Bob Reece, *The Invincibles: New Norcia’s aboriginal cricketers 1879-1906*, reviewed by Rosa MacGinley, p 287

Odhran O’Brien, *Martin Griver Unearthed* reviewed by Clement Mulcahy, p 285

Roy Williams, *Post-God Nation?*, reviewed by James Franklin, p 308

Wanda Skowronska, *Catholic Converts from Down Under ... And All Over*, reviewed by Robert Stove, p 301
Journal Editor: James Franklin

ISSN: 0084-7259

Contact
General Correspondence, including membership applications and renewals, should be addressed to

The Secretary
ACHS
PO Box A621
Sydney South, NSW, 1235

Enquiries may also be directed to:
secretaryachs@gmail.com

Executive members of the Society
President:
Dr John Carmody
Vice Presidents:
Prof James Franklin
Mr Geoffrey Hogan
Secretary:
Dr Lesley Hughes
Treasurer:
Ms Helen Scanlon
ACHS Chaplain:
Fr George Connolly

Cover image: Archbishop Mannix makes a regular visit to the Little Sisters of the Poor hostel for the aged, 1940s. Original image supplied by Michael Gilchrist. See book reviews, p 289
Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society

Volume 36 2015

Contents

Julia Horne, Political machinations and sectarian intrigue in the making of Sydney University ................................................................. 4
Peter Cunich, The coadjutorship of Roger Bede Vaughan, 1873-77 ........... 16
Cherrie de Leuien, Remembering the significant: St John’s Kapunda, South Australia ................................................................. 43
Lesley Hughes, The Sydney ‘House of Mercy’: The Mater Misericordiae Servants’ Home and Training School, 1891-1919 ......................... 61
Graham Wilson, Catholics need not apply? A case for anti-Catholic bias in the selection of AIF officers .................................................. 77
Kieran Tapsell, Canon law on child sexual abuse through the ages ........ 113
Val Noone, Father Con Reis and the Movement’s attempted takeover of Catholic immigration ministry: a Melbourne and a national issue, 1950-53 ... 137
Michael Costigan, B A Santamaria remembered by one who knew him a little 159
John de Luca, The two Ronnies: Priestly influence on a neophyte – a case of clerical grooming? ................................................................. 170
Patricia Madigan, Nostra aetate and fifty years of interfaith dialogue – changes and challenges ............................................................. 179
Michael Costigan, Catholicism and Judaism: a few personal reflections .... 192
Eugene Stockton, Aboriginal Catholic Ministry: The urban apostolate ...... 196
Brian Lucas, The Australian bishops and national media: conflicts and missed opportunities ................................................................. 202
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James Franklin</td>
<td>Gerald Ridsdale, pedophile priest, in his own words</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Kelly</td>
<td>The many faces of religious persecution in Asia</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book review: Odhran O’Brien, Martin Griver</td>
<td>Unearthed: The life of a Spanish missionary priest who became a bishop in colonial Western Australia, 1814-1886, reviewed by Clement Mulcahy</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book review: Bob Reece,</td>
<td>The Invincibles: New Norcia’s aboriginal cricketers 1879-1906, reviewed by Rosa MacGinley</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Franklin, Gerry O. Nolan and Michael Gilchrist</td>
<td>The Real Archbishop Mannix: From the sources, reviewed by Bernard Doherty</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book review: Brenda Niall</td>
<td>Mannix, reviewed by James Franklin</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book review: Vincent Crow</td>
<td>St Joan of Arc Parish, Haberfield, 1909-2005, reviewed by John Luttrell</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book review: Wanda Skowronska</td>
<td>Catholic Converts from Down Under ... And All Over, reviewed by Robert Stove</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book review: John Hirst</td>
<td>Australia’s Catholic University: The First Twenty-Five Years, reviewed by Michael Costigan</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book review: Roy Williams</td>
<td>Post-God Nation?, reviewed by James Franklin</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book note: David Daintree</td>
<td>Soul of the West: Christianity and the Great Tradition, by James Franklin</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FROM ROME TO ROYAL PARK

Gerald O'Collins SJ
Genuine Australian Catholic History

A Midlife Journey – Gerald O’Collins SJ
From Brotherhood to Priesthood: The Memoirs of Monsignor W A Mullins
Last of the Land We Know – The Life and Times of Maeve Collins
As told to her nephew Les Coleman
Melbourne Before Mannix: Catholics in Public Life 1880–1920
Patrick Morgan
The Real Archbishop Mannix: From the Sources
James Franklin, Gerald O Nolan and Michael Gilchrist
On the Left Bank of the Tiber – Gerald O’Collins SJ
Ennio Mantovani
The Challenge of Change: Mercy and Loreto Sisters in Ballarat
Heather O’Connor
The Education of Dr Joe – Joe Santamaria
The Heart of James McAuley – Peter Coleman
To Bonegilla from Somewhere – Wanda Skowronska
By Wendouree, Memories 1951–1963 – John Molony
Letters to Naples – Vincenzo De Francesco SJ
Catholic Values and Australian Realities – James Franklin
A Loose Canon – Brian Coman
Pastoral Care of Italians in Australia: Memories and Prophecy
Edited by Anthony Paganoni

visit our webpage
www.connorcourt.com
POLITICAL MACHINATIONS AND SECTARIAN INTRIGUE IN THE MAKING OF SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

Julia Horne*

In the first decade of the University of Sydney, this public university and creation of the New South Wales colonial parliament had achieved the remarkable distinction of a religiously diverse university. No single religious denomination was in control or had an absolute majority in the student population. Arguably, it was the first in the British Empire to achieve such a state of affairs, which begs how such circumstances come about. What political machinations supported this outcome and what was the sectarian intrigue behind the move to have a public university not dominated by any one religion? This article explores the early years of the University, the debates that led to its creation in 1850, and in the decade that followed, how the churches came gradually to accommodate themselves to an institution not founded on religious principles.

In 1849, as the New South Wales Government was considering ways toward self-government it was also debating the merits of a publicly endowed colonial university. Led by William Charles Wentworth, by then a conservative squatter-politician and Australian patriot, the legislative council considered a university scheme that would make it a ‘duty of the State … to provide for the instruction of the people …’! The words were carefully chosen. Although there was only ever the intention to have a small proportion of the population of New South Wales university-educated—to create, in effect, a governing elite—the university’s supporters believed that the ‘people’ would benefit by having their brightest educated to a standard that would equip them to serve the public, and that the benefits would flow to the colony as a whole.

This vision of a public university revealed a belief in the capacity of meritocracy as a way to select suitable male colonists on the basis of academic merit, whatever their social or religious origins. Yet there was an additional feature that soon came to define the public institution. Basic to * Julia Horne is associate professor in the department of History at the University of Sydney. Her books include *Sydney, The Making of a Public University*, Miegunyah, Melbourne 2012 and *The Pursuit of Wonder: how Australia’s landscape was explored, nature discovered and tourism unleashed*, Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2005.

** This article is adapted from Julia Horne and Geoffrey Sherington, *Sydney, The Making of a Public University*, Miegunyah Press, Melbourne 2012 (distributed by Sydney University Press).
Wentworth’s proposal was that there would be no overt religious influence in who controlled the university or what it taught—he used the word ‘secular’ to describe the sort of university he envisaged. The university was not to be dominated, he argued, by any church, or serve its needs through religious instruction. Charles Nicholson, future university provost and donor of an antiquities collection that became the basis for the University’s Nicholson Museum, was open to the idea of involvement by the major religious denominations, but he too was adamant that the curriculum be secular.

The University of Sydney, founded in 1850, inherited a past that linked higher education and religious belief. It has often been assumed that its foundation broke with this tradition because of public declarations to be secular. Australian historian and, later, university Vice-Chancellor JJ Auchmuty wrote in the 1950s that secularism had triumphed in Australia, where the universities ‘are, without exception, firmly organised on a purely secular and non-sectarian basis’. Other scholars have since pointed out the significance of affiliated denominational residential colleges at Australian universities. In effect, the university emerged with a secular curriculum but only after debate about the historical basis of religion at the centre of a university. What emerged was a public secular university containing collegiate forms of the churches.

In the early nineteenth century, most established universities in Europe still had formal associations with Christianity arising out of their foundation by church and religious bodies. In England, the ‘ancient universities’ of Oxford and Cambridge in the early nineteenth century could have been seen as the Church of England at study. After all, the Church of England was the established church of the nation and Oxbridge college fellows were among its ordained clergy. Even as late as 1840, about half the undergraduates at Oxford were preparing to enter the church. Religious tests were not completely abandoned at Oxford and Cambridge until the 1870s. Before the publication of Charles Darwin’s theory of natural selection in 1859, few in universities had questioned the tenets of Christianity. In Britain it had not so much been belief or unbelief but matters of denominational faith that caused controversy, particularly in the efforts of the Established Church to maintain its privileged position.

Increasingly, after Darwin, establishing state-endowed secular educational institutions seemed the appropriate path. This became accepted not just in Britain, where the overall privileges of the Established Church of England were under challenge, but also in those parts of the British Empire where sectarian tensions had been exacerbated by the patterns of migration and settlement.
There was not just challenge but also concrete activity. From 1836, the new University of London (an examination authority only, no teaching) had affiliated with denominational and non-denominational colleges responsible for preparing students for university examinations. The University of London did not profess any specific faith, although its colleges, where university students were actually taught, were free to do so. Its attitude to religion and education was to be mirrored in the University of Sydney Act 1850. The situation in Ireland provided a possible model for those supporting the idea of different Christian denominations coexisting at the same university. The state-created nonresidential Queen’s University Colleges established in 1845 provided a common secular curriculum for all faiths. But just as it had earlier rejected the state-sponsored national schools for Irish children of all denominations so the leadership of the Catholic Church in Ireland condemned these Colleges.

These various approaches to education and religion came together with the founding of the University of Sydney. As chief sponsor of the Act creating it, William Wentworth had had personal experience of religious tests, having been briefly to Cambridge, where chapel attendance was compulsory.

In the 1840s, he had also been on the governing council of the secular Sydney College, the demise of which had initiated debate on establishing a university. From this background, he emphasised that the provision in the bill allowing secular instruction alone was the basis for the university:

This principle was absolutely indispensable; if they once introduced the principle of sectarian interference, all government of such an institution was at an end. Because if any one sect asserted its supremacy, all other sects would retire from it; and thus be virtually excluded from participation in its benefits.

To Wentworth religious frictions had to be avoided if a public university were to survive and serve society. Nonetheless, religion and morality were not to be absent from the constitution of the university. There was provision for the moral supervision of all students, and in particular the requirement that students attend divine worship at the behest of parents and guardians. In fact, not until 1972 was this requirement, by then long out of use, removed along with other defunct clauses, for instance, the requirement that students live with their parents or with an approved friend, guardian or tutor.

Initially, local churches took little interest in Wentworth’s proposal for a university. Within the Church of England there was a view that the new university had been established to replace the failed secular Sydney
The Church of England Bishop William Broughton distrusted Wentworth for his role in the move towards secular national schools that were established in 1848, and saw his motives as masking ‘an old heathen tyrant’ who ‘wished that the Church had only one neck that he might despatch it in one blow’. Even when Wentworth agreed to representation of clergy from different denominations on the Senate, the university’s governing body, Broughton did not change his criticism of the university as head of a national secular education system—‘the great emporium of false and anti-church views in this hemisphere’. The Catholic hierarchy also condemned the idea of a secular institution as establishing ‘a principle calculated to sap the foundations of Christianity’. As well, the English Benedictine Catholic Bishop John Bede Polding and clergy argued against public endowment of a university designed not to provide a liberal education but merely a ‘certain amount of classical, scientific, and other information, to the exclusion of any professedly religious teaching’.

The Anglican Broughton, the Catholic Polding and leaders of other denominations in New South Wales were more concerned with providing colleges to train future clergy. Broughton had worked hard to establish one such, first at St James in the city, and then from 1847 to 1849 in Glebe at a house built in 1835 by colonial architect John Verge and called Lyndhurst. St Mary’s seminary in Sydney from the 1830s trained Catholic priests and then extended its efforts to schooling for the laity when the Catholic Church purchased Lyndhurst in the early 1850s for St Mary’s College. On his return to New South Wales in 1850, the Presbyterian John Dunmore Lang reopened the Australian College, which he had first established as a secular institution in 1831, and which would now train Presbyterian clergy as well as cater for general education. He saw merit in the proposed university but only if it were simply an examination authority like the University of London with colleges to do the teaching. What Lang and other church leaders rejected was the proposed university having the functions of a secular college as Wentworth now suggested. All the churches at this stage were opposing the establishment of the university.

Balancing religion with the secular nature of the university finally fell into the hands of the three first professors, and particularly the Reverend Dr John Woolley, foundation Principal of the University of Sydney. Fellow of University College Oxford, a Broad Churchman, and friend of the Oxford reformer Arthur Penryhn Stanley, Woolley was strongly committed to university reform, including the introduction of a secular curriculum and the ending of religious tests for entry. A former headmaster, he followed
the principles of his friend Stanley’s headmaster, the legendary Thomas Arnold, who had sought to accommodate both the High Church and evangelical sectors of the Church of England, while reaching out to other denominational faiths. In his oration at the inauguration of the University of Sydney in 1852, Woolley laid out his views on religion. Beginning with King Alfred in the ninth century and the origins of Oxford in the eleventh century, he suggested that ‘true religion and sound learning cannot brook to dwell apart’, but then with reference to Arnold he argued that,

To require from the students of the liberal sciences a pledge of unity in creed, to enforce upon all the religious convictions of a part would be to widen the breach which separates us, to aggravate our misunderstandings, to embitter the jealousy and heart burnings which political differences sufficiently inflame.

