit{The Australian} informing the colonists of Australia that the former
Chaplain at Newcastle,

\begin{quote}
Is happy in being able to assure the Colonists of Australia that he will
be prepared to receive pupils at his residence, \textit{Bellmaine}, leased from
its recent occupier, R.W.Loane Esquire, and distant two mile from
Sydney on Monday 10\textsuperscript{th} Instant. Bellmaine October 6 1831.\textsuperscript{718}
\end{quote}

Prior to this another advertisement had appeared for an ‘Academic Establishment’ in
which he described his credentials as ‘of Westminster School, subsequently

\textsuperscript{715} John Dunmore Lang, \textit{An Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales Both as a Penal
Settlement and as a British Colony}, 252-254.

\textsuperscript{716} Maitland Mercury, 13 February 1879.

\textsuperscript{717} \textit{Maitland Mercury}, 8 April 1843.

\textsuperscript{718} \textit{The Australian}, 6 October 1831.
Exhibitioner of St Johns College Cambridge’. The curriculum was to include Latin and Greek and the list of pupils could be inspected at the Bank of NSW and Australia.\textsuperscript{719} His project was well received. \textit{The Australian} said of both he and the school that:

\begin{quote}
The Reverend Gentleman’s scholastic attainments being of a very superior order and the want of a rural seminary for instruction in science and the classics near to, but not exactly in Sydney the establishment of a school under Mr Middleton’s auspices must be a matter of gratification to parents and of benefit to youth.\textsuperscript{720}
\end{quote}

For children under six years of age the fees were 25 guineas per annum.\textsuperscript{721} Children aged between six and eight years were charged 30 guineas per annum and those above eight were to pay 35 guineas per annum. Each child was also charged two guineas per annum for washing. Latin and Greek were to be the main subjects both of which were to be tested once annually and at which the presence of parents and friends ‘will be requested’. Two vacations of a fortnight each were to be observed and ‘the establishment will be formed in a healthy situation conveniently distant from Sydney’. The ‘healthy situation’ was at \textit{Waterview}, the home of R.W. Loane.\textsuperscript{722}

Of the school, no records now exist.

There does exist, however, a record of a different kind. Middleton once again found himself embroiled in legal matters but this time, not involving him directly. He became witness at a murder trial.\textsuperscript{723} Henry Mills and William Chapman were accused of causing the mutilation and death of Samuel Priest, also known as Chapman, near

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\textsuperscript{719} \textit{The Sydney Gazette}, 29 September 1831.
\textsuperscript{720} \textit{The Sydney Gazette}, 26 August 1831.
\textsuperscript{721} A guinea was the equivalent of £1. 1s. 0d. (£ one pound, one shilling).
\textsuperscript{722} \textit{The Australian}, 30 September 1831.
\textsuperscript{723} \textit{The Sydney Gazette}, 16 August 1834.
\end{flushleft}
Waterview, Middleton’s residence at Birchgrove on the southern bank of the Parramatta River. Middleton stated that on 10 November 1831 he had dined away from home and on his return, his servant, Mrs Brady, was in a state of great consternation. She had heard a ‘great noise and altercation’ between at least two people which sounded similar to a pursuit. Two days later, in the morning, Middleton, while looking from his verandah noted a ‘dark object’ near the landing place. It was a hat in which were some papers. Other papers were lying nearby. Two days later, having observed two men searching for something in the bay, he spoke to them and was informed they were looking for the body of a friend who had been drowned. He next asked them to describe the hat worn by the victim and they described one similar to that which he had found previously. He then sent his son to the house to fetch it and on seeing it, they acknowledged it as that of their ‘friend’. No mention was made of the papers accompanying it and which Middleton had already forwarded to Sydney. He retained the hat for some time and later delivered it over to the police. Middleton attended the subsequent inquest at which the hat was produced and gave testimony concerning it. Mills and Chapman were hanged on 18 August 1834, a few days after the trial. On the scaffold both men declared their innocence. According to The Sydney Monitor they ‘behaved devoutly’.

As far as can be ascertained little else happened during these schooling years other than that Middleton must have returned to the Hunter district on a regular basis. Sarah continued to bear children who were born and registered at either Newcastle or

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724 The name of the son is not provided. However, given the ages of the first three boys, George, born 1817, Charles, born 1824 and Osman, born 1826, in 1831 only George, now in his teens, would have been old enough to accompany his father to Sydney.

