



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC  
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# NEWSLETTER

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**The following members were elected to the ACHS Council at the AGM held on 11 March 2012.**

President: Dr John Carmody  
 Vice Presidents: Prof James Franklin, Mr Geoff Hogan OAM.  
 Treasurer: Ms Helen Scanlon.  
 Councillors: Dr Michael Belcher, Mr Tom Byrnes.  
 Fr. George Connolly continues as Chaplin and is appointed by the Archbishop of Sydney.

**Australian Catholic Historical Society: Program May, June and July 2012.**  
*(These details are correct as at 4 May 2012, but may change owing to unforeseen circumstances).*

Date	Topic	Speaker
May 13	<i>Memoirs by Australian priests and religious.</i>	<b>Professor James Franklin</b> [Vice-President: ACHS]. School of Mathematics and Statistics, UNSW.
June 17	<i>Vatican II viewed from afar.</i>	<b>Emeritus Professor Paul Crittenden.</b> Formerly Professor of Philosophy and Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Sydney.
July 8	<i>Fifty years since the "Goulburn Strike": Catholics and education politics.</i>	<b>Emeritus Professor John Warhurst.</b> Formerly Professor of Politics, Australian National University, Canberra.

**Please note the following changes to the previously advertised program**

August 12	<i>Reporting on Religion.</i>	<b>Mr Alan Gill.</b> Formerly Religious Affairs Editor, <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>
September 9	<i>Protestants, Catholics and Vatican II: The dying gasps of sectarianism?</i>	<b>Rev. Dr Ben Edwards.</b> Lecturer in Church History, St Mark's National Theological Centre and School of Theology, Charles Sturt University, Canberra.

**Time and Location:** 2.30pm, in the foyer of St Mary's Cathedral College hall, Cathedral Street, Sydney.  
**Best entry is from Cathedral Street, near the Cathedral Street Parking Station. The venue is sometimes changed, with short notice to the Society, to the Chapter House which is best accessed from St Marys Road.**

### From the President

Over the past few years, I've been struck by the number of books which have been published about religion -- and not just from what might be thought of as the "religious press".

For example, in 2009 Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch (Professor of the History of the Church at Oxford) published his formidably thorough *A History of Christianity* [Allen Lane: Penguin Books]: it is 1161 pages long, elegantly-written and scholarly, with scrupulous end-notes. The book has a fascinating subtitle, "The first three thousand years" because, in his first 70-odd pages MacCulloch provides a fascinating synopsis of the essential Greek, Roman and Jewish

philosophical background, the culture from which Christianity emerged and which influenced its earliest expression. Reviewing this book in the *Times Literary Supplement*, Lucy Beckett wrote, "...the writing of its history by one author is a tremendously ambitious project. It is all the more ambitious for the fact that for most of these twenty centuries the story of Christianity is not separable from the history of power and the consequences of its use and abuse, in and beyond the Roman Empire, in its successor states and empires, and eventually in the whole world. Diarmaid MacCulloch has made an astonishing success of the project and his huge book is throughout enthralling to read." And she

summed up by saying, "As his whole book demonstrates, people can and do make a mess of anything, including for 2,000 years the revelation of God in which Christians believe. But that a very great deal of good has been understood, thought through and done as the result of this belief, even the most sceptical historian cannot deny, and Diarmaid MacCulloch, for all his ironic distance from the story he tells with such panache, does not."

Last year, the same company [under its Viking imprint] published the Australian historian, Geoffrey Blainey's *A short history of Christianity* ["short" is, plainly, a relative term because this book is 616 pages long]. It tells a story as much as recounts a history [in some respects it reads like a gospel told in a good modern translation], something which is reflected in the fact that, by comparison with the 95 pages of references and 49 pages of index in MacCulloch's book, Blainey's has 22 and 37 pages respectively. As the critic, Peter Craven, wrote in his characteristic way when reviewing the book in *The Australian*, "We all know that we go to Blainey because he will tell us that the spires of the great cathedrals of the Middle Ages probably show the influence of Islam and are a product of the Crusades. We also know that he's the kind of historian who will tell us the less comfortable truth that medieval Islam was a real and encroaching threat to mediaeval Christendom: think of the Moors in Cordoba, think of the attack on Vienna. What we don't expect, and what comes with the shock of summer rain, is the way, after telling us the cathedrals had more glass in them than any buildings in the history of the world, he will give us a glimpse (or the ghost of a glimpse) of what the ordinary people of Europe saw through that jigsaw of glass."