It was thus a matter for ‘congratulation’ that the university ‘has first distinctively marked the boundaries of Education and Secular Instruction’. In other words, this approach would breed tolerance and suit students, most of whom lived in the city enjoying the ‘purest and safest religious training’ in the home, while mixing with students of all creeds in the university lecture halls. And for those living away from home he hoped for not just a lodging house but ‘an English College’ to reproduce the discipline that Thomas Arnold thought best adapted to British youth. Woolley’s view was that university teaching must be secular, but it also left open the possibility of denominational residential colleges. Not only Woolley but also Sir Charles Nicholson, long a supporter of the university who became University Provost in 1854, promoted such colleges as a way to create an Oxford in the Antipodes but without the religious tests. With the prospect of a move from the old Sydney College site in Sydney’s town centre to more spacious accommodation on its outskirts, some in the Parliament and in the community began to dream of the university becoming the ‘centre of a cluster of Colleges’.

The initiative now passed briefly to some Church of England laity and clergy who campaigned for a college that would provide ‘religious and moral teaching’ to complement the secular instruction of the new university. Following negotiations between the government and the university senate, and significantly during the absence in England of Broughton (where he died in early 1853) with his strong views about the university as solely an examining authority, a ‘concordat’ was reached in 1853: the university would require students in affiliated colleges to attend the ‘purely secular instruction’ in the university (although the senate was willing to regard
lectures in metaphysics, ethics and modern history as not compulsory) but to appease those who wanted a ‘religious’ or moral test, before graduating, a student had to obtain a certificate of ‘satisfactory conduct’ from his college principal.26

The promise of residential colleges settled differences between the university and the local religious denominations. Woolley saw advantages in requiring students at residential colleges to attend the university for secular teaching, but he was disturbed when the Catholic Bishop Davis proposed that attendance at university lectures could be suspended for some students in affiliated colleges in a reference to the alternative teaching at the new Benedictine College Lyndhurst in Glebe, which John Woolley explained, created the prospect of ‘a new church college …founded just out of the range of the University’.27 Charles Henry Davis was a member of the University senate, experienced with the workings of London University and an enthusiastic participant in the negotiations between the University and the Church over the matter of a Catholic college.28 The 1854 Act to establish colleges within the university attempted to deal with these issues. The aim was to encourage the establishment of colleges that would offer ‘systematic religious instruction’ and ‘domestic supervision’ with ‘efficient assistance’ for students preparing for university lectures and exams. In order to graduate, all students of a college had to be ‘matriculated’ and accept compulsory attendance at the university’s professorial lectures, as well as the requirement of religious certificates. For each proposed college of the major religious denominations there was to be a land grant of eighteen acres, a generous state endowment of £20,000 towards the cost of the building and £500 per annum for the salary of the principal.29

The university professors adamantly opposed the proposed religious certificates from the colleges as tantamount to the introduction of ‘religious tests’ and, by 1858, Woolley had convinced the colonial Parliament to remove this clause from the legislation. While arguing that his position was consistent with the reform movement at Oxford and in accord with the principles that the Scottish reformer Sir William Hamilton had enunciated in the 1820s, he rejected the views of parliamentarians that the proposed establishment of residential colleges was sectarian and a violation of the secular principles on which the university had been founded.30 As he told the Select Committee of the Parliament in 1859 enquiring into the university:

in this University we are trying an experiment which is a very difficult one … that is to unite the general secular teaching of the University with independent denominational Colleges, which are
independent in their own sphere. It is a very difficult scheme, which has not been tried anywhere.\textsuperscript{31}

Privately, Woolley himself remained suspicious of the motives of the specific denominations. Before he left for England in 1864 (to die at sea in 1866 on his voyage back to Australia) he even suggested to his favoured student William Windeyer that there was a ‘denominational conspiracy’ to undermine the university and enshrine the affiliated colleges as the principal teaching bodies.\textsuperscript{32} But the settlement that Woolley helped create was enduring, and established an effective relationship between the university and its residential colleges. Indeed, the Sydney arrangement was to have a lasting influence on university residential colleges throughout Australia.\textsuperscript{33}

There were also immediate effects within the university as each of the major religious denominations responded in different ways. Splits between the adherents of the High Church and the Evangelicals in the Church of England denied St Paul’s, the Anglican university college opened in 1856, what could be seen as the traditional role of preparing the clergy through a university education.

Broughton’s successor, Bishop Barker, concentrated diocesan energies on maintaining and building schools to compete with the secular state system and there was also the business of setting up training for the clergy in Moore Theological College, which had been established in 1856 at Liverpool, south-west of Sydney, under a bequest from the estate of Thomas Moore, a local landowner.\textsuperscript{34}

The arrival of the former headmaster of King’s College, London, Alfred Barry as Bishop in 1883 brought a change of direction. A cleric with extensive experience of secondary and higher education in Britain, Barry revived the financial fortunes of St Paul’s and transferred Moore College to Newtown to be near the influences of the University, although it was not to be a part of it.\textsuperscript{35} St Paul’s College was to reach a closer relationship with the university, with later wardens such as Sydney University–educated Arthur Garnsey coming to play an important part in university affairs. The establishment of the Presbyterian St Andrews was also affected by differences and disputes partly stemming from John Lang, who was committed to the training of clergy.\textsuperscript{36} Founded in 1870 principally for university undergraduate students, St Andrew’s College also housed a theological hall for the Presbyterian ministry (separate from the University).\textsuperscript{37} Of the other major Protestant denominations, the Methodists had originally intended to establish a college under an Act passed in 1860, but this intention was unfulfilled until 1917 when Wesley College was opened. By the 1920s, the Methodist Church was
participating in theological training at St Andrews. The most interesting denominational adaptation in founding a college was the Catholic St John’s in 1864, which reflected English, Irish and papal influences. From the 1850s, the papacy was increasingly antagonistic to the new state-based secular education. In Sydney, Archbishop Polding had been hostile to a local secular university, but the *College Act* of 1854 and the foundation of St Paul’s changed his mind. In 1857, he issued a pastoral letter on the importance of supporting what would become the first Catholic residential college in the British Empire to be supported by state funds.

Since his arrival in Sydney in 1835, Polding had been in continuous tension with Sydney’s Irish-Australian Catholic community. The Benedictine Lyndhurst College with its focus on classical studies, which Polding favoured, was not necessarily what the New South Wales Irish wanted. But influenced by the university work of his bishop, Davis (who died in 1854), Polding now argued that the possibility of a Catholic college within the grounds of the university would not only sustain the study of Catholic theology but provide the ‘intellectual culture’ that would bring ‘incalculable benefit’ of social advancement to those in the Catholic community. Initially there was great community support for the proposed College of St John the Evangelist, to give its full name, particularly from rural districts outside Sydney. It was to be built in Gothic style at great cost, on a hill in sight of the Great Hall of the University. There was to be much external decoration and great attention was paid to the creation of the interior chapel. Determined to find someone of equivalent status to a university professor, the College Council chose as rector the Irish classical scholar and Catholic priest Dr John Forrest, in spite of his opposition to any form of ‘mixed’ education between Catholics and Protestants.

But St John’s was also soon caught up in the politics of international Catholicism—conflict between Rome and Ireland—that spread to Australia. Locally, those associated with the lay *Freeman's Journal* used the proposal of a college to undermine the Archbishop, who now faced opposition from the Irish bishops appointed to rural provinces outside Sydney. Polding and Forrest also had fundamental conflict of theology, ethnicity and personality. The Archbishop supported St Mary’s College, Lyndhurst in Glebe, which matriculated students to the university but sent few to reside at St John’s in spite of Polding’s help in its establishment. The situation changed with the arrival of Archbishop Vaughan, also an English-born Benedictine, but with a more expansive outlook than the monastic Polding. He soon dismissed Forrest, and also closed down Lyndhurst.
Determined to defend Catholic education against growing state secularism, Vaughan decided to make the college his own residence, seeing St John’s as ‘pre-eminently fitted to become the main fortress amongst us of Catholic Christianity’. When the state withdrew aid to church schools under the Public Instruction Act 1880, Vaughan and the other Catholic Bishops in New South Wales soon encouraged religious orders, many from Ireland, to increase their presence in both city and country schools, and so ensure the viability of Catholic education. Catholic students from the secondary schools of the religious orders in New South Wales and Queensland were soon matriculating to the university with growing numbers coming to reside in St John’s.

Changes continued under Vaughan’s successor, the Irish-born but Rome-trained Cardinal Moran, but he was more prepared to find ways for Catholics to integrate into the wider community although maintaining separate forms of education. Moran established St Patrick’s at Manly, clearly indicating that clerical training was not associated with the university. He dismissed Barry, the Benedictine rector of St John’s and appointed, first, the Irish-born Patrick Murphy from St Kieran’s College, Kilkenny, and then James O’Brien from All Hallows, Dublin, who remained from 1888 until his death in 1915. Before he died in 1911, Moran had significantly influenced education in Sydney. Schools such as St Ignatius Riverview were as successful at university matriculation examinations as state and Protestant schools. And Moran even raised the question of a separate university Catholic college for nuns so that they could attend lectures and sit for degrees—a proposal which the university senate rejected. However, by the early 1920s, there was further pressure to establish a residential college for Catholic women. The rector of St John’s hoped this would occur under his direction, but instead Archbishop Michael Kelly, along with prominent women from the Catholic laity including the doctor Constance D’Arcy and the nuns of the Order of the Sacred Heart, opened Sancta Sophia as a Hall of Residence in 1925, and in 1929 it became a college by Act of Parliament. However, St John’s, and later Sancta Sophia, represented a significant state-endowed provision for Catholic higher education even as the state withdrew funds from religious schools.

State funding of denominational colleges represented a departure from the aim of the University’s founders, but consolidated support for the university among the major denominations in New South Wales. After much debate the compromise had established the university as an independent teaching and examining authority. The major churches had
gained special rights of residence, but the university had the authority of its compulsory secular curriculum with the right of access for all who qualified. With no religious test on entry, and the resolute parliamentary rejection of the requirement for religious certificates on graduation, the idea of the ‘central secular teaching university’ had triumphed. The founders believed that this idea was crucial to the future of a public university even if compromise with the churches had to be won by the gift of public land and money. The student intake showed that within the first decade of the university’s foundation, these non-denominational and secular aims had worked: at least 19 per cent of students, but probably more, were Catholic, indicating support for a public, non-denominational institution of secular higher education. Located on the fringes of the university, Sydney’s residential colleges became places apart from the mainstream, although they soon played a major role in university activities and particularly in sport. Modelled in many ways on Oxbridge college life, they became sites for the socialisation and bonding of youth, and particularly young men. By the twenty-first century, however, almost all of the male colleges had become coeducational, with only St Paul’s remaining single-sex, while Sancta, and also the Women’s College founded in 1892 were still committed to having their own place apart from men.

Endnotes

1 WC Wentworth, quoted in ‘Foundation of a University’, Sydney Morning Herald, 7 September 1849.
7 WC Wentworth, quoted in Turney et al., Australia’s First, p. 43. See also Walker, Church, College and Campus, pp. 37–43.


12 Turney et al., *Australia’s First*, p. 48.

13 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 September 1850.


15 Turney et al., *Australia’s First*, pp. 23–4.

16 Turney et al., *Australia’s First*, pp. 47–8.

17 Walker, Church, College and Campus, pp. 44–6.


24 Turney et al., *Australia’s First*, p. 82.

25 Cable, K, ‘The Case of the University of Sydney’, MSS, University of Sydney Archives, pp. 27–32; Turney et al., *Australia’s First*, pp. 79–80.

26 Turney et al., *Australia’s First*, p. 85.

27 John Woolley, quoted in Turney et al., *Australia’s First*, p. 86.


29 Turney et al., *Australia’s First*, p. 87.

30 Turney et al., *Australia’s First*, pp. 90–1.

31 Turney et al., *Australia’s First*, pp. 118–19.

32 Simpson, ‘Reverend Dr Woolley’, p. 94.

33 See Walker, Church, College and Campus.

Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1955, pp. 1–60.


37 Walker, Church, College and Campus, pp. 64–92. See also Jack, RI, The Andrew’s Book: St Andrews College Within the University of Sydney, The Principal and Councillors of St Andrews College, Sydney, 1975.


39 Daly, RA, One Hundred Years on Grose’s Farm: The Story of the College of St John the Evangelist, Within the University of Sydney, to 1915, St John’s College Archives [date unknown].


43 O’Farrell, Catholic Church and Community, p. 178.

44 Based on Student Registers of St John’s College. The authors acknowledge the assistance of Dr Perry McIntyre, the archivist of St John’s. Questions of student background at St John’s are illuminated in Sherington, Geoffrey, and Perry McIntyre, ‘Empires of Faith, Mind and Body: St John’s College University of Sydney, 1857–1918’, Journal of Royal Australian Historical Society Volume 100, Part 1, June 2014, pp. 93-109.


47 Ayres, Prince of the Church, pp. 174–5.


49 Turney et al., Australia’s First, pp. 90–1.

Re-establishing Roman Authority in the Sydney Archdiocese: The Coadjutorship of Roger Bede Vaughan, 1873-77

Peter Cunich*

Roger Bede Vaughan’s four-year term as coadjutor archbishop of Sydney has received little scholarly attention, and yet during this relatively brief period the Benedictine successor to Archbishop John Bede Polding implemented a number of policies through which he successfully re-established full episcopal control over both the archdiocese and its metropolitan jurisdiction.1 Although several authors have previously noted the role that Vaughan played in reviving Roman authority in Sydney, little attention has been paid to exactly how he achieved these aims during his time as coadjutor archbishop under the aged Polding.2 There is consequently much in the relationship between these two Benedictine archbishops which remains unexamined. As the acknowledged successor of Archbishop Polding, Vaughan was placed in a sometimes difficult relationship with the elderly patriarch, a relationship which we seldom have an opportunity to observe in the post-Vatican Council church of the early twenty-first century, for relatively few coadjutor

1 An earlier version of this essay was delivered as the 2007 Polding Lecture at St John’s College within the University of Sydney. I am grateful to Dr David Daintree for inviting me to deliver that lecture. I am also grateful to Pauline Garland of the Sydney Archdiocesan Archives for being an efficient and welcoming host during my numerous research trips to Sydney, and to the late Abbot Placid Spearritt of New Norcia for his hospitality and permission to quote from the abbey’s archives. I acknowledge with gratitude the late Sr Mary Xavier Compton sgs, for her generous assistance at an earlier stage in my research; I have also relied heavily on the work of the late Sr Mary Peter Damian McKinlay sgs, whose translations of Propaganda Fide documents in Italian at the Sydney Archdiocesan Archives have made my task much easier than it would otherwise have been.