725 The Monitor, 20 August 1834.
Hinton. He continued with his school until the end of 1837. Between 1832 and 1837 he came to the notice of Archdeacon Broughton, Archdeacon Scott’s successor. With a continuing desperate clergy shortage within the colony Broughton was eager to find priests to fill vacant parishes and to open new ones. Middleton was available but didn’t commence ministry until November, 1837. A number of reasons are possible. Broughton was in the colony only four years before he returned to England to report on the state of the Church and the need for further organisational development. Given the time-consuming nature of his archidiaconal travels to the various regions of the colony, Middleton may not have been a major item on his agenda. No doubt he was aware that there was a non-functioning priest in his archdeaconry but was probably cautious about using him. Undoubtedly he knew something of Middleton’s turbulent past and wanted to observe his demeanour before considering him for possible appointment. That Broughton returned to England also contributed. Knowing he would be gone for a considerable time he may not have wanted to act until he had a more definite picture of the Australian church’s future and his role in it. Also, as Archdeacon, his hands were tied. He would have had to negotiate with the Bishop of Calcutta, a slow and time consuming process given the communications of the 1830s. It is also possible that Middleton was reluctant to return. His first years as a priest with their upheaval and its consequences may have given him cause him to hesitate.

In 1836 Broughton returned from England as the first and only ever Bishop of

726 See the Baptism Register for Christ Church, Newcastle, March 1826 –May 1837, for Osman, Sarah, Isabella, William and Francis. For Georgiana, Evan, Albert Cecil and Clarence see the Register of Baptisms, Parish of Morpeth. The Register numbers are B7806and B5944, Archives of the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle, Archives and Rare Books Section, University of Newcastle, N.S.W.
Australia and changes were inaugurated. As Bishop he was now able to implement policies and make his own decisions. Insofar as Middleton was concerned, he had an experienced priest familiar with an expanding area of the Hunter Valley. He had also a priest who held the respect of many of the inhabitants and who had a home placed more than conveniently among them. He had a priest, too, who like them, was an experienced, if not successful agriculturalist, who had endured what they had endured. In more ways than one he could weep with those who weep, mourn with those who mourn and he could laugh with those whose joys he shared. Without any difficulty, and with immense benefit, a new parish could be carved out of the existing ones, reducing the burden on the clergy of Morpeth and East Maitland thus allowing greater potential for more personalised ministry. But still another year passed before Broughton’s plan achieved realisation. The probable reason is that Middleton felt he had a duty to his pupils and their parents and needed an extra twelve months to allow them to find an alternative school. Finally, on 1 November 1837, William Cowper, acting as the Bishop’s Commissary, licensed Middleton to serve in the geographical parishes of Butterwick and Seaham. In the following April, Broughton defined the boundaries and stated that a school was to be established under Middleton’s jurisdiction. Later, in 1845, another school, ‘an episcopalian school’, was opened on the estate of John Galt, a wealthy settler, who paid for its erection and The Sydney Gazette recorded that in it, ‘Divine Service will be performed every alternate Sabbath by the Reverend Mr Middleton’.

727 William Grant Broughton has the distinction of being the first and only Bishop of Australia. He remained so until the formation of the dioceses of Adelaide, Melbourne and Newcastle in 1847.


729 The Sydney Gazette, 3 May 1845.
That more schools were opening indicates clearly that the population of the region was expanding rapidly. New parishes such as East Maitland, West Maitland and Raymond Terrace were formed indicating a high growth rate in both population and church attendance. St James Church, Morpeth, was not built until 1846 and George Rusden, incumbent of East Maitland, appears to have left the Morpeth work to Middleton. His signature does not appear in the Morpeth register.

With no church from which to operate between 1837 and 1846, Middleton needed a sacred space. In April 1838 he received authority to solemnize marriages in his house at Phoenix Park just across the river from Hinton, all of which were to be registered in the Morpeth parish registers. The house was a most substantial building. When advertised for sale in 1848 it was described as situated on 20 acres of land and having an entrance hall, a drawing room, a dining room, four bedrooms and two verandah rooms.\textsuperscript{730} The dimensions of these rooms printed in the advertisement shows them to be very large. While recognising that such advertisements can exaggerate, a further comment stated that the house was built at great expense and with a little repair would be fit for the reception of a respectable family.\textsuperscript{731}

In January 1839 the geographical areas of Butterwick and Seaham became the Parish of Hinton and Middleton was appointed as incumbent. Almost at once he instigated a fund-raising programme to build a church.\textsuperscript{732} Regrettably, he died before his vision became reality. After his death, his son Osman carried on the work and St

\textsuperscript{730} The \textit{Maitland Mercury}, 8 January 1848.