The reviews of a few quite different books have also caught my attention recently. One was Charles Freeman's *Holy bones, holy dust: How relics shaped the history of medieval Europe* [Yale University Press]. The review in the *TLS* had a few mildly critical remarks to make but, generally, it sounds a fascinating little history [this one is only 196 pages long!]. The other two treat more modern matters. *The religious question in modern China*, by Vincent Goossaert and David Palmer [University of Chicago Press; 464pp] deals with something rather closer to us in Australia. The *TLS* review begins by saying, "This book is a magisterial survey culminating in one of the most striking phenomena of our age: the boom in religious belief in a country which, a little over a generation ago, tried to eradicate it for good". There are, it seems, currently over 60 million Christians in the People's Republic. Much more troubling is the book by the well-known journalist, Jason Berry, *Render unto Rome: the secret life of money in the Catholic Church* which deals with the Vatican Bank, the astonishing

"cash economy" which the author claims the church to be, allegations that the Vatican Bank "remains controversial as a tax haven", a claimed general lack of financial transparency, and the financial problems facing the world-wide church (though, in this respect, Berry's principal focus is the USA) as a consequence of the sexual abuse scandals.

Two people who have been sympathetically featured in the Australian media, have also published contentious books which have received far tougher scrutiny abroad than here: Richard Dawkins and AC Grayling.

When Dawkins's *The God Delusion* [2006] was published it was savaged by the British scholar and author, Professor Terry Eagleton [formerly of Oxford]. Eagleton began his review: "Imagine someone holding forth on biology whose only knowledge of the subject is the **Book of British Birds**, and you have a rough idea of what it feels like to read Richard Dawkins on theology." He went on, "The more [such "card-carrying rationalists"] detest religion, the more ill-informed their criticisms of it tend to be." Warming to his theme, he went on, "What, one wonders, are Dawkins's views on the epistemological differences between Aquinas and Duns Scotus? Has he read Eriugena on subjectivity, Rahner on grace or Moltmann on hope? Has he even heard of them? Or does he imagine like a bumptious young barrister that you can defeat the opposition while being complacently ignorant of its toughest case?"

One of the first letters of protest came from AC Grayling who was himself to be intellectually mauled in the *TLS* when he published *The Good Book: a secular Bible* in 2011. That reviewer, David Martin, is emeritus Professor of Sociology in the London School of Economics and he began by reminding his readers that Grayling's book had been "widely dismissed as dislocated gobbets grandiloquently promoted to the City and the World as a modern secular Bible." Grayling's, he said, "is the mind of the commentator gesticulating in the grandstand, addicted to moral free-loading at the expense of some of mankind's most profound commitments, particularly over the last three millennia. These are dismissed as the insubstantial fabric of pre-scientific speculation, according to some remarkable restrictive philosophical protocols. And this restriction claims the honourable title of humanist." Martin is forensic and formidably informed in his critique which he concluded with this devastating sentence: "To the extent that the polemics of Grayling and his like engage in the abuse of believers, evade what is being said, and reject the social-scientific understanding of our common predicament, they have become specialists in easy victories."

Oh that there might exist in Australia a capacity for such educated and robust writing about books. Or that

our editors had the courage to print it if such material were presented to them. And that people would then read critically

John Carmody, ACHS President.