* Peter Cunich is associate professor in the Department of History at the University of Hong Kong. A native of Orange and a late medievalist by training, he is currently writing a biography of Archbishop Vaughan.
bishops are appointed these days. They were once a familiar feature of church government, however, with numerous coadjutor bishops being appointed to Australian sees in the first half of the twentieth century. What, then, was a coadjutor bishop, what was his role under the incumbent ordinary of the diocese to which he was appointed, and why was Archbishop Vaughan’s coadjutorship so successful?

In the modern church, bishops are required by canon law to tender their resignation at seventy-five years of age.³ In the nineteenth century, bishops were expected to die in office, and retirement was extremely rare. This custom created practical difficulties in the administration of the church, for many bishops continued in office well beyond the age when they could effectively perform the onerous duties of the episcopate. Auxiliary bishops were sometimes appointed to assist ailing bishops, but it was more usual for a coadjutor bishop to be appointed, especially in what the canon law candidly described as cases of diocesans who were ‘impeded from performance of their Episcopal duties by old age, or bodily infirmity, or sickness, protracted and incurable, such as loss of speech, blindness, paralysis, and insanity’.⁴ In the most serious cases,

³ The current canons relating to auxiliary and coadjutor bishops are to be found at canons 377, 403-413 & 463; see The Code of Canon Law in English Translation (London: Collins Liturgical, 1983).

when a see was said to be ‘impeded’ due to the insanity of its bishop, the coadjutor could exercise all episcopal duties within the diocese, with the sole exception of disposing of church property. Normally, however, a coadjutor had no role in ecclesiastical administration except in so far as the ordinary allowed him, but by the second half of the nineteenth century it was becoming accepted practice for a coadjutor to be appointed as the diocesan bishop’s vicar general in spirituals, or his administrator in temporal matters. Coadjutors could be either temporary or perpetual, but it was more usual for them to be appointed as perpetual coadjutors, in which case they had the right of succession (cum jure successionis), which meant that they immediately entered into possession of the see upon the death of the incumbent.

Roger Bede Vaughan’s appointment was as a perpetual coadjutor with the right of succession to the see of Sydney upon the death of Archbishop Polding. This arrangement was to ensure a smooth transition from one bishop to the next and to prevent lengthy vacancies in missionary areas in an age when international communication was difficult and time-consuming. The coadjutor bishop with right of succession was guaranteed to succeed to his nominated see unless he predeceased the incumbent. He also had a number of other rights and privileges which auxiliaries did not have. While auxiliary bishops were frequently nominated by the incumbent diocesan himself, a coadjutor had to be nominated via a terna submitted by a meeting of the provincial bishops; moreover, the candidate was required to be ‘most worthy’ (dignissimus) rather than just ‘worthy’ (dignus). This stricter nomination process recognised the full episcopal dignity of the coadjutor in holding a prelatial title, while the auxiliary simply held a temporary office during the life of his diocesan.

Coadjutors did not exercise ordinary jurisdiction in their own right before they succeeded to their sees, but they were consecrated as bishops of dioceses that had fallen into the hands of the infidels (in partibus infidelium).

5 Taunton, Law of the Church, p. 205.
6 Ibid.
7 Sydney Archdiocesan Archives (SAA), U1523/19-7B, Vaughan’s brief of appointment by Pope Pius IX, 28 February 1873.
8 By the 1870s communication between Europe and Australia was becoming easier with the opening of the undersea telegraph line in 1872, but Rome still tended to do most of its business in the traditional way until the end of the nineteenth century. Letters from Rome to Sydney and vice versa typically took up to two months to be delivered in the 1870s.
Most of these dioceses were to be found in the Middle East or the Near East, and bishops appointed to these seizes were known as ‘titular bishops’. The appointment of clergy to titular bishoprics was reserved to the Holy See, but in the case of missionary territories such as Australia, the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (Propaganda Fide) played an important role in advising the pope on the best men for such appointments. Because a coadjutor appointment involved raising a priest to a titular episcopal dignity as well as providing for his succession to an active see, it was necessary to issue two papal briefs before consecration could take place. One brief raised the nominee to a titular bishopric and outlined his duties with regard to that see, while the other appointed him as coadjutor to a diocesan with ordinary jurisdiction. This second brief enumerated his duties to the incumbent diocesan. The papal briefs appointing Roger Bede Vaughan as Archbishop of Nazianzus and coadjutor to Archbishop Polding with right of succession were issued by Pope Pius IX on 28 February 1873; he was consecrated in Liverpool by Archbishop Manning of Westminster on 19 March 1873, the feast of St Joseph.10

The title of Vaughan’s titular bishopric was significant, for his was not like the majority of titular sees whose names were rather obscure: the Benedictine Peter Baines was titular bishop of Siga as coadjutor to Bishop Collingridge, 1823-29; and the future Cardinal Moran was titular bishop of Olba when appointed in 1871 as coadjutor to the bishop of Ossory. Nazianzus was an ancient archiepiscopal see whose name and dignity was well-known because of the fame of a previous incumbent, St Gregory of Nazianzus (329-390 AD), and such things mattered in Rome and among bishops of a more ambitious nature than Vaughan. Perhaps more important for Vaughan was the small financial advantage that came with the titular see of Nazianzus. Vaughan was a Benedictine monk. He had lived for twenty years under a vow of poverty and had no way of supporting himself beyond an annual allowance of £100 from his father, so the endowment that came with the see of Nazianzus gave Vaughan a small measure of independence.11 As events in Sydney would prove, however, this small pension was nowhere near sufficient to maintain Vaughan’s episcopal dignity in the manner expected by colonial society in the 1870s.

10 SAA, U1523/19-7A & B. For the full story of Vaughan’s appointment as coadjutor to Polding, see Dowd, *Rome in Australia*, pp. 393-425.

11 SAA, U1521/2-2, Barnabo to Vaughan, 22 November 1873; U1523/21-2, John Vaughan to Roger Bede Vaughan, 16 September 1874; U1523/21-4, John Vaughan to Roger Bede Vaughan, 19 August 1878. Vaughan’s father had given him fifty sovereigns before he set sail for Australia, U1523/21-1, John Vaughan to Roger Bede Vaughan, 24 October 1873.
The relationship between a diocesan and his coadjutor was often a difficult one. Sometimes a coadjutor was appointed by the Holy See against the wishes of the diocesan, usually in cases where the diocesan had refused to accede to requests from Rome. This had happened in Ireland several times during the nineteenth century, but such cases were rare and invariably proved to be disastrous, so Propaganda Fide exercised caution. When Cardinal McCabe of Dublin requested an auxiliary in 1883, Rome decided to appoint a coadjutor instead. McCabe was so worried that the ultramontane and interfering Patrick Moran would be appointed that he threatened to resign if Rome forced a coadjutor upon him who was not acceptable. Normally, however, the difficulty was on a much more human scale, for the appointment of a coadjutor was a clear signal to any diocesan bishop of Rome’s opinion that he was no longer effective as a bishop. This was a realisation that many bishops found difficult to accept. When Archbishop Goold of Melbourne heard rumours in 1878 that a coadjutor might be appointed for him he was furious. He wrote to Vaughan and stated categorically that an auxiliary or coadjutor was not welcome in his see; a coadjutor would only get in his way and cause trouble in the diocese: ‘It is a sort of help I never liked, because it is invariably a source of much vexation of spirit and unseemly division.’ Bishop Peter Collingridge of the Western District of England had certainly found this to be the case in the 1820s when his coadjutor Peter Baines at first tried to take over the finances of the district to build an expensive seminary which later failed, leading to a series of misunderstandings which rendered the two men barely on speaking terms. Ultimately Baines disappeared to the papal court for three years where he worked very assiduously at securing a cardinal’s hat, but he was not much help to Collingridge as vicar apostolic of the Western District. In Goold’s case he seems to have become more resistant to a coadjutor as he grew older. When Archbishop Moran suggested a coadjutor for the 72-year-old Goold in 1885, his reply was brief and acid: ‘I need no Coadjutor – When I do, I know how to apply for one’. Bishop John Cani of Rockhampton had a similar response in 1891 and even went to Rome in

13 SAA, U1521/6-22, Alipius Goold to Vaughan, 3 September 1878.
order to prevent the nomination of a coadjutor.\textsuperscript{16}

This was not the case with Vaughan’s appointment, for Polding had been pleading with Rome for a coadjutor for some years, asking for one of the talented Vaughan brothers as early as 1866, and actually securing the appointment of his own vicar general, Samuel Austin Sheehy, in the same year.\textsuperscript{17} Sheehy ultimately refused the honour, the victim of a poison-pen campaign by Polding’s Irish suffragan bishops.\textsuperscript{18} Polding was therefore overjoyed when he heard the news that Vaughan was being sent out to assist him, writing to Abbot Salvado of New Norcia that his heart was ‘full of gratitude to Almighty God for his gift of such a labourer … Yes, Bede Vaughan is one in whom we may well rejoice; he will, I feel confident, do much for our Lord’s honour under the banner of St Benedict, and will revive the perfume of our great name in this Southern world’.\textsuperscript{19} This joy was short-lived, however, once Polding realised how much the advent of a coadjutor would affect his own role within the ecclesiastical province over which he had presided as metropolitan for more than thirty years.

Australia and the Australian Catholic Church were changing rapidly in the 1860s and 1870s. The convict colony which Polding had been sent to evangelise in 1834 was now a relatively prosperous and expanding society of free-settlers and assisted immigrants. New South Wales and the other newer colonies were becoming wealthier by the year as commodities from primary industry (especially gold and wool) boomed. The Australian Catholic church, over which Polding had at first presided as the only colonial bishop, had been subdivided into ten dioceses, and more were soon to follow. Indeed, his ecclesiastical province of Australia was split into two provinces in 1874, with Sydney and Melbourne as the metropolitan sees. While it was generally agreed that this development was good for the church, Polding found it difficult to adjust to his own position within the new order.

Sydney was for many years still recognised as the senior diocese in Australia, and the decentralised Australian church continued to have a united feel to it until well into the 1870s. For example, the \textit{Freeman’s Journal}, the Sydney-based Catholic weekly newspaper continued to be sold...
throughout New South Wales and beyond, and carried news items on most of the Australian dioceses, many of them in great detail. Sydney, then, took a proprietorial view of the Australian church and Polding played the role of the elderly patriarch, expecting deference from all the other Australian bishops, but this was a deference which was given less readily as the years wore on. Cardinal Franchi had assured Polding that he would always take ‘precedence of affection’ among the Australian bishops as the oldest prelate and the propagator of the Australian mission, but in 1875 Rome wrote a stern letter to Vaughan requesting him to persuade Polding to cease using his former title of ‘Metropolitan of Australia’, to which he was no longer entitled. Propaganda felt that Polding’s continued use of the title threatened the harmony of the Australian church.20 Such requests from Rome did not make the relationship between the two bishops in Sydney any easier, especially once Polding became aware that Vaughan had been charged with the task of returning the Australian church to full Roman discipline.

Vaughan was already well aware of the problems in the Sydney archdiocese when he was appointed as Polding’s successor; these issues had been widely discussed within the English Benedictine Congregation since the early 1860s. Before leaving England, Vaughan assiduously prepared himself for the Sydney posting in the months after his consecration in March 1873. He was able to attend the provincial synod in London in July 1873 in order to learn more about how the church was governed in his own country, and ‘to master the best method of arranging ecclesiastical affairs whether they pertain to the visitation of clergy or to the administration of temporal matters’.21 Vaughan then spent several weeks in Rome, learning more of the situation in Sydney from Cardinal Barnabo, the Prefect of Propaganda Fide, and meeting Pope Pius IX before starting his journey to Australia. He was determined to understand ‘the wishes of the Holy See, and to act in accordance with them prudently but firmly’.22 Although there is little surviving record of Vaughan’s activities in Rome, it is apparent from later correspondence that he was fully briefed by the officials at Propaganda Fide on the role that was expected of him when he reached Sydney. It is certainly clear that he was given full license by Propaganda to take into his own

20 SAA, U1417/26-7, Franchi to Polding, 28 August 1874; U1521/2-6, Franchi to Vaughan, 16 November 1875.
21 SAA, U1521/1-4, Vaughan to Barnabo, 16 March 1873; Freeman’s Journal, 27 September 1873, p. 10.
22 Mitchell Library, Sydney (ML), 93/69, Cahill Papers, folder 10/10, Vaughan to Smith, 6 March 1873.
hands the administration of both temporal and spiritual affairs in Sydney as a first step towards reforming the archdiocese. It seems, however, that Polding did not expect this work to begin in earnest until after his passing. As Vaughan set to work to achieve the goals set by Rome, Polding became increasingly aware that the missionary days of the Australian church were drawing to close and that his successor was changing forever the institutions which Polding had created. This hurt the aging prelate and naturally caused tension between the two men.23

The first sign of difficulties between Polding and his new coadjutor became evident within days of Vaughan’s arrival in Sydney on 16 December 1873. Rome’s expectation that Polding would appoint Vaughan to be vicar general and administrator of the archdiocese grieved the old bishop who wanted to retain his own officials whom he had ‘always found to be true to their office’ over a long period of service.24 Polding was, in fact, very reluctant to surrender any of his ordinary powers as bishop. According to the only recorded version of the difficult meeting between the two men where these issues were first discussed, Polding rather patronisingly told the ‘young archbishop’ that:

You have been sent here by the Holy Father as my coadjutor, and you shall be so; you shall do what I cannot do, you shall pontificate on solemn days, and go about giving confirmations and receiving the professions of nuns when I am unable to do it myself. This is what [it] means to be a coadjutor, and I shall employ you as such. Still, if you like it, I will make you Abbot of St Benedict, and give you the full administration of Lyndhurst as a college and as a monastery.25

Polding undoubtedly rejected Vaughan’s initial attempt to take control of the diocese because the incumbent vicar general was the loyal and hard-working Austin Sheehy, who had suffered so much disappointment and embarrassment on Polding’s behalf in 1867 and 1868. How could Polding dismiss men such as Sheehy who had been ‘faithful servants … for many long years’? It is said that he took the whole matter so much to heart that he retreated to the home of Dean Kenny on the North Shore for several days where he was laid low by ‘mental depression and bodily debility’.26

24  SAA, U1523/22-1(i), report in the Sydney Evening News, 24 November 1883.
25  Ibid. This discussion between the two archbishops was reported by an anonymous observer who claimed to have been in the room at the time of the meeting.
26  Ibid.; these details are in part supported by a report in the Freeman's Journal that Polding made a visit to Dean Kenny at North Sydney around this time.
Vaughan was nevertheless determined to enter immediately into the work for which he had been sent to Sydney, reporting to Cardinal Barnabo that he intended to be prudent and steadfast in his determination to overcome the difficulties he faced ‘one by one when the time comes’. It may have been at this moment that Vaughan threatened to return to Europe if he were not given full administration of the diocese, for it seems that some such bluff finally pushed Polding’s friends and advisors into recommending submission to Rome’s wishes. Austin Sheehy was prevailed upon to relinquish the vicar generalship by the end of the first week of January 1874; or perhaps he willingly gave it up to save Polding the embarrassment of losing his long hoped-for coadjutor. That was not the end of the story, for Vaughan had to travel to Windsor on 9 January to ask Dean Patrick Hallinan to move to the Manly mission so that Sheehy could be given Windsor as a quiet country retreat after his retirement from diocesan administration. Polding finally appointed Vaughan on 13 January 1874 as sole vicar general and administrator with ‘absolute authority’ within the archdiocese, but on the understanding that this was Rome’s wish. Vaughan himself announced the appointment after Mass at St Mary’s Cathedral on Sunday 18 January.

It had taken Vaughan just over a month to wrest control of the diocese away from Polding and Sheehy; Vaughan was now fully in charge and immediately began making clerical appointments across the diocese to give force to his new administration. Although he reported in his next letter to Cardinal Barnabo that Polding had ultimately ‘begged’ him to take the offices of vicar general and administrator, Vaughan’s correspondence with his father indicates that a battle had been fought between the two archbishops and the young coadjutor had come out of the contest as the victor. From mid-January 1874, then, Vaughan threw himself into the work of being coadjutor archbishop, but he also tried to show Polding the reverence that was his due. A later commentator noted that Vaughan was in an invidious position during these troubled weeks:

If the old archbishop, in his 80th year, and at intervals of senile infirmity, may have been induced to hang on to an impossible state

---

27 SAA, U1521/1-8, Vaughan to Barnabo, 29 December 1873.
28 SAA, U1523/22-1(i), clipping from the Evening News, 24 November 1883.
29 Freeman’s Journal, 24 January 1874, p. 10.
30 SAA, U1523/19-9, Polding to Vaughan, 13 January 1874; U1523/19-11, Polding’s circular to the diocesan clergy, 13 January 1874; Freeman’s Journal, 24 January 1874, p. 9.
31 SAA, U1521/1-9, Vaughan to Barnabo, 12 February 1874.
of things, it became all the more incumbent on his coadjutor to save him and the archdiocese from the consequences ... Archbishop Vaughan ... did not only what was right, but what was absolutely required under the trying circumstances in which the archdiocese was then placed.\textsuperscript{32}

Vaughan was able to combine ‘the deepest veneration and respect for this veteran prelate with the most scrupulous performance of his own duty’ in the years that followed, despite his distaste at the parlous state of temporal administration and ‘ecclesiastical discipline’ that he found in the diocese.\textsuperscript{33} He reported to Cardinal Barnabo that Polding’s advanced age ‘has made him very indecisive and unpredictable, and to sum up, the archdiocese has been for a long time without an active and resolute head’.\textsuperscript{34} Vaughan was determined to be the active and resolute coadjutor archbishop that Sydney so badly needed.

Difficulties in his relationship with Polding, exacerbated by the old man’s worsening deafness and forgetfulness, were a mere irritation compared with the larger and more pressing problems which faced Vaughan in the administration of the archdiocese and the co-ordination of the metropolitan province.\textsuperscript{35} Vaughan’s appointment as coadjutor had not been arranged strictly according to the canons and an 1866 decree of Propaganda Fide, and this infuriated Polding’s Irish-born suffragan bishops in Brisbane, Bathurst, Goulburn and Maitland. They complained to Rome immediately but for their trouble received only a rebuke for having doubted the Holy See’s wisdom. They were told that Vaughan had been appointed as a special concession to the old patriarch of Sydney by Pius IX, and that it was absolutely necessary that the coadjutor should be an Englishman and a Benedictine. This was so that he would be able to reform the Sydney Benedictine Congregation which Polding had formed in the 1840s as the foundation of his dream for a great Benedictine abbey-diocese in the Australian mission field.\textsuperscript{36} This rebuke from Rome hardly mollified the irascible Irishmen on the provincial episcopal bench. They fumed and complained to the prefect of Propaganda

\textsuperscript{32} SAA, U1523/22-1(ii), letter to the editor of the Sydney \textit{Evening News} from A. M. Sullivan, 31 December 1883.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{34} SAA, U1521/1-9, Vaughan to Barnabo, 12 February 1874.

\textsuperscript{35} For Vaughan’s irritation with Polding see his letter to Dom Bernard Smith of 4 September 1874, ML 93/69, Cahill Papers, folder 10/10.

\textsuperscript{36} Bathurst Diocesan Archives (BDA), Quinn correspondence 1873, 1/73, Cardinal Barnabo to Matthew Quinn, 14 February 1873.
Fide, and when the opportunity finally arrived they demonstrated their disgust by pointedly failing to be in Sydney for Vaughan’s triumphal reception on the evening of his arrival.37

Vaughan was well aware of Polding’s difficulties with his suffragans – it was the talk of the Westminster provincial synod which Vaughan had attended in London during July and August 1873. The coadjutor realised that a frontal attack on the New South Wales suffragans would probably backfire; he cleverly decided that diplomacy would be a far more effective tactic. Consequently, from the moment he arrived in Sydney he did (and said) everything he could do to win over his brother bishops and play down the Anglo-Irish animosities which had for many years been such a public scandal in the Australian church. At his welcome in St Mary’s Cathedral he spoke ‘tenderly and beautifully’ of the faithfulness of the Irish people, and alluded to the ‘holy brotherhood’ which existed between the persecuted Catholics of Ireland and the persecuted Catholics in England, of which his family was so prominent an example.38 A few weeks later at the opening of St Patrick’s College in Goulburn he once again told a large assembly of Catholics that he was ‘a son of forefathers who in good and evil report stubbornly held the garment of the ancient catholic creed’. Just as in ancient days Irish bishops had been sent to all parts of Europe as missionaries, Vaughan insisted:

Now [it] is the turn for an Englishman to come amongst an episcopate which for the most part is composed of Irish Prelates, and to unite his little stock of knowledge with their large experience, and to join them, in the common faith, in order that, in the bonds of charity and religion, they may one and all seek and promote the true interests of genuine Catholicity in these colonies, and it is a joy to me to enter into such a fellowship.39

The Irish suffragans were impressed by his flattery as much as they were by Vaughan’s support of the ‘magnificent’ education policy ‘of the great Irish hierarchy’, and Bishop Murray of Maitland was quick to acknowledge their acceptance of Vaughan as Pius IX’s choice for Sydney:

We, the Irish Catholics of Australia, though inhabitants of the

37 For the action of the Irish bishops with regard to Propaganda and their rebuke from Cardinal Barnabo, see Dowd, *Rome in Australia*, pp. 414-20; BDA, Quinn correspondence 1873, 5/73, Barnabo to Quinn, 21 June 1873.

38 *Freeman’s Journal*, 20 December 1873, p. 9.

39 *Freeman’s Journal*, 7 February 1874, p. 10.
remotest part of the whole Catholic world, do not yield to any other
nation in our loyalty and fidelity to the See of Peter.\textsuperscript{40}

Moreover, the Irish bishops realised that Vaughan would not be an uncritical
supporter of the Benedictine mission model that Polding had tried to impose
upon the Australian mission.\textsuperscript{41} Vaughan confided ‘fully without reservations’
his opinions about the Sydney Benedictines to Bishop Matthew Quinn of
Bathurst so that these views could be conveyed to Rome by Quinn during
his \textit{ad limina} visit in 1874-75.\textsuperscript{42} Small but important gestures such as these
reassured the Irish suffragans that they had perhaps found an unexpected
ally in the person of Polding’s coadjutor.

Reporting to Cardinal Barnabo after his visit to Goulburn, Vaughan
announced that he had won the co-operation of the suffragans ‘for the glory
of God and the progress of the Church’, but he also made a remark which
reveals much about his attitude to these bishops and the Irish in general:

\begin{quote}
Being Irish, they are more swayed by the emotions than by the
cold principle of truth, and so, having proclaimed against me
vociferously before meeting me, now that they have seen me, they
are proclaiming just as much in my favour.\textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}

Vaughan already had some experience of the Irish before he came out to
Australia; many of his students at Belmont Priory had Irish parentage, and
he had also given retreats at convents which had Irish members. No doubt he
had the same stereotypical attitudes towards the Irish that were usual among
aristocratic Englishmen of the day, but he seems to have understood how
to deal with them effectively in the highly charged national environment of
colonial New South Wales. There was, perhaps, an element of overkill in
his approach to neutralising the Irish suffragans through pandering to their
national pride, for after he succeeded Polding in 1877 he admitted to his
agent in Rome that ‘I have written, spoken, and published more in favour
of the Irish people than all the Irish Bishops in Australia put together … I
have done more to make them respected and to improve their condition in
the mixed community in which we live than those “episcopi” who, after my
consecration, protested against my appointment.’\textsuperscript{44}

Vaughan kept up the charm offensive in the months that followed his

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{41} Cahill, ‘Archbishop Vaughan and St John’s College’, pp. 39-40; Dowd, \textit{Rome In
Australia}, p. 422.
\textsuperscript{42} SAA, U1521/1-11, Vaughan to Franchi, 8 July 1874.
\textsuperscript{43} SAA, U1521/1-9, Vaughan to Barnabo, 12 February 1874.
\textsuperscript{44} ML 93/69, Cahill Papers, folder 10/10; Vaughan to Smith, 3 August 1877.
triumph with the Irish bishops in Goulburn. At the opening of the church of
the Guardian Angels at Burragorang he re-affirmed that:

Thus we are Catholics first; and in our Catholicity, our human
patriotism, be we English, Irish, or Scotch or German, finds a
harmony and spirituality which prevents discord, and in fact teaches
us to live in peace and brotherhood together.45

His greatest public relations triumph in these early months in Sydney was
a sermon preached at St Patrick’s, Church Hill, on St Patrick’s Day 1874.
The previously non-committal Catholic newspaper, the Freeman’s Journal,
lauded Vaughan for a sermon on St Patrick which ‘kept the immense
congregation spell-bound’ for over an hour on ‘a theme which is supposed
to require an Irishman of the truest type to do it justice’. On this occasion,
the editorial declared:

… we can state that the truest Irish ecclesiastic could not handle
it with more heartfelt devotion and love, than did his Grace the
Archbishop of Nazianzus … The sermon might be said to be a most
perfect proof that he possessed himself, in a very high degree, the
warmth of heart, the fertility of imagination, the generosity of spirit,
the enlightened breadth of view, the elevated humanity, and the
vividness, strength, and intensity of faith which he attributed to the
people evangelized by St Patrick.46

This was high praise indeed coming from the newspaper which had
championed the Irish Catholic community in New South Wales, and had
often been at odds with Polding’s policies in recent years.

Vaughan’s sermons were to become the stuff of legend over the next
nine years. They were almost always long and florid, but delivered with
an expressiveness and eloquence which made his congregations come back
thirsty for more – very different from his successor, Cardinal Moran, who
preached in a dry, intellectual and unemotive way. Vaughan was constantly
called upon to give ‘charity sermons’ at the openings of churches, schools,
convents and presbyteries, for his listeners invariably opened their pockets
with great liberality during the collection taken up at the end of such
occasions. These sermons were described in glowing terms by the Freeman’s
Journal: ‘another powerful sermon’, ‘a brilliant and argumentative sermon’,
‘a soul-stirring sermon’, a ‘lengthened and powerful discourse’, ‘a very

45  Freeman’s Journal, 21 February 1874, p. 10.
46  Ibid., 21 March 1874, p. 9.
impressive sermon’. The first of these sermons took place at St Mary’s Pro-
cathedral on 10 January 1874, a fund-raiser for the women’s asylum work of
the Good Samaritans at which there was standing room only. Perhaps the
most important thing about these sermons was that they allowed the people
of the diocese to see and hear him. He traveled extensively during his first
year in Australia, visiting nearly every part of his own enormous diocese,
as well as making well-received visits to Goulburn, Brisbane, Maitland and
Bathurst. He was a great success on these public occasions, and people
came to love him remarkably quickly considering his natural studiousness,
timidity and aloofness.