\textsuperscript{731} The \textit{Maitland Mercury}, 8 January 1848.

Johns, Hinton, was erected and opened in 1856.\textsuperscript{733} The \textit{Maitland Mercury} tells that on 11 May 1848, just four days before Middleton’s passing, Osman was appointed to the committee appointed to receive subscriptions for the erection of the new church and a school-room at Hinton.\textsuperscript{734}

After 1837 there is no hint of controversy. Whether Broughton made it a condition of his re-appointment or whether there were other reasons is not clear. What is clear is that he served faithfully and well and participated in diocesan activities as occasion arose. In December 1840 he was present at the consecration of St James Morpeth, and in June 1843 participated in the formulation of St Mary's Church, Maitland. In the same month St Peters, East Maitland was consecrated but Middleton is not listed among those present. Nor did he attend the consecration of St Mary-on-Allyn in November 1845 but on the next day he attended the consecration of St Pauls, Paterson.\textsuperscript{735} In January 1847, St Johns, Wollombi, was consecrated and many of the clergy were listed as present but again, Middleton was not among them. Two probabilities explain his absences. Most likely was a pastoral need at Hinton. Another is the onset of the illness which, within eighteen months, would take his life.

Parish records from St Peters, East Maitland and St Mary's, Maitland, show that Middleton worked out the normal parish routine. He prepared children for confirmation, performed marriages, baptisms and funerals and from time to time conducted the occasional funeral outside his parish. But this time there is no hint of the ‘sheep-stealing’ which upset Frederick Wilkinson in 1827. The people concerned...

\textsuperscript{733} In later years the Parish of Hinton was amalgamated into the Parish of Morpeth. In 2000 the Church of St John was sold and is now a private residence.

\textsuperscript{734} \textit{Maitland Mercury}, 17 May 1848.

\textsuperscript{735} H.M.R. Rupp, \textit{St Pauls Church Paterson}, (Paterson, N.S.W.? The Church? 1929) Morpeth, N.S.W., St Johns College Press, 1929, unpaged.
were either related to him or known to him and, with no church in the parish of Hinton, he had no option other than to take people elsewhere. This is especially true for his confirmation candidates. He was required to take them where the bishop attended. On one occasion his confirmation candidates went to St Marys, West Maitland.736 On another occasion he attended a concert at the same venue.737

As the years passed and the population flowed into and across Australia the necessity for additional bishops became more and more apparent. Broughton’s workload was rapidly approaching an impossible burden. Moves were set in train and on the Feast of St Peter, 1847, four bishops were consecrated in Westminster Abbey, three for the Australian church and one for New Zealand.738 At the same time Queen Victoria issued Letters Patent for the establishment of four new Dioceses, one of which was the Diocese of Newcastle and its bishop would be William Tyrrell. He arrived in Newcastle in February 1848 and during a liturgical welcome, was enthroned in Christ Church in the presence of the clergy and a great many civic dignitaries and lay people. Middleton was among them and it is regrettable that no record exists of his feelings. Those who enthroned Tyrrell were Wilton and Rusden, the ‘senior clergymen of the Diocese’. Even though more senior in service, Middleton played no official part in the ceremony. His resignation had cost him status, prestige and advancement.739 The man who initiated ordained Christian ministry into the Hunter Valley and laid the foundation on which the diocese grew received no recognition whatsoever. On the next day Tyrrell went to Morpeth

736 *Maitland Mercury*, 8 July 1843.

737 *Maitland Mercury*, 1 July 1843.

738 The Feast of St Peter is 29 June.

739 *Maitland Mercury*, 5 February 1848.
accompanied by Rusden but there is no mention of Middleton. The likelihood is that he returned home the previous evening. If so, why? Perhaps past memories haunted him but more probable is that his illness had progressed to the point where he was unable to endure prolonged periods of activity.