### **"VATICAN II AS I EXPERIENCED IT". Presented on Sunday 11 March, 2012**

On Sunday 11 March 2012, following the ACHS's Annual General Meeting, Dr Michael Costigan gave a most interesting and detailed address on his direct experience of Vatican II. As a young priest he was sent to Rome, as Associate Editor of the Melbourne Catholic newspaper *The Advocate*, to report on proceedings of the Second Session of the Council. Archbishop Guildford Young had urged that this be done because of his concerns about Australian Catholic media coverage of the Council's first session.

Dr Costigan mentioned many significant participants with whom he then had direct contact including: Cardinal Montini (the future Pope Paul VI); theologians Courtney Murray, Bernard Haering, Yves Congar, Charles Davis, and Hans Kueng; and also other participants including Cardinals Suenens and Ruffini, Archbishops Heenan and Thomas Roberts SJ and Abbot Christopher Butler OSB. On a lighter note he also mentioned his role in providing transport for some of the delegates in a Fiat 1500 which belonged to his hosts, the Blessed Sacrament Father, and also of his adventures on a "Vespa" motor scooter.

He spoke of his time inside the Council Hall, listening to the formal proceedings; observing the informal meetings and interactions of bishops, theologians, non-Catholic observers and others in the two bars set up in the Basilica. He praised the multi-language briefings which were given each day on proceedings; particularly those of Father Edward Heston and Father John B. Sheerin. This process had significantly improved from what had been available during the First Session.

### **THE SYDNEY IRISH: Presented on Sunday 15 April, 2012**

Dr Damian Gleeson spoke to the ACHS on Sunday 15 April 2012 on aspects of The Sydney Irish. He drew from a number of sources including other writers and researchers on the topic and also statistical data which he had personally collected.

He pointed out that Irish Catholic migrants to NSW came mainly from the south and west, notably from the Munster counties of Clare, Limerick, Cork and Tipperary, but that about 20% of the Irish immigrants to NSW were actually Protestants, who were sometimes referred to as the "Black Irish", whereas the Catholics were often called (even by themselves) the "Bog-Irish". The term, new to most of us, was "Sydney Ducks" used in San Francisco in reference to Sydney Irish who migrated there during the Gold Rush. They encountered an adverse reception because of their alleged criminality, gambling and excessive drinking.

Dr Costigan also noted, the now well-acknowledged point, that many of the bishops did not passively accept the position papers which had been developed by the Roman Curia and felt encouraged in this by Pope John XXIII, who convened the Council. At that first session, the year before Dr Costigan attended, the bishops had recognised that he was really serious about the need for change and updating in the Church.

Speaking of the Australian bishops Dr Costigan indicated that Archbishop Guilford Young stood out in his grasp of the issues and his enthusiasm. Of similar disposition were: Frank Rush, James Gleeson and Lancelot Goody. Archbishop Beovich and Cardinal Gilroy accepted what the Council laid down, but were restrained in their early reactions. Archbishops Eris O'Brien and Justin Simonds were in poor health and were unable to make a significant contribution.

Dr Costigan's outlining of his close personal experiences, interactions with participants, and direct witnessing of the proceedings of the Second Session of Vatican II gave us a unique insight into aspects of that momentous event in the life of the Church and how it has impacted, not only Catholics, but also other people of good will and the world in which we now live.

#### NOTES.

1. The *Catholic Weekly* (1 April 2012, pages 16&25) published a more detailed report on Dr Costigan's presentation written by Dr John Carmody.
2. Other speakers in the 2012 Program will also deal with aspects of Vatican II and its impact.

By 1860 approximately a third of Sydney residents were Catholic and the Australian Catholic Church was largely Irish in orientation, notwithstanding the presence of English Benedictines. However there was "dilution of Irish identity amongst late 19<sup>th</sup> century migrants, and first generation Australian-Irish". A contributing factor was "marrying out". Dr Gleeson explored statistical data related to this. One point mentioned was that there were significantly more Irish-born females than males and data on females indicated a greater tendency to marry non-Irish and non-Catholics, but "marrying-out" was stronger in Melbourne than in Sydney.