Vaughan also appears to have been quite successful acting as a mediator
in a long simmering border dispute between two of the Irish suffragans,
Bishop Murray of Maitland and Bishop O’Mahony of Armidale. When
visiting Rome for the First Vatican Council in 1869-70, O’Mahony had
complained to Propaganda that the town of Tamworth was within his diocese
but had been administered by Murray for some years. Murray insisted that
the boundary of his diocese extended twenty miles to the north of Tamworth
and that the dispute should be settled by a decree of Propaganda. Vaughan
and Bishop Lanigan of Goulburn were eventually able to settle the dispute
in Murray’s favour. By the middle of 1874 he was telling his agent in
Rome that ‘I am getting on very well with Bishops, priests, and people’ and
assured him that he did not anticipate any ‘unpleasantness’ from the Irish
suffragans whom he considered to be ‘zealous and earnest men’. Later
in 1874 he was again boasting to Bernard Smith that his relations with
the Irish suffragans were ‘first class’, and that he found them to be ‘good,
earnest, zealous men’. Events later in the year would test this happy set of
relationships when Bishop Timothy O’Mahony of Armidale was accused of
illicit relations with one of his parishioners.

The real proof of Vaughan’s competence as coadjutor archbishop is to be
found in his other less public work, for winning over the suffragan bishops

47 Ibid., 30 August 1874, 11 April 1874, 13 September 1874, 12 April 1874, 28 July 1874.
48 Ibid., 17 January 1874, p. 10.
49 SAA, U1521/6-2, O’Mahony to Vaughan, 8 July 1874; U1521/6-4, Polding to
O’Mahony, 23 May 1873.
50 SAA, U1521/6-1, statement by Bishop Murray, 3 June 1874; U1521/6-6, Murray to
Vaughan, 22 July 1874.
51 SAA, U1521/6-7, Lanigan to Vaughan, 29 August 1874.
52 ML 93/69, Cahill Papers, folder 10/10, Vaughan to Bernard Smith, 8 May 1874.
53 Ibid., Vaughan to Smith, 4 September 1874.
was just one of the many tasks he had been given by the Roman authorities. Indeed, in order to prepare himself for the pastoral and administrative duties that awaited him in Sydney, Vaughan had delayed his departure from England so that he could meet with several of the English bishops and learn more about how they administered their dioceses: ‘The most intelligent of our bishops are most willing to give me all the information in their power, and hence my time will not be thrown away’.

He also attended the Westminster Provincial Council in the summer of 1873 to learn how a meeting of provincial bishops should be conducted before traveling to Rome to reacquaint himself with old friends and receive his instructions from Pope Pius IX and Cardinal Barnabo at Propaganda Fide. The challenges awaiting him in Sydney were numerous. First there was the problem of clerical indiscipline, especially among Sydney’s Benedictine community. He kept a close eye on the Benedictines from his first week in Australia when he attended the examination day at St Mary’s College, Lyndhurst, the colony’s premier Catholic school. He also took a great interest in the secular priests of the diocese, and gave his first retreat to them in the first week of August 1874. Vaughan was a very experienced retreat-giver, and this Lyndhurst retreat was to be a vintage performance, although it seems to have gone completely unreported in the local Catholic press. There were four ‘meditations’ given by Vaughan on each of the three days of the retreat, beginning with priestly obligations, missionary obligations, and obstacles to their proper performance on Tuesday; warming up to mortal sin, ‘wine, women and money’, venial sin, and ‘uncharitable use of the tongue’ on the Wednesday; and concluding with the personal love of Christ, the sacrifice of the Mass, generosity, and the determination to give oneself wholly to God on the Thursday.

The diocesan clergy must have wondered what had hit them, for in the three days of his first annual retreat, the coadjutor had addressed all the disciplinary problems which he had noticed among the Sydney priests and had made it clear that these lapses would not be tolerated in future.

Vaughan also used the retreat as a forum for finalising arrangements for the diocesan finances. This issue had been discussed in Melbourne at the provincial synod of 1869, but Rome insisted that the decrees of this meeting

54 Ibid., Vaughan to Bernard Smith, 25 March 1873. The identity of these English bishops is not known, but perhaps included his brother Herbert Vaughan, bishop of Salford, and William Bernard Ullathorne, bishop of Birmingham and formerly Polding’s vicar general in the 1830s.

55 SAA, U1523/18-1, Vaughan’s retreat notes, pp. 138-39.
had to be approved in diocesan synods. Vaughan had been horrified upon taking up the administration of the diocese to discover a debt of £5,000, including a liquor bill of no less than £600 for St Mary’s presbytery in 1873.\[^{56}\] He took immediate steps to improve the day-to-day finances at St Mary’s and these were largely successful even though the accounts were still in the red when he succeeded as archbishop in 1877.\[^{57}\] A more pressing problem was the upkeep of not just one archbishop, but two. A preliminary agreement had been reached at the provincial synod of 1873 by which each mission would be taxed at 6 per cent of its annual income in order to provide no less than £1,500 per annum for the sustenance of the archbishop and his coadjutor.\[^{58}\] This plan, which took effect on 1 January 1874, does not appear to have been successful. The amount raised from this diocesan tax in the first six months of 1874 was only £594. 19s. 8d., well below the expected £750.\[^{59}\] Moreover, a special collection taken to welcome Archbishop Vaughan raised a paltry £623 (half from the clergy and half from the laity), but this covered only half of the expenses incurred in preparing Eveleigh House as an archiepiscopal residence for the coadjutor, leaving Vaughan with a personal debt of £600. Another appeal was launched by the clergy in May 1874, perhaps in an attempt to forestall a revision of the diocesan taxation, but this too was something of a failure.\[^{60}\]

At the end of the annual retreat, therefore, it was decided to allow the diocesan clergy to discuss these financial problems over two days under the chairmanship of Fr Anselm Gillett, Vaughan’s private secretary, in order to decide upon a new scale of diocesan taxation. Vaughan wanted his priests to have ‘the freest and fullest discussion’ of the situation before reaching a decision, but he probably did not expect to achieve the amazing coup of each priest agreeing to reveal his annual income so that a more precise scale could be determined to provide the Archbishops’ Sustentation Fund with the required £1,500 per annum. In return, Vaughan was generous, making this bitter financial pill of extra taxation a little easier for the priests to swallow by giving up the annual surcharge that was due to him from the

\[^{56}\] SAA, U1521/1-9, Vaughan to Barnabo, 12 February 1874.

\[^{57}\] SAA, P3, Archbishop Vaughan and the Lyndhurst Estate 1875-1883, 2-6. The debt on the St Mary’s account had been reduced to £1,719. 9s. 3d. by 31 July 1874.

\[^{58}\] SAA, U1629/2, notice to priests of the diocese from S. J. A. Sheehy, vicar general, 23 December 1873.

\[^{59}\] SAA, Account Book 87, Sustentation Fund, 1874-1896.

\[^{60}\] SAA, U1523/21-2, 16 September 1874, Vaughan’s father wrote to him saying that the Sydney Catholics ‘must support the dignity of the office & the expenses of administration – & should be told so’.
vicar general’s office. He also proposed that a separate annual collection should be held for the Mission Fund (for the training of priests) rather than the traditional tax on mission income. The proposal that was finally agreed after two days of discussion was based on a sliding scale of taxation calculated according to the agreed income of each parish. At a stroke, therefore, Vaughan engineered the re-establishment of the Archbishops’ Sustentation Fund on sounder financial footings and ensured that the parish clergy would play their part in sustaining the two archbishops, an achievement for which his successors would be profoundly grateful. The Sustentation Fund received income of £1,529 in 1875, £1,588 in 1876, and £1,611 in 1877.

Much else needed to be done in Vaughan’s remaining time as coadjutor. He famously arranged his own election as rector of St John’s College at the University of Sydney in July 1874 so that he could use the college as his stronghold in the fight for Catholic education. The *Freeman’s Journal* welcomed his election ‘with joy’ as a good omen for the education of future leaders among the Catholic population of Australia:

Archbishop Vaughan is a scholar, not merely of local but of European reputation, and of reputation in those precise branches of learning which are most requisite in the head of a great centre of Catholic education in these days … the worth of such a man as Dr Vaughan cannot easily be over-estimated.

Vaughan was in many respects the second founder of the college at a precarious moment in its history when the buildings remained unfinished and the rooms were empty of students, so it was the coadjutor who finally achieved Polding’s fondest wish of making St John’s the jewel in the crown of Catholic education in New South Wales. The relationship between Polding as founder of St John’s and Vaughan as rector is one that has already been

---

61 SAA, U1629/5, Minutes of the Clergy Conference of 6-7 August 1874. The rate started at 5% for missions with income of less than £300 per annum, up to 20% for missions with income of £1000 or more per annum.
62 SAA, Account Book 87, Sustentation Fund, 1874-1896.
64 *Freeman’s Journal*, 25 July 1874, p. 8.
partly explored by the late Tony Cahill. There can be no doubt that this was one area of diocesan policy in which the old archbishop and his successor were of one mind. So too was Vaughan’s campaign for Catholic education, which began the day he arrived in Sydney and continued during his early visitations around and outside the diocese, as has been demonstrated in his rapturous reception at Goulburn in February 1874. But it would be the later years of his episcopate, after he had succeeded Polding in 1877, when he would expend more significant amounts of his time and energy in fighting for the cause of Catholic education and attracting religious orders into the diocese to take up teaching duties in the Catholic schools.

The other great work for which Vaughan is chiefly remembered was the completion of the first stage of St Mary’s Cathedral in 1882. Although it has traditionally been the final stages of this project after 1878 with which Vaughan’s name has been connected, especially with regard to his personal fundraising activities through writing more than 2,500 begging letters between 1880 and 1882, his work on the fundraising campaign for the cathedral was actually taken up very soon after his arrival. At his welcome reception in the temporary timber pro-cathedral on 16 December 1873, Vaughan praised the Catholics of Sydney for their determination to erect a ‘magnificent cathedral’ that would proclaim to future generations the firm faith of their generation. Vaughan recognised the potent symbolic value of completing this vast Gothic-revival pile of masonry before other projects began to tax the pockets of the laity, especially the looming educational needs of Catholics in an age of secularisation of state education. Unfortunately, it took him only a matter of days to realise that the renewed fund-raising campaign initiated by Polding earlier that year had stalled, with only £3,000 raised in seven months. By this time, the massive foundations of St Mary’s had been laid to a depth of eighteen feet and exterior walls had been completed up to a height of twenty-three feet, but the whole project was falling into serious debt. The initial zeal of Sydney’s Catholic population

66 Cahill, ‘Archbishop Vaughan and St John’s College’, pp. 36-47.
that had been so evident in the mid-1860s when the old St Mary’s burned down had now subsided, and it was very difficult to raise funds for ongoing construction work. Vaughan therefore determined to take the lead in the fund-raising activities of the building committee, but he was faced with a daunting task in attempting to raise the £13,000 required for the next stage of work when so many parish churches, schools, convents and presbyteries were being built throughout the archdiocese at the same time.  

Vaughan started his campaign only a week after his arrival in the colony by addressing the weekly meeting of the St Mary’s building committee on 21 December 1873. He noted the beauty, vastness and grandeur of the cathedral’s design, praised the faith of the men and women whose contributions were making the work possible, and pledged himself ‘to be spent in labouring’ on the project, working hand in hand with the Catholics of Sydney until the cathedral was finally completed. For the next four years he regularly attended the building committee meetings every first Sunday of the month, speaking encouragingly and sometimes at great length to cajole his flock into greater generosity with their ‘shillings and pence’. He raised money for the project in the outlying districts when he was on visitation, and when donations did not come in quickly enough he was instrumental in releasing Fr Patrick Mahony from other duties so that he could undertake a very successful campaign of fund-raising activities in the country stations of the archdiocese. Nevertheless, fundraising fatigue again set in and by the end of 1876 it was clear that a different approach was needed. In 1877, as Polding lay dying, he proposed a new scheme which he hoped would raise £8,000 per annum. By the middle of 1877 he was able to speak of having had an ‘earnest hand in this endeavour’ over the previous four years, and was delighted that the building fund’s bank balance was standing at a healthy £2,045. This allowed a new building contract worth £21,390 to be signed soon after he succeeded Polding in March 1877. By this time the walls of St Mary’s had risen to a height of thirty-nine feet above the foundations and included all the main arches and piers of the nave, choir, transepts and lady chapel at a total cost of £53,540; the newly contracted masonry work would further raise the walls to the triforium level and complete the walls and parapets of the aisles. While Vaughan’s final triumph would not come until 1882 when the first section of the cathedral was opened for worship, it

71 Freeman’s Journal, 1 June 1878, p. 15.
72 Ibid., 27 December 1873, p. 10.
73 Ibid., 1 June 1878, p. 14.
74 Ibid., 29 September 1877, p. 13. The amount raised in 1876-77 was £7,898.
was during his years as coadjutor that the building work advanced to a stage that allowed for a frenzy of fund-raising and building activity between 1877 and 1882.

More important to Vaughan than bricks and mortar was the spiritual renewal of the diocese that he put in train in early 1874. A significant part of this work was Vaughan’s careful and fatherly guidance of the religious communities under his jurisdiction. Perhaps the most pressing issue to resolve was the future of Polding’s community of Benedictine monks at Lyndhurst College, the small remnant of the failed attempt to erect an abbey-diocese in Australia. After speaking with all twelve monks in the two months after his arrival in Sydney, Vaughan concluded that ‘I have little hope of reforming them … from what I have seen and heard others say, it appears that it would be morally impossible to restore the order with the corrupt elements within it’. Nevertheless, he decided to await a formal visitation of Lyndhurst before he made a final decision on the fate of the congregation. Perhaps out of uncertainty over Rome’s expectations after Cardinal Franchi expressed his hope that Vaughan would ‘in your own good time, know how to revitalize the Institute … of your Holy Patriarch’, but more probably out of reverence for the ailing Polding, Vaughan decided to bide his time and did not suppress the Sydney Benedictines until after Polding’s death in 1877. In the meantime, he seems to have maintained good relations with his Benedictine confreres at Glebe.