That Middleton was ailing is obvious from three sources. From late 1846 an increasingly noticeable decline in his hand-writing can be seen in the Morpeth parish register. Next, after April 1847, in the same register there is one entry only in his name. Just a month before he died he baptised his last-born son, Clarence Tyrrell and his signature in the register is almost illegible. Clarence was born on 12 April. The final source is from a diary of Bishop Tyrrell. He wrote ‘Revd G.A.Middleton (dying) 20.0.0’. (20 pounds). Another entry under ‘Public Accounts’ made on 10 April 1848 notes ‘20.0.0 to Rev G.A. Middleton in dying state’. The Diary also has a list of years showing Middleton’s age in each of them. The one for 1848 states that he was 57. He wasn’t. He was in his 56th year. One of the sadder aspects of Middleton is that his age at the time of his death is given as 52, 55 and 56. No death certificate is available to state his cause of death, nor can family memory supply it. All that is known is that it was a reasonably long and slow process. Two potential causes are either a form of cancer or, because of his long association with cattle, tuberculosis. On 15 May 1848, twenty-one years to the day on which he wrote to Archdeacon Scott tendering his resignation from Newcastle, he breathed his last. His funeral took place in St James Church, Morpeth, on 18 May and he was buried in the Morpeth cemetery. No mention is made of the attendance of any of his priestly brothers and the Morpeth register has none of their signatures denoting their

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740 William Tyrrell, Accounting Records, 1831-1879, University of Newcastle, Archives and Special Collections, B6558, unpaged.
appearance. Nor was Bishop Tyrrell there. More important matters demanded his attention. On the day of the funeral he was in Singleton receiving the accolades of the parishioners and towns-people.

After George’s death, Sarah went to live with her son, Charles, on his property Tressingfield on the Paterson River about 10 kilometres south of the present village of that name. She died on 15 March 1863 and was buried ‘at the feet of poor Rev.’ in Morpeth cemetery.741 Sarah’s death was not an easy one either. Her death certificate discloses that she died from ‘decay of nature’ over a period of twelve months.742 On 23 May 1863, Charles wrote to his brother Frank, then living at Jerilderee. Frank had expressed great disappointment at not being able to be with his mother at the time of her passing and was told:

You seem to feel very much that you were deprived of having seen poor Ma before her death, I can assure you that to have been able to do it would almost have been as painful to you, such a wreck of her former self could scarcely be imagined.743

Neither Sarah nor George rested in peace for very long. Other people were buried so close to them that the family contemplated exhuming the bodies with a view to having them interred elsewhere in the cemetery and of ‘erecting a tombstone to their memory’.744 Given the site of the present tombstone and the space around it, it would appear that the intention was carried out.

741 Charles Middleton to Frank Middleton, 23 May 1863. This is an unpublished letter, a copy of which is in the writer’s possession and which was provided by Dr Barry Cairns of Melbourne, a direct descendant of George and Sarah.

742 This information is taken from a copy of the death certificate dated 2 September 1999 and is in the possession of the writer.

743 Charles Middleton to Frank Middleton, 23 May 1863. A copy of this letter is in the files of the writer.

744 Charles Middleton to Frank Middleton, 23 May 1863.
CONCLUSION.

‘Ecce Homo’

Christ Church Cathedral, Newcastle, now stands on the site of Middleton’s church. Mounted in the north-eastern wall of the Baptistry is a stained-glass window erected as a memorial to George Augustus by his son, Alexander Dillin Middleton. In the top half is a depiction of Phillip the Deacon. In his hand, Phillip holds an open copy of the prophecy of Isaiah. The chapter is 53, the theme of which is ‘The Suffering Servant’. Beneath Phillip is a representation of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptiser. Both John and Jesus were suffering servants. Distinct parallels between Middleton and John are obvious. John ‘prepared the way of the Lord’ and was the one not worthy to untie the thong of Jesus’ sandal. John also lived in the wilderness, offended against the governing authorities and paid the ultimate price at the hands of King Herod. No doubt, Middleton’s descendants saw George Augustus in a similar light. He it was who began the process of building the church in the Hunter Valley and who, with his colleagues and contemporaries, laid the foundation on which Bishop Tyrrell, the ‘one who was to come’, was able to establish his episcopate. But during his lifetime, another image was manifest. To his adversaries, Middleton was best exemplified by the last of the three parables in the fifteenth chapter of St Luke’s gospel, the story of the Prodigal.