Dr Gleeson explored the question of "was there a part of the population which could properly be called the *Sydney Irish*?" He pointed out that historians are

divided on the question. He mentioned a tendency of the Australian Irish to forsake the city for rural areas, unlike their American compatriots, which thus created "Irish districts" in country NSW. He cited several examples such as *IrishTown* near Goulburn, at Braidwood, Burrowa, Bungendore, Crookwell, Galong and Yass. In Sydney there were Irish clubs and associations and a significant number of pubs with Irish names, but he reminded us that this did not necessarily indicate the development of Irish ghettos. However there is a suggestion that some Irish settled in "ethnic conclaves around Woolloomooloo, Pyrmont, Redfern, Surry Hills, Chippendale, Balmain, Waterloo". Dr Gleeson also mentioned some "*Irish Towns*" which seemed to exist in North Turrumurra

and Pymble (predominantly Protestant, mostly Presbyterian, communities). Another was in the Yagoona-Bankstown vicinity. A third was in South Randwick which was named *Irish Town* and later *Tin Town* or *Struggletown*. During a lively and long-lasting question-time, a number of ACHS members, who grew up in Randwick, denied any knowledge of that name for the area, perhaps illustrating the contentiousness of the notion of the existence of Irish "ghettoes" in Sydney.

In closing his presentation, Dr Gleeson pointed to rich source of data that exists in parish and other records, which has yet to be examined fully to further inform us on the Irish in Sydney.

### 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the consecration of St Benedict's Broadway

On Friday 24 February a Mass followed by supper marked the celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the consecration St Benedict's Church, Broadway. The Mass was celebrated by Cardinal Pell. There were several concelebrants including the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Lazzarotto. In his homily Cardinal Pell pointed out that St Benedict's was the first Catholic

church in Australia to be consecrated. The Catholic Weekly of the 19 February 2012 and 4 March 2012 published articles on this anniversary. Cardinal Pell's homily at the anniversary Mass is published in the 4 March edition. Helen Scanlon and Geoff Hogan represented the ACHS at the Mass and were very impressed by the occasion, particularly the music.

### Anniversaries being celebrated this year

St Pius College Chatswood and Marist College Eastwood were both established in 1937 and are celebrating their 75th Anniversaries this year. St Patrick's Marist College Dundas is celebrating the 50th Anniversary of its establishment at Dundas. The college traces its foundation back to 1862 at a site in Church Hill. More information is available on the websites of the colleges.

Blessed Edmund Rice the founder of the Christian Brothers was born 250 year ago in 1762 in Callan, Ireland.

The ACHS is happy to acknowledge significant anniversaries, providing we are given sufficient notice and we have space available in our newsletters.

### The Catholic Weekly

ACHS members and others interested in Catholic history, particularly in the context of Australia, would be aware of the rich source of historical articles, pictures, reports, announcements, etc. which are published in the *Catholic Weekly*. Each week there are the regular historical photos in the "Parish photo album" and "Remember when" sections and also the short reports in the "Out of the Past" column. Then there are the numerous articles of historical interest, book reviews, etc. and also contemporary reports and photographs which will be a rich source of data for future historians.

### Requests for assistance

The ACHS receives a remarkable range and number of requests for assistance. It should be noted that the ACHS has no paid officers and is not in a position to undertake research tasks or archival searches for individuals. Where possible and appropriate we do offer some assistance and advice, but are limited in what we can do. We are also asked to pass on information or to promote functions organised by other groups, often at short notice, which may be of interest to members. We are currently limited in what we can do but are exploring options as to how this may be done. There would also need to be some criteria established as to what we pass on.

<p><b>Postal address</b> The Secretary ACHS PO Box A621 Sydney South, NSW, 1235</p>	<p><b>Enquiries may also be directed to:</b> <a href="mailto:secretaryachs@gmail.com">secretaryachs@gmail.com</a> <b>Website:</b> <a href="http://australiancatholichistoricalsociety.com.au/">http://australiancatholichistoricalsociety.com.au/</a></p>
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