In addition to the Benedictine monks, there were also a number of other religious orders in the diocese whose discipline had been questioned in Rome. Polding’s benign neglect of the two orders of Benedictine women that he had founded – the active Good Samaritans and the enclosed nuns at Subiaco – were of special interest to Vaughan who had become an experienced retreat-giver to Benedictine nuns in England. He was equally concerned with the teaching and nursing orders in the diocese, but there were so many other tasks to attend to in his first months in Sydney that he found it difficult to spare time for the lengthy visitations of religious houses that were the norm at that time. Even though he made informal visits to several of the houses in his first year as coadjutor, it was not until December

75 SAA, U1521/1-9, Vaughan to Barnabo, 12 February 1874.
76 SAA, U1521/1-11, Franchi to Vaughan, 2 May 1874.
78 See his retreat notes in SAA, U1523/18-1, pp. 34-37, 98-99, 153-54, & 156.
1874 that he conducted his first formal visitation. On 8 December he visited the Marist Brothers at St Patrick’s parish in the city; on 4, 5 and 8 January 1875 he conducted the first of a number of difficult visitations of the Good Samaritans in their Pitt Street convent; on 19 May it was the turn of the Sisters of Mercy at St Patrick’s; on 13 September the enclosed Benedictine convent at Subiaco, near Parramatta; and finally on 24 June 1876 the Sisters of Charity at St Vincent’s.79 At each visitation Vaughan took great care in examining each religious and issuing injunctions for the better management, both spiritual and temporal, of the religious houses under his jurisdiction.

The most difficult of the visitations was undoubtedly his second attempt at resolving the difficulties within the Good Samaritan order in July 1876. Over several days he interviewed virtually every sister in the large community and heard serious charges laid against the foundress, Mother Scholastica Gibbons, and the other superiors. Vaughan’s detailed notes run to seventeen pages and conclude with a brief record of his interview with Mother Scholastica, who had decided to resign. He appointed a new superior and encouraged the sisters to reform their deficiencies before his next visitation, but he seems to have treated the humiliated foundress with great courtesy and concern.80 Vaughan seems to have been a firm but kind father to his religious, especially those with an active apostolate. He realised, perhaps, that these men and women would be required in the front lines for the educational battles which he anticipated fighting in the future. He was therefore keen to establish regular discipline and proper formation in each of the religious institutes under his supervision. In general, he seems to have made wise recommendations for improvements. He strongly supported the establishment of a Marist brothers’ novitiate at Hunters Hill, and arranged for the superior of the Benedictine monastery at Subiaco to travel to Europe to gain experience of monastic observances there.81 Even the troubled Good Samaritans reformed themselves and, with new superiors hand-picked by Vaughan, the order went from strength to strength in the years that followed. Vaughan is still fondly remembered as a great

79 SAA, U1522/9, including Vaughan’s formal visitation register and a bundle of materials relating to the first visitation of the Good Samaritans.
80 Ibid., Mother Mary Magdalen Adamson was appointed as the new superior, while Mother Scholastica decided to retire to Tasmania; see also Margaret Walsh, The Good Sams: Sisters of the Good Samaritan, 1857-1969 (Melbourne: John Garratt, 2001), pp. 78-80, 141.
supporter of the order by the current members of the congregation, and was much missed after the appointment of Patrick Moran as archbishop.\textsuperscript{82} All the religious orders of the diocese thrived during Vaughan’s episcopate – not surprising, perhaps, under the leadership of a man who had himself been a monastic superior for ten years.

It would be wrong to paint too rosy a picture of Vaughan’s three and a half years in Sydney as coadjutor to Archbishop Polding, for he faced a number of very serious trials which culminated in the scandal over Bishop Timothy O’Mahony of Armidale. Vaughan, in this instance, proved himself to be rather imprudent and far too trusting of unreliable priests in his investigation of O’Mahony’s case, so his relations with the Irish suffragans, which seemed to hold such promise in 1874, were irretrievably soured from the middle of 1875. Relations between him and the two Quinn brothers were particularly poisonous, and this would prove even more divisive for the province after Vaughan had succeeded Polding in 1877. Yet, it has to be admitted that the final decision from Rome in 1878 regarding Bishop O’Mahony was a strong reassertion of Vaughan’s authority as the new metropolitan.\textsuperscript{83} Vaughan’s favour in Rome after the O’Mahony affair was amply demonstrated with the appointment of Italian bishops in Armidale and Rockhampton: Vaughan had known Elzear Torreggiani on the mission in Wales before he came to Sydney and his personal preference for Torreggiani to occupy the see of Armidale was supported by Propaganda against the Irish nominees who had been placed on the \textit{terna} by the bishops of the Sydney province.\textsuperscript{84} From this time there was an almost total collapse of support in Rome for the Irish suffragans and Vaughan continued in high favour at Propaganda Fide for the remainder of his time as archbishop and metropolitan.

Vaughan’s pastoral and leadership activities in the Sydney archdiocese during his time as coadjutor to Polding were therefore multifarious and highly demanding, serving as a good introduction to the even greater responsibilities which he was to face in the late 1870s once he had succeeded to the metropolitan see. These years of coadjutorship provided him with ample opportunity to ruminate on both his future role within the

\textsuperscript{82} Vaughan’s pontificate was considered to be a time of episcopal benevolence compared with the ‘challenging’ years under his successor, Cardinal Moran, see Walsh, \textit{The Good Sams}, p. 51.

\textsuperscript{83} The whole sorry story of Bishop O’Mahony is told in great detail by Dowd, \textit{Rome in Australia}, pp. 431-79, especially p. 472-74.

\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 467-70.
Australian church and, perhaps more importantly, the means by which the Sydney province could best fulfill its role within the Universal Church. These were therefore years in which he was able to formulate what might be called a distinctive ‘theology of church’. This was a theology that was both appropriate for its time in the context of colonial Australia, but was also a theology whose broad outlines Vaughan was able to explain to his future subjects in language which they all understood. A month before Polding’s death in 1877, while addressing a gathering of young men who had presented him with a splendid gold crozier, Vaughan used the occasion to share with the people of Sydney the ideas which he had developed over the previous three years regarding what he understood to be his duty as a colonial bishop:

He teaches his people the full doctrine of God … He exhorts them, he rebukes, he chastises with all firmness, gentleness and love. He … warns them of dangers, condemns and puts his foot down upon error, and takes little heed of the clap of many tongues. He has his work to do, his message to deliver, his truth to shape and to proclaim, and his mind is so much absorbed with this responsibility, that he scarcely notices the din of condemnation and the passing cyclone of abuse, which … proclaims to him the fact … that he has not only launched his [arrow] shaft, but that the monster has been pinned in his den by the messenger of truth.85

According to Vaughan, such tasks could only be performed by a man of special qualities: he must be learned, ‘possessed of the whole mind of the Church as expressed in the writings of her greatest Doctors and her most celebrated Bishops, Councils and Popes’; he must be ‘a man of sterling virtue, sober, chaste, modest, a spring of perennial charity tempered with loftiest courage’; he must be wise in the sense that ‘the fundamental principles of religious and moral life should be as it were a portion of the very texture of his mind’; but he must also have ‘a large generosity for others, and never feel the slightest bitterness because others are harsh or unfair in his regard’.86 These were very high expectations for a colonial bishop, and the young men in his audience on that occasion must have wondered whether any of the bishops in New South Wales were capable of aspiring to such lofty aims.

86  Ibid., pp. 326-7.
Clearly, though, Vaughan saw the bishop’s role as being the very foundation and central pillar of the colonial church. If Vaughan’s ideal colonial bishop seemed to be a paragon of virtues beyond the ordinary run of late-nineteenth-century churchmen, his vision of the Australian church was no less idealised. From the moment he set foot in Sydney he had been at pains to emphasise the subjection of the entire Australian church to the universal authority of the Holy See. This notion was certainly not something new that he developed in Sydney, but the volatile national situation within the Australian church certainly helped him to refine his ideas on the essential unity of the Catholic Church which he had previously expressed in sermons at Hereford and Liverpool before departing for Australia.\(^87\) His proud boast that ‘You may call me an Englishman … but I am a Catholic first’ was taken up and developed in numerous addresses in 1874 and 1875, and by the time of his succession in 1877 it had become something of a mantra in urging Catholic unity under the sovereignty of the Holy See, no matter what persecution the secular state might perpetrate against the faithful. At various times during his coadjutorship he urged the Catholics of New South Wales that only the church could arrest the ‘advancing darkness’ of materialism which he saw afflicting modern society. At the opening of the Australian Holy Catholic Guild’s hall in October 1876 he warned his audience in one of the most controversial addresses he ever delivered as coadjutor that the materialism of the modern world aimed at the total annihilation of Catholicism, whether by means of the revolutionary ideas of socialism and communism, masonic societies or ‘Universal Secular, Free and Compulsory Education for all classes of Society’.\(^88\) He insisted that the Catholic church was the only ‘impregnable Stronghold of immovable dogma and unchangeable morality’ that guarded humanity against ‘the wide quagmire of level Materialism, on the bitter ocean of heaving unbelief’.\(^89\) He described the Catholic church as ‘the Heart of the Supernatural’ in the world:

… beyond comparison in its tough strength, in its dynamic power, in its colossal size, in its adaptation to the gigantic work placed for it to do, superior to every other … the mainspring of the Supernatural,

\(^87\) *The Freeman’s Journal* reported on these sermons on 27 September 1873, p. 5, and 25 October 1873, p.3.


\(^89\) Vaughan, *Hidden Springs*, pp. 19, 23.
the chief antagonist, the Leader, against which the foul monsters of the future will have to throw themselves, if they would overrun, and ravage this fair world which God has given us, and darken the heavens with their poisonous breath’. 

Vaughan advanced this conception of the church even further in his first pastoral letter, *Pius IX and the Revolution*, published soon after he succeeded Archbishop Polding in 1877. The pastoral was a robust defence of universal papal sovereignty against secular power. In it he drew the attention of the Catholics of New South Wales to the plight of Pope Pius IX and the church in Italy, comparing the pontiff to ‘a perpendicular rock of granite’ withstanding the attacks of revolution, libertinism and infidelity. 

Vaughan stressed that the bishops of the universal church owed ‘implicit obedience’ to the Pope’s ‘spiritual sovereignty’: ‘they follow his lead, and shape their policy according to his example’ and ‘In his formal teachings as Universal Pastor in questions of Faith and Morals he cannot lead astray’. 

A few years later during the education campaign he would call on all Australian Catholics to recognise and submit to the authority of Rome: ‘The spiritual empire, of which we are soldiers, by its very history, stirs up the fires of charity and zeal in our hearts. Ours is one of the very few causes in the world worth living for, and dying for, too’. He insisted that Australian Catholics had to ‘stand firm on the adamantine rock of the Catholic faith’. 

‘If we take the Papal Chair as a centre, and cast our eyes around the world, we shall find that the Catholic Church is engaging in almost every country in a heavy conflict with her enemies.’ ‘Let us, then, often meditate … on the great Spiritual Empire to which we belong; encourage in our minds a profound sense of thankfulness that we are members of so glorious a society; and think of how we can do our part towards strengthening its hold and perpetuating its power in this land of our adoption.’

This was a message that Vaughan’s suffragans, the Cullenite Irish-born bishops of his province, had no difficulty in endorsing, but none of them ever managed to express the notion quite so eloquently or forcefully as

---

90 Ibid., p. 27
92 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
93 O’Farrell, *Catholic Church and Community*, p. 189.
94 Ibid., p. 190.
95 Ibid., p. 192.
Vaughan himself. Matthew Quinn of Bathurst, for example, an opponent of Vaughan in so many other ways, was a staunch supporter of this ultramontanist policy, declaring that the suffragans in New South Wales were all ‘true sons of Rome’. In promoting this notion of church unity as the core of his ‘church theology’ for colonial Australia, Vaughan was able to bring the bishops together in a strong bond of shared past experience (most of them had been educated in Rome) wedded with an imagined future crusade, especially over the matter of education. In this sense the serious day-to-day problems of inter-human relations between the metropolitan and his suffragans as individuals did not ultimately matter: the most important thing was that they should remain united together in this one essential principle of institutional cohesion. What is all the more remarkable is that Vaughan was able to inspire such an unshakable commitment from his suffragans. Compared with the problems that had plagued their mentor, Cardinal Cullen, in his attempts to rein in the gallican-leaning bishops of Ireland from the 1850s, Vaughan’s achievement in New South Wales was truly extraordinary. The foundations of this achievement were laid during the short period of his coadjutorship, when he had to tread a dangerous line between his obedience to Polding’s wishes as ordinary, the mission which had been entrusted to him by Rome, and his own aspirations for the spiritual renewal of the Sydney archdiocese.