What manner of man then was Middleton? His story reveals that he was possessed of unflinching conviction. Forthright in his views, he defended his interpretation of the faith against those whom he perceived would undermine it and demean the society in which they lived. So, too, was he independent in spirit and action. Without considering the personal cost, he stood against overweening authority while at the same time defending its victims. At the same time he was
naïve, failing to realise the ultimate consequences his actions might yield. Determination to succeed drove him down paths he believed to be right but which others avoided, especially when it came to dealing with those in authority. That he was a man of venture is beyond dispute. To leave his homeland under the circumstances which surrounded him in 1819 and to take his baby son to an unfamiliar land with all its possibilities of success or failure revealed him to be a man of courage, daring and enterprise. But above all else, he was a survivor. On many occasions he had reason to buckle under pressure, the first being with his years at Cambridge, the last being the loss of his fortune as a farmer. Between these two turning points he confronted both Morisset and Scott and stood his ground where lesser men might have retreated into the safety of conformity and obedience. To survive in the colony he needed to be independent, to have a vision for his future and to be able to devote his energy to the fulfillment of that vision. If bureaucrats and pedants would try to draw his energies elsewhere, he resisted. At times he seemed to fail. These ‘failures’ were what claimed most attention and sullied his reputation. Few looked behind the actions to understand the man and his motivation. They certainly broke the golden rule: they did not do to him as they would have wanted done to themselves. Those who could agree with Samuel Marsden that he was a stranger to religion were hoist on their own petard. Certainly, he had his weaknesses. Often he accentuated them by his responses to the situations he faced. But he also had his strengths. That he overcame the negativity that beset his early years in the colony is to his credit. That he learned from his experiences as he did with his failure in agriculture is the sign of a wise and moderate man. The pity is that this quality went unrecognised. Above all else, Middleton had human failings. Like all who live in the public eye, he attracted notice and at times was seen to have been weighed in
the balance and found wanting. If he was the victim of his adversaries, he was also
the victim of the system. He came, a free spirit, with no military background to a
military establishment where unquestioning obedience took priority over all other
allegiances. Underpaid by the standards of his day, he readily, like other clergy, fell
into the subtle trap of accepting glebes and land ownership. As with them, his
involvement ultimately brought about immense problems and his financial undoing.

John Dunmore Lang commented that Middleton was literate, being a man of
‘attic salt’.\footnote{John Dunmore Lang, \textit{An Historical Account of New South Wales}, 253. According to Professor
Godfrey Tanner of the University of Newcastle, this term is from ancient Greece and infers that such a
person was gregarious and very good company.} Others found him difficult, though capable, and with a variety of skills,
which, when necessary, he put to use. He used his natural aptitude to develop
farming and business expertise, which rendered him very wealthy but which also
created enemies. His dealings with his convicts show that, like so many of his time,
he could be judgemental on the unrepentant sinner but merciful to those who sought
to turn from their ‘naughty and wicked ways’. That he stood up for his rights, even
when others believed him to be wrong, is without question. As with the prophets of
old and following the example of his Saviour, his zeal for adherence to moral and
ethical codes based on truth and justice determined his responses to the situations he
faced. He would ‘constantly speak the truth’ and ‘boldly rebuke vice’. Regrettably he
lacked the final attribute of being able to ‘suffer patiently’. That he was willing to
proclaim without fear or favour evinced an inevitable clash with those of differing
standards and especially with those in authority. His views on sexual propriety in his
clash with Major Morisset contrast vividly with his fidelity in his marriage with
Sarah after 1824. Nor could he, or would he, tolerate what he saw as abuse of power,
especially if he believed that it was being used against society, the law or himself. In James Morisset he saw a man prepared to go to almost unbelievable lengths to maintain his authority and position. In Archdeacon Scott he saw a man as pharisaic as any ancient Jewish leader.

New South Wales was, for all who went there, unlike anything they had experienced previously. Samuel Marsden, in attempting to recruit clergy in England had told them:

The clergy would not be stationary as in the Old Country but ...are to be possessed of a good natural constitution to make long journeys in the bush in all kinds of turbulent weather to attend to turbulent people at all times.746