It has recently been suggested of Archbishop Ullathorne of Birmingham, one of Vaughan’s exemplars of episcopal authority and efficiency, and his brother bishops in England in the second half of the nineteenth century, that they were engaged after 1850 in ‘developing a style, a theology and a spirituality of European Ultramontanism for the Catholic Church in England’ which ‘has rarely been examined closely’. We cannot say the same of the ultramontanism of the Australian Catholic church in the same period, for this has been one of the major focuses of interest for church historians in Australia over the last fifty years. Archbishop Vaughan’s role in creating this ultramontane style, theology and spirituality in Australia has also been widely discussed by historians, but almost always with regard to

96 Ibid., p. 213.
the education issue of the late 1870s and early 1880s once he had succeeded Polding as archbishop of Sydney. Seldom, however, do we hear anything about Vaughan’s activities as coadjutor to Polding between 1873 and 1877. This is unfortunate, for it was in this brief period of relative calm before the storm that Vaughan formulated the policies which would ultimately be implemented with such magnificent effect after 1877.
INTRODUCTION

Kapunda was once a prosperous copper mining town located a short distance from the Barossa Valley and 75km north of Adelaide in South Australia. These days the built landscape and historical narratives stand as tributes to the town’s founders: wealthy British and Anglo-Irish landowners and Cornish miners. But these were not the only groups who played a significant role in Kapunda’s past. The emigrant population also included substantial numbers of post-Famine Irish Catholics, many of whom were employed as mine labourers. Nevertheless, Irish Catholic Kapunda is invisible. There are no obvious commemorations to one of the first Catholic churches built in South Australia, St John the Evangelist (St John’s), to the unique Irish settlement once home to hundreds at Baker’s Flat or to the work of Mary MacKillop in the town. St John’s was established in 1850 about three miles (5km) from Kapunda and was once a church and presbytery at the centre of a large, thriving Catholic parish. The buildings were later repurposed for use as a school and a Catholic girls’ reformatory run by the Sisters of St Joseph. Today, nothing remains of the St John’s site except a palm tree planted in the 1890s. Further, the Irish Catholics of Kapunda are remembered in pejorative ways, for example, St John’s suffers from the infamy of being one of Australia’s ‘most haunted’ sites. There are many stories, such as the tale of Ruby Bland, a young girl who was allegedly an inmate of the reformatory in 1909. As the story goes, after being raped by the reformatory’s resident priest, Ruby became pregnant, and, not wanting the scandal to leak, the deranged priest attempted to give her an abortion but murdered her accidentally in the process. Her ghost is said to linger in the graveyard still—the pale figure of a young girl, looking for her baby, her footsteps echoing across the lonely plains at night. Despite the fact Ruby Bland was never at the St John’s reformatory, such stories have led to anti-Catholic sentiment, the demolition of the remaining buildings at the site in 2002, unrelenting vandalism and desecration of graves, and even ghost tourism, which are perpetuating local urban myths. This paper explores the history of St John’s and aims to chronicle the significant aspects of Irish Catholic Kapunda.

*Cherrie De Leiuen is currently completing her Ph.D in Archaeology at Flinders University. This article is refereed.*
the site, which are unknown to many. It also summarises results from archaeological research that focused on the reformatory phase of its use and can help provide further insight into the reality of life at St John’s.

**St John’s: 1845-1897**

Bishop Francis Murphy arrived in South Australia in 1845, and almost immediately thereafter, he and Father Michael Ryan visited the Kapunda and Mid-North areas locating early settler Catholics and Catholic families of German, Austrian, Polish and Irish descent. Ryan then made frequent trips back to Kapunda to celebrate mass and Confirmation to the ever-increasing numbers of Irish Catholics who were arriving in the district to work in the copper mines. Perceiving the need for a priest to be located in the area, Murphy sent John Fallon, ordained into priesthood in July 1849, to Kapunda in January 1950. Fallon selected land in the locale of Catholic farmers on which a church, school and cemetery could be constructed and accessed by this diffused community. The first church, a wooden slab hut, also served as a presbytery, and was built and funded by local Catholic farmers on the site in 1850. Named the Church of St. John the Evangelist, the church also gave its name to the surrounding area, Johnstown. Located in section 1451 in the Hundred of Belvidere, St John’s became the headquarters of the Light Mission of the South Australian Catholic Church serving an area from Gawler and Marrabel to Port Wakefield and the Barossa.

The colonial government under the State Aid to Religion Act granted this area as ten hectares of glebe land for the parish in 1851. On 2 April 1850 the foundation stone for a more substantive church had been laid, however the construction of a permanent church and presbytery was only completed in 1854, the delay said to be due to labour shortages after local men went to Ballarat to mine for gold. The architect of the church was Walter Hunter who died in 1851, and the builder a Peter Dunne. The buildings were constructed of sandstone and sheoak with brick quoining and detailing on bluestone plinth and footings. The £95 raised at the church’s first collection paid for the plastered walls and glazed windows, and behind the altar were three stained glass windows featuring St John The Evangelist and Easter lilies.

Parishioners of St John’s are said to have numbered at times in the hundreds, and was at the centre of one of the largest Catholic communities in rural Australia. Parish records collated by Peter Swann indicate in the ten years Fallon was at St John’s, he performed 167 weddings and 755 baptisms, demonstrating the significance of the site at the time. The presbytery on
the site was the residence of Fallon and successive priests until 1866. The original cemetery was located at the top of the site, on the northern side of the church. Parish records indicate there were approximately 110 burials there, mostly of children, and the current cemetery was established further away in 1861. After Fallon’s death the second priest to reside at St John’s was Father Michael Ryan who, as early as 1862 renovated and enlarged the presbytery. Newspaper articles indicate from 1867 there was a general store and post office located directly across the road from the church, known as Haime’s Store, where mail and news were distributed to the Irish community after mass on Sundays, and was where Irish school books, whiskey and assorted goods could be purchased.

St John’s is situated approximately five kilometres south east of Kapunda. The River Light flows in between it and the town, and on numerous occasions in the past when the river flooded it was completely isolated. The distance of St John’s from the main township and its vicinity to the River Light made access difficult, particularly for the parishioners living on the settlement known as Baker’s Flat. Thus a new Catholic church, St Rose of Lima, was built in Kapunda in 1863 and parishioners attended this church.

Figure 1: Interior of St John’s church, Kapunda, circa 1909.
Picture by Sidney Albert Boriston Oats (1874-1936), photographer, Kapunda.
Photo from SA Catholic Archives.
in preference, and by 1866 priests had ceased living at the St John’s presbytery. It is not documented when regular services ceased in the immediate period after the move to St Rose’s. However, the site was still used as a school in 1867 when Patrick Thomas Russell and Julian Tenison Woods became its trustees. The original slab hut was left on the site and was run as a school for about 25 children by a Mrs Moore until 1869 when the Sisters of St. Joseph commenced operating Catholic schools on the site as well as several others in the Kapunda district. The Sisters of St. Joseph came to Kapunda responding to a petition for a Community of sisters, and ran schools in the Light parish at St. John’s, St Rose’s, Baker’s Flat, Gilbert, Freeling, Greenock Head Station, Navan, Marrabel and Bagot’s Gap. Pupils decreased after closure of the mines in the late 1870s and the population of Kapunda declined. The schools were closed down, and the Josephites left the district and children sent to the Kapunda public school. In 1874 the Catholic Church Endowment Society took over the St John’s property. The decline in population, the location of a church in town, and the relative isolation of the site eventually saw it abandoned.

St John’s Reformatory for Girls 1897-1909

Sister Mechtilde Woods (born Ellen Henrietta Woods), a Josephite, had made regular visits to Catholic girls at the reformatory at Magill in Adelaide from the 1880s. During these visits she became concerned Catholic girls were being proselytised to and boarded out to Protestant families. Raising her concerns with the Bishop, over the next decade the Catholic Church lobbied the government to do something about this situation. In 1895 a new Act was proclaimed allowing the State Children’s Council (SCC) to send
State children of particular religious denominations to private reformatories subsidised by the government. This allowed the Catholic Church to re-establish the St John’s site as a separate reformatory for Catholic girls. The new St John’s reformatory was gazetted as an Industrial School under the State Children’s Act (1895). In 1897 Bishop Shiel tasked the then Sister Mary MacKillop to oversee alterations of the site to become a suitable reformatory, and she lived at St. John’s for the duration of the work.

MacKillop had been a regular visitor to Kapunda before this time though, holding the Title for a property in town, which was used as a convent for the Sisters teaching at schools in the district. Note that MacKillop had a history with Kapunda prior to this time. The Josephites there in 1870 had reported Fr. Patrick Keating at St. Rose’s for serious misdemeanours [alleged sexual abuse or inappropriate behaviour around school children] to Fr. Julian Tenison Woods. Woods raised a complaint with the vicar-general of the Adelaide diocese, John Smyth who found Keating guilty of the offences and ordered him to return to Ireland. Fr. Charles Horan, also in Kapunda, a friend and protector of Keating did not hide his desire to seek revenge against Woods and the Josephites. Horan later working for Bishop Shiel persuaded him to break up the Josephites by changing their structure and in September 1872, it was to St John’s that MacKillop had been ordered under the new Rule on the day prior to her excommunication. Gardiner records that on arrival in Kapunda on 1 May 1897, Byrne, an old adversary, did not allow MacKillop (and the sisters sent to Kapunda by Shiel to run the reformatory) to stay at the Dominican convent, nor collect their luggage from there, but were ordered to go straight out to St John’s. As the site had been abandoned for years it was empty, and, MacKillop writing on 2 May 1897 from St John’s stated that she “had no cups, mugs or anything to drink out of or wash in, or boil water so after a time we walked to Rodgers where we got something to eat and drink…We have nothing but the rocking chair to sit on”.

Sister Helena (born Mary O’Brien in Dublin) was appointed matron and she, along with four other sisters ran the reformatory. Sisters Berchmans of the Assumption (born Mary Cox in Dublin, 1848 and St John’s second matron), Scholastica of the Nativity (born Ellen Byrne in Wicklow 1848) and Wilfrid of the Scourging (born Mary Hayes in India to Irish parents 1858) are the only ‘visible’ young nuns documented to be at St Johns for all or part of its life, though at any one time there were five living there. The first group of ten girls arrived at St John’s in June 1897. A letter from MacKillop at St John’s to the State Children’s Department dated 8
June 1897 stated “so far - the girls have given most satisfaction”. This indicates a more intimate and ongoing involvement with the girls, and that she was doing more than just overseeing the renovation work. The church had been converted into a dormitory for the girls and the presbytery had been furnished for the sisters as well as some additions of a bathroom, kitchen and veranda and the planting of trees, including a palm. Joanna Barr-Smith and other benefactors donated furnishings and supplemented the reformatory’s expenses through donations. During the twelve years of its existence a total of 125 girls were detained there: between 12 and 21 girls at any one time.

While it may be confronting to conceptualise why girls as young as 12 were confined in prison like conditions, the reformatory was a manifestation of a belief in the role of environmental manipulation for social improvement, and all reformatories shared an emphasis on regularity, discipline, segregation and surveillance for reform. The rise of separate female institutions, asylums, reformatories and Magdalen laundries (or asylums), were continuums of far older practices that were markedly influenced by contemporary notions of masculinity and femininity. Arguably the history of women’s imprisonment and the reformatory experience should be traced to institutions such as the iconic Hôpital de Salpêtrière, which was the primary female asylum in Paris from 1658 to 1916, with its 19th century école de réforme. Cohen argued that Catholics in France, Germany and Italy founded refuges for ex-prostitutes as early as the 12th century, and that from 16th Century far more types of gender-specific institutions have been created for women than for men. The institutions for women served many social functions, including the control of women’s sexuality. Corrupted girls and wayward wives could be sent to institutions such as Salpêtrière by their husbands, fathers, or the State along with prostitutes, the sick, insane, infertile or indeed any undesirable woman. Once incarcerated, women were tasked with a range of work including sewing, weaving and religious instruction. Salpêtrière’s chapels, architecture, imagery, and the presence of St Vincent de Paul’s Daughters of Charity inscribed Catholicism at the centre of the institution and practices echo early Christian monasteries and nunneries in their enclosed monasticism, developing in tandem, overlapping and intersecting with the later development of the Victorian reformatory and the Magdalen Asylum. The first Magdalen Asylum (or Laundry) was established in 1758 in England to house ‘fallen’ women aged 15 to 20, and led to institutions being established internationally. Young women and girls across Europe, North America and Australia were brought to asylums on
similar grounds and subjected to similar routines documented at Salpêtrière. The focus and purpose of these early institutions was closely tied to the twin problems of eradicating women in prostitution and unmarried mothers, but later also served as refuges for the destitute. The Magdalen asylums were administered ‘on the ground’ by the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity, a Catholic order founded in Caen, France in 1641, however Protestant and lay-run institutions also operated. Such practices had become entrenched over centuries and evolved into the sanctioned Catholic response to fallen women.

In 19th century Australia, each capital city had a number of reformatories for both girls and boys. Each city also had convents that contained commercial laundries where ‘fallen women’ who were sent to the convent, voluntarily or involuntarily, worked. Both the State reformatory system and the convents detained girls for reasons as being destitute, uncontrollable, consorting with boys, drinking alcohol or had simply had been picked up by the police. The Sisters of the Good Shepherd ran most of the Australian and New Zealand Magdalen laundries. They included the head house and convent at Abbotsford in Melbourne, but operated in each state affecting thousands of women and girls and ran until the 1970s. Institutions such as that at Abbotsford were originally founded in Australia to provide refuge for destitute women, but from the late 19th century they became involved with the Children’s Courts and accepted girls who were sentenced to custody, “As the laundries came to be used as dumping grounds for girls picked up by the police, got rid of by their parents and step-parents, or sent on by jails and other institutions, they turned into penal institutions with locks, barred windows and walls.” Catholics in mid 19th century Australia thus inherited traditions of practice from continental Europe and adapted them to suit local conditions. However, despite the differences evident between countries and over periods of time, all Catholic institutions shared distinctive features and were governed by Rome. Most importantly this was the belief that guidance under Catholic nuns for a protracted period was the most effective means of reforming young women.

Accounts of escape attempts by girls from St John’s in the State’s newspapers appear to have led to changes to the site’s architecture, to further control the girls’ movements and delimit their access to space. The number and frequency of escapes were grossly over exaggerated, leading to mythologising about the girls as bad, ungrateful rebels, needing further confinement. By 1899 the girls were divided into two classes, and a ‘second class’ dormitory was added so that ‘better girls’ would not be contaminated
by bad behaviour. Two internal 6ft x 6ft cells, a sisters’ room, linen press, a larger 11ft high jarrah and iron fence enclosing all buildings as well as iron bars on all windows were added. Historical accounts noted three cells external to the main building to punish and cope with a number of escape attempts. The church was divided into chapel and the remaining half used as a dining room and workroom, and a large water tank built to deal with severe water shortages.