England, with its rolling countryside, its cultural heritage and its ‘mannered’ society lay three to four months under sail to the north-west. In New South Wales the harsh sun and the climate it governed, the endless, and at times, impenetrable bush filled with new and sometimes dangerous creatures, and an increasingly hostile indigenous people, came as a vast culture shock to the immigrants and felons. Such a land demanded new and differing solutions to the questions of survival and social organisation. For clergy there were two extra dimensions. With no consistent ecclesiastical organisation until 1825, Middleton, in common with his brother clergy, was faced with new, and sometimes perplexing, pastoral dilemmas. Solutions were not always ready to hand and so he, like they, was thrown on his own resources. The solution was simple. They sought forgiveness rather than permission, but sadly, did not always find it, especially after Archdeacon Scott arrived. The other dilemma was acceptance. Anne O’Brien contended that many of the clergy were middle class and

so, amongst those who worked at hard labour, whether free or convict, they had to prove themselves as ‘manly’. They required ‘a particular virility needed to cope in the bush’. But there was another side as well. In July 1831 William Cowper wrote to his son,

> A clergyman ought not to be a novice. The Latin, Greek and Hebrew languages ought to be learned by all persons intended for the ministry, who have time and the talent to acquire them.

Middleton came to this country learned but inexperienced. Leaving aside the spiritual life that is to be expected of clergy, Cowper omitted the most important qualification of all – adequate pastoral training. With no grounding in hermeneutics or any other of the skills necessary to be a successful pastor, Middleton learned as he went. He was a good learner because his exploits reveal that he was indeed ‘manly’. Cowper grew to adulthood in Sydney during Middleton’s lifetime and perhaps it was because of Middleton’s reputation that he could write as he did. Of clergy recruited for Australia he believed that,

> College puppies we want none of. We have had a surfeit. Men of expensive habits ought to be dissuaded from coming because the money will barely support a clergyman.

Like it or not, Middleton was a ‘college puppy’ and he had expensive habits. His days as a sizar gave him a perspective on wealth and privilege at close hand and he liked what he saw though not what he suffered. In his early weeks in Sydney his gambling drew attention. Interestingly, it is the only mention of such behaviour


750 Marsden to Bigge, 15 March 1821, *Bonwick Transcripts (Bigge Appendix)*, ML, Box 27, 6366.
and does not come to light again, even when his most vociferous critics attacked him. That he sought to become wealthy is evidenced by the fact that he began to work towards his dream within only a few months of arriving in the colony.

Beyond any doubt is the reality that Middleton was a man driven by strong impulses in all that he did. The speed of his ordinations and his determination to come to Australia despite the loss of his first wife, Mary, in 1819 point to purpose and conviction which went to the very core of his being. Regrettably, purpose and conviction are not always sufficient to sustain. No doubt, as he sailed to Sydney he had a vision for the future. At his marriage to Mary in 1817 he possessed a plan for their life together. It came to naught. His new wife died, shattering his dreams of a long and happy life together. Shortly afterwards, at his ordination, he held clear objectives and fervour and had another vision for future but it, too, failed. Never could he have imagined the course his ministry would follow and the influences which would be brought to bear on it. A desire for fulfilment impelled him into his agricultural interests with expectations of amassing wealth and living in comfort and style. English examples spurred his imagination and on his arrival in the colony he was met by Samuel Marsden, the great exemplar of what might be achieved with perseverance and enterprise. But as with his other plans, this, too, failed to reach his expectations.

If Middleton was driven by strong impulses, he was also driven by a determination to succeed. No matter his circumstances he girded up his loins and resolved the challenges facing him. No better example is seen than when he moved to Sydney to open his school.

The criticism most commonly levelled against Middleton is that of
absenteeism. In the light of research, it is easy to explain why he left his station at Newcastle as often as he did. Parramatta was a fertile ground for learning pastoralia and commercial skills but it did not prepare him for the convict settlement on the Coal River. The explanation for his absenteeism is basically very simple – culture shock. No compatible company for a man of his gregarious nature was to be found there. Manifestly would he have agreed with a writer in *The Sydney Gazette* who complained that ‘We find in this colony an almost universal complaint of a want of society’.\(^{751}\) As well, insofar as his glebe was concerned, he needed to supervise it. Cattle theft was commonplace across the colony and the stolen beasts were either sold or else slaughtered and eaten.\(^{752}\) Stockmen and overseers could very easily thieve from absent landlords by collaborating in ‘duffing’ with their colleagues on neighbouring farms.\(^{753}\) Interestingly, Perkins and Thompson note that cattle were preferred because horses and sheep were more closely guarded.\(^{754}\)

Loneliness and isolation dogged him. Although his marriage fulfilled his deepest personal needs, it could not end the professional loneliness of separation from his colleagues. When, from 1823 onward, the lower Hunter Valley began to open up and to draw men, women and families of a caste compatible with his own, he found the solution to his predicament. It was among them that he could minister and mix. Consistent with the exercise of loyal priesthood, he went out to the people. Few convicts wanted him or any other chaplain and the number of free citizens living

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\(^{751}\) *The Sydney Gazette*, 28 April 1821.


\(^{753}\) Perkins and Thompson, ‘Cattle Theft’, 297.

\(^{754}\) Perkins and Thompson, ‘Cattle Theft’, 301.
in Newcastle by 1826 was minimal. To have neglected the new settlers who were arriving in increasing numbers and among whom was a more fertile ground for ministry would have made him derelict in his duties. If he were intending to lay the groundwork for a thriving and successful spiritual, sacramental and ecclesiastical life in the Hunter Valley, it had to be achieved on a foundation of people who would support him. Elkin said of him that the whole valley was his parish and, at first, this was true.\(^{755}\) To minister to it he had, as a clergyman, to posses qualities believed by Lt. Governor Arthur to be essential for their success.

They should be able to endure fatigue, they must be active and zealous, and have peculiar term to overcome the hardened vices of the generality of the population.\(^{756}\)

Given the distances he travelled, the terrain he covered and the people he encountered, Middleton certainly exemplified these qualities.

To the modern generation, encased as it is in the motor car, a perspective of the rigours of travel in Middleton’s years is almost impossible to achieve. Today, the traveller can drive from Christ Church Cathedral, Newcastle, to the village of Morpeth and on to the township of Paterson in about forty minutes. Well-formed bitumen roads and conveniently placed bridges allow rapid journeying in air-conditioned comfort. Middleton had none of this. When he travelled by boat his departure in both directions was determined by tide, wind and current. If he travelled on horseback he had to pass through mosquito infested swamps while facing the possibility of encountering runaway convicts, bushrangers and potentially aggressive Aborigines. And all the time he was open to the elements. With few places to seek

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\(^{756}\) G. Arthur to Bishop of London, 9 October 1826, *Correspondence of Col. George Arthur*, ML,
shelter except from the landholders along the way and at his destination, his potential travelling companions were always heat, cold, rain and flood. And lurking in the background was always the possibility of illness brought on by the weather conditions and by the natural fauna.

In spite of all these things, Middleton coped. Not only did he cope, he succeeded insofar as his enemies allowed. Party politics within the church is as old as the church itself. The Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament reveals that as early as A.D.15 the Council of Jerusalem had to come to terms with differing viewpoints which, if not reconciled, threatened to destroy the unity of the Christian people. St Pauls letters burgeon with details of his battles against factional groups within the congregations he founded. Little was different in Middleton’s time. An increasingly virulent cabal of Evangelicals set upon him and attempted to destroy his name and his ministry. By their use of *The Sydney Gazette* they were able, by innuendo, slur and slander and, with the suspected collaboration of the Archdeacon, to erect a scandal of mountainous proportions. Given the pressures and personal hostilities brought to bear on him, Middleton had no option other than to resign.

In the aftermath of his resignation, Middleton showed himself to be a true man of the people and a worthy addition to the Paterson community. He participated in the activities of the community while at the same time ministering to such as called on his services. He may have lost his parish but his sense of vocation remained as strong as ever. Like his neighbours he faced the reality of rural life in the neophyte settlement. Difficult servants such as James Williams and uncontrollable factors such as drought and its consequences, the depredations of bushrangers and the hostility of

Bonwick Transcripts 53, 1713.
the indigenous people were ever-present. In like manner as his neighbours, he also threw himself into the social and administrative life of the community and became a worthy and recognised citizen. Also in like manner as his neighbours, he faced the Australian climate. Never before had he or they encountered anything like the conditions which, in drought, prevail in Australia. And so, as with his neighbours, his agricultural empire crumbled. Again, his resourcefulness came to the fore. One door had closed so he opened another and passed, once again, into the portals of education.

The success of his school in Sydney allowed him to live comfortably, but not with his family. Once again there was separation. Only young George lived with him there. Sarah and the other children remained at Phoenix Park. Whether or not, during this time, he assisted in the parishes of St James or St Phillips is not known. Given the nature of schooling at that time, it is highly likely that the spiritual responsibilities towards his pupils fulfilled his need to minister. His efforts, whatever they might have been, did not go unrecognised and when Archdeacon Broughton returned from England as Bishop, Middleton was returned to full-time ministry. That he was prepared to turn his back on his school is obvious proof that his sense of vocation was still at the core of his being. He returned to the Hunter Valley, lived at Phoenix Park and assumed responsibility for the parish of Butterwick and Seaham.

As times and conditions change, so too does people’s health. At some time in 1847 Middleton began to experience decline in his physical well-being. His handwriting, as seen in the registers for the parish of Morpeth, reveal that his former style, with its firmness of character degenerated. It became weaker and ‘spidery’. The nature of his illness is not given and there is no death certificate to be had. Ultimately death claimed him on 15 May 1848. Four days later, the Australian
announced to its readers that Middleton had died. The *Maitland Mercury* reported the same on 17 May.\(^{757}\)

Middleton, Rev. George Augustus, aged 52 (sic) years, deeply regretted by a large circle of friends, at his residence, Phoenix Park, Hinton on the 16\(^{th}\) (sic) instant.\(^{758}\)

If, as the first pastor in the Hunter Valley, he had aspired to receive the honour to which he was due, death and Bishop Tyrrell robbed him of his reward. Despite his being the first and longest-serving priest in the Hunter Valley, due recognition for his efforts was withheld. William Tyrrell eclipsed him. Addresses of welcome flourished wherever Tyrrell journeyed. In his replies he gave no credit to those clergy who had served in the Valley before him and laid the foundation on which his episcopate was erected. Certainly he made no mention of Middleton. By contrast, praise for the generosity of supporters in England was lavish. By their monetary donations they helped finance the Diocese and supported his ministry but he made no mention of the local clergy and their contribution. Rather, he was applauded because of the clergy he brought with him.\(^{759}\) Fulsome praise also went to Bishop Broughton because he had given up half his salary to finance the income of two Bishops but there was no mention of Middleton and those others who had borne the heat and burden of the day.

Did Middleton die disappointed and with a sense of failure? Given his outlook before 1827 it is reasonable to believe such might have been the case. Or, had he, in the years since then come to new insights into the nature of personal and ministerial understanding? The later is the more likely. While not receiving the

\(^{757}\) Maitland Mercury, 17 May 1848.  
\(^{758}\) *The Australian*, Friday, May 19th, 1848.  
\(^{759}\) Maitland Mercury, 5 February 1848.
plaudits of Tyrrell, he and his family did benefit from the bishop’s generosity. Tyrrell showed that the church had not altogether forgotten him. He gave Middleton £20.⁷⁶⁰ Elkin records that Tyrrell was staying with Edward Charles Close at Morpeth at the time Middleton died. While there he met socially with the clergy of the lower Hunter but not with Middleton. Apparently George was too ill to be present.⁷⁶¹ Tyrrell’s diary does not record that he paid him any kind of visit and on the day Middleton was buried, Tyrrell was not present at the funeral. He was in Singleton receiving the plaudits of the local inhabitants.

No better testimonial can be given than the Middleton family’s recollection of their forbear as the ‘Suffering Servant’. They might also have added that he was the ‘surviving servant’. Throughout the turbulent years of 1821 to 1827 and in the more pacific era afterwards, he persevered and won. In the years after 1827 his farming, his school and his return to ministry showed him to be trustworthy and that his prodigality existed only in the minds of those who would traduce him. Middleton was not prodigal. Attacked on the basis of pharisaic principles which decreed that ‘isms’, rules and regulations are more important than concern for people and their needs, he was brought into disrepute but he overcame all. For the remaining years of his life he served faithfully and well, there being no evidence of the controversial man of the 1820s. J.H.L. Rowlands wrote that in Middleton’s time, the parson knew the part he had to play in his society. He had to exercise ‘plain sense’ rather than ‘much learning’, to have a ‘sociable temper’, to be ‘beloved’ by his parishioners and

⁷⁶⁰ William Tyrrell, ‘Diocesan Expenses 1848’, Private Diary, Archives of the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle, Archives and Rare Books Section, University of Newcastle, N.S.W., unpaged.

to ‘keep peace in the village’. Perhaps from previous experience he learned the lessons from St Paul’s letter to the Romans 12:9-21 and discovered that Christian conduct in personal relationships was entirely contingent with living peaceably with all people.
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