The girls, aged between 13 and 17, undertook tasks from gardening, laundering, corset and shirt making for sale in town, sewing (both plain and fancy work) and making their own clothes, to wood chopping, laying garden beds, tending cows, a horse, and poultry. This was in addition to the regime of prayer, daily mass, choir, and lessons, and meticulous cleaning. There are no comprehensive records of these girls, but the available documentation indicates most had no official sentences or mandated release dates. These records when collated show that some were detained because they were homeless, destitute, or stole, however the majority of girls were charged with being ‘uncontrollable’- accusations almost always couched in terms of real or imagined sexual promiscuity. The Kapunda Herald correspondent perhaps ‘enhanced’ his accounts of the reformatory girls, not unlike many of the narratives about St John’s stating:

Nearly half of the number of girls received have been sent as the result of drink, and with one exception are all from Adelaide. The age of the girls range, from about thirteen up to seventeen years. The sisters always feel much disheartened when the older girls are brought. The evil in them is deep-rooted, and as the girls cannot be kept after they have reached the age of eighteen years, the time is too short for reform to be accomplished, and it is feared that much of the work in such cases is wasted.

Letters from some of the girls themselves also provide a different picture to that of the popular perceptions. These include document requests to the SCD to be transferred to Abbotsford to live with the Good Shepherd nuns there. It is plausible that, particularly for some girls who may have been abandoned by their parents or left destitute, that life in a reformatory afforded some protection, comfort or familiarity. A small number of girls ‘whose behaviour improved’ were placed in service with Catholic families. Families who accepted them into their homes as domestic servants did not always prove to be suitable, or possible. The Catholic Church acknowledged this problem in a report on the St John’s Reformatory published in the *Southern Cross* in 6 September 1907, admitting that not a single girl had
been placed in service during the year because of the shortage of suitable homes, and also perhaps from the reticence of non-Catholics to take Catholic girls in as domestics. None of the girls died at the reformatory, but the persistent picture of drunken Catholic priests, and dirty, uneducated Irish, were part of the social landscape in South Australia. Thus when the SCC discovered a priest had been resident at St John’s in 1909, Archbishop O’Reily, rather than deal with the fall out, abruptly closed the site.42

Mr. Gray objected to the residing of a chaplain on the premises. A chaplain lived there certainly; but I had not permitted that having until all reasons pro and con had full and careful consideration from me. The priest was old. He was competent, however, in my judgment, to celebrate. I thought him, though not of decidedly robust mind, fitted for the office, and I assigned-it to him. The Reformatory is three miles from the nearest church. The residing of the chaplain at the institution saved the sisters and inmates a six-mile journey every Sunday. The closing of the Reformatory followed in due course.

Despite the huge financial investment, the success stories of reform and efficiency of the running of St John’s, political charades saw the Josephites leave Kapunda once more. The eleven girls resident at that time were transferred to the Protestant Redruth Girl’s Reformatory at Burra. The relocation of the priest to the reformatory in 1909 and the lack of transparency regarding this is no doubt the basis of the myths of Ruby Bland and the evil priest, and only added to the already existing rumors the site was haunted.43 Ruby Bland (1891-1909) was with her family in the Riverland when she was sent to the Kapunda Hospital on 15th November 1909 for a gall stone operation after years of illness. Her death from complications in hospital on 28th November 1909 was two days before St John’s was vacated. The church was demolished in the 1946 after the site’s abandonment. Locals believe the remaining buildings were used as private residences from the 1950s. The remaining reformatory buildings were demolished in 2002 to deter people visiting and vandalizing the site. Consequently, all that remains of the reformatory building is the landmark palm tree, pine and pepper trees.

The archaeological project

With a mass of dense rubble and vegetation, including grasses, trees and thorn bushes, it was difficult to establish the location of footings and buildings remaining from surface surveys undertaken in 2012 and 2013 by the author and teams of students from Flinders University. In addition, much of the site surface was sterile in terms of artefacts, likely due to cleaning of the site.
by caretakers, or the removal of artefacts as ‘souvenirs’, since the 2002 demolition has done little to deter the ghost hunters. The demolition rubble appeared to have been pushed into the centre of the main presbytery/convent buildings and meant that excavation of this area would not be possible. A geophysical investigation was undertaken in 2013 using ground penetrating radar, a fluxgate dual sensor gradiometer and metal detector to identify footings or soil disturbance. Over a two-week period in April 2013 excavations were carried out directed by the author and involving volunteers from Flinders University. The significance of excavations was to document and investigate the site and to uncover the physical remains of the church, associated buildings and any related artefacts. The excavation also provided evidence of the evolution of the Catholic community’s development: the spiritual and educational values represented by St John’s are as important in the growth of the community as the establishment of the mining/economic centre in Kapunda. Although a short history of the site is available, much of the information in the public domain rely on the same few primary sources and an enduring urban mythology. Further, artefacts recovered can provide a remarkable insight into the daily life of such a site – often the most significant or memorable events are written down, but everyday practices, patterns of behaviour and what people used, ate, and threw away, for example, are not.

**Work related artefacts**

Buttons and other sewing equipment found included pins, scissors, beads and thimbles. Buttons are a marker of the type of tasks carried out on site, as well as what was used and worn. In 1904 Sister Helena reported to the SCC that the girls had made 263 articles of clothing and wished to obtain more paid laundry work. Slate pencils and inkbottles excavated reflect daily religious instruction, catechism, writing, reading and arithmetic, which were all commonly timetabled in Catholic reformatories. The excavated ceramic material (a total of 395 artefacts) contained a high proportion of teacups (17). These may have been used for consumption, but also in
domestic training. The range of decorative techniques included moulded, banded and transfer printed in a range of colours and designs. Saucers (11) were also of diverse designs but none were matching cup/saucer sets. A range of plates and bowls in standard forms were also present. Four large keys and a padlock excavated indicated the locking of doors, safes or areas and the controlling of space or access.

**Prayer related artefacts**

A religious medallion found depicting St Jude (the patron Saint of lost causes and of “desperate” or “difficult” cases) is a poignant example of the Catholic tradition of regarding saints as intercessors. The letters “KAPG” have been engraved under the image of St Jude, perhaps indicating specific issuing to St John’s using an acronym for Kapunda Girls’. Glass and ceramic decorative candleholders found may have been used to furnish the chapel, and a black rosary bead was also recovered. The small number of religious artefacts may indicate either religious materials were cared for/coveted and kept safely, or when damaged were not disposed of with household rubbish. Cleanliness and order were important reforming principles, and any rubbish on site would have been appropriately disposed of.

**Provisions and food related artefacts**

The excavated ceramic material revealed a predominance of food service ceramic vessels, serving dishes and platters. This suggests meals were a group activity and may have been served on large platters with individual smaller plate/bowls used by each individual. It is likely the nuns and girls’ diets were shared and consumed at the same times. Larger plate sizes recovered might also be a reflection of the type of meals and the quantity of food served on a regular basis: cheap meat cuts and large pots of stew. This corresponds with the recovery of a large bone-handled knife and remains of meat (mostly mutton cutlets, rump and head/jowl for soup or stock). Vegetables were grown on the site. The assemblage recovered indicates the reformatory acquired neither its ceramic nor glass tableware in matching sets, goods may have been donated or purchased on an ad hoc basis when required and may also reflect the lack of funds available for running the site: ten shillings for each girl per week.

A high number of women’s boots and boot parts (at least 14) were found. The sizes range from 14.5cm to 23 cm (current Australia sizes 8 infant to 6.5 women). Some have stacked heels, others are flat, and thus could have been worn by either the girls or the nuns. In either case they were plain,
sturdy and standard, probably issued by the state or readily available and of the same style of two boots found under the floorboards of the Adelaide Destitute Asylum. Some have indications of repair and were worn out when discarded. The wearing of uniforms is not documented at St John’s, (though they did make their own clothes), and the (lack of) clothing when the girls initially arrived was recorded in a single letter by Mary MacKillop to the SCC complaining the girls had not been appropriately provided for, even though a standard ‘Girls’ outfit in a box’ was normally issued to all under state care. Two brooches were recovered, indicating at least some girls were allowed more scope for personal expression or were able to dress more fashionably when sent out for domestic service. These may even have been rewards for good behaviour. The Adelaide Herald’s Passing Notes for 20 January 1900 stated, “Miss Baker, by her present of a pretty silver brooch to the best girl in the Kapunda Reformatory, set an excellent example”. A coin with a defaced Queen Victoria was also an interesting find.

**Artefacts of care and play**

There is a detectable provision for care and play in small finds - a dolls eye, two knucklebones, a marble, a harmonica and glass salad oil bottles, condiment/pickle jars and cordial indicate small privileges. Two fragments from a German or Austrian bisque statue and glass and ceramic vases indicate decoration of the altar or interiors. Flowerpots also reflect beautification, and also gardening work. A range of medicinal bottles such as cough elixir, a nit comb, toothpowder, and a bone toothbrush indicate a concern for personal hygiene.

**Cells?**

The feature known locally as ‘the cells’ to incarcerate reformatory girls was built in 1897 and was excavated in its entirety. The excavation found a 4.57m (15 ft) square bluestone structure built into the slope of the hill.
and therefore on two levels with the upper, ground level half divided into three cubicles, each 0.9m (3ft) wide and 2.1m (7ft) long. Each cubicle was identical and separated by stonewalls 0.6m (2ft) wide, and based on historical photographs would have had a height approximately 2 metres above ground, and there were glass lined chutes that sloped down from the northern rear wall, and opened into the lower half of the structure, which was built below ground level. This half was a single rectangular 1.55m (5ft) deep cement rendered pit. There were inserts in the walls of the pit for roof timbers indicating that this section would have been fully enclosed underground and a thin layer of bitumen sealed the foundation. No staining, damp, or organic layers at the bottom were present to indicate any use as a septic tank or lavatory. Artefacts from the 19th and early 20th century occurred along the base of the pit. Interpretation of this feature has been challenging, with no clear purpose identified, nor have any comparative structures been located. On balance this is not likely to have been cells, but rather something else, and the possibilities include a grain or animal feed storage, a shower block, washrooms, or laundry room. In this context, then, the archaeological investigation refutes the persistent local story that these were cells for confinement, with the two cells built inside the presbytery the only ones built and are those referred to in historical records.

Conclusion

The archaeological recording of St John’s and dissemination of any information and artefacts are of importance to the local community, and of great importance to the local Catholic community and amateur historians. But this site does have much wider significance. St John’s still has strong associations for many Australians as the location of an ancestor’s wedding, birth or death, particularly for those researching an Irish genealogy. The St John’s church and the reformatory display exceptional historic, economic and social themes that are of importance to South Australian history. As one of the first and largest centres for Catholics in the state the site also reflects the growth and decline of a mining town. They have played an important part in the lives of local residents and the cemetery has been the location for interment of Catholics since the 1850s, and the site of Catholic education. Whether religious or not, the site has merit in terms of the architectural and social history. It is an early form or historical representation of the evolving attitudes towards juvenile crime and punishment and social welfare. The site is also important in telling the story of the Irish, as their history in this area has been obscured in favour of stories of Cornish miners. The site
of the reformatory is also associated with an important Australian, Saint Mary MacKillop. This building represents the “bridge” between the early itinerant Catholic presence, utilising existing buildings and a slab hut for ecclesiastical purposes, and the later permanent presence of the Catholic clergy and schools within the district. This is the earliest building and longest serving structure associated with the development of the Catholic Church in the area, and documents both a community development and evolution of Catholicism in the district. St John’s is important as a study of the reformatory system, and of the colonial setting that saw Catholic doctrine enacted. But importantly, recounting the history of St John’s also redresses the imbalances in the historical narratives of Kapunda by including and remembering the Irish Catholics who settled, lived, worked and worshiped there.

Acknowledgements

The work carried out at St John’s would not have been possible without the kind permission and support of Fr. Mark Sexton. Peter Swann has been a remarkable asset in caring for and documenting the Light Parish records and has been most generous in sharing his knowledge, time and friendship. Thanks to students of Flinders University also volunteered their time and energy to carry out fieldwork in 2012 and 2013.

Endnotes

1 Given this particular narrative, it is interesting to note population numbers from the 1861 Census, which reveal that across the various Kapunda council districts, there were officially 1572 English and Welsh (which includes the Cornish) and 1023 Irish residents. There were approximately 6,500 baptisms recorded in St John’s between 1848 and 1882 (Light Parish Records, collated by Peter Swann) and there were probably more unofficial births. In terms of the gender balance, the census records demonstrate women have outnumbered men in Kapunda since the 1860s. This is important to consider given that women are not represented in any significant fashion, especially in terms of the mining story.


4 Irish farming communities had settled in the region earlier along the Hutt and Light Rivers from Mintaro to Clare, see Brady, T. 1973 “The Pioneer Catholics of South Australia” in Australian Catholic Historical Society Journal 4(2)36-44.

5 Confirmation at Kapunda. 19 April 1849. The names of those confirmed are in the Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society
It appears Murphy had advanced £150 to Kapunda in 1850 to entitle it to Government aid as recorded by the Grant-in-Aid Ordinance Trustees of Kapunda Church (St. Johns), J. Fallon, E. McCabe, A. Fox. Original documents held at SA State Records.


South Australian Register 14 May 1850: To Stonemasons SEALED TENDERS will be received by W. Hunter, Architect, until Wednesday, 15th May, for the stonework of a Catholic Church, near the Kapunda Mines. Plans and specifications may be seen at the Architect’s office, Wakefield-street, and at Mr Fitzgerald’s, near Kapunda. Adelaide.

These panels were removed when the church was demolished in the 1940s and are now in the church of St Rose of Lima in Kapunda. There is no clear indication on these pieces as to which studio or artist may have manufactured them, which is complicated by the fact that new sections of glass were added in the 1890s. However, what is significant is that if it this particular image of St John was erected with the church in 1850-1851, then this rules out any colonial manufacturer by at least ten years. In other words, these panels would have been imported, and could be the work of any number of prominent English studios such as William Wailes, William Morris and Co, or Clayton and Bell. The style and detail also point to English production.

In March 1860 he was the first priest to die in SA. Fallon’s remains were interred beneath the altar of his church, and later were removed to the new cemetery by John Ryan in 1891. Chronicle 15 October 1936.

Ryan also died at St. John’s on August 24, 1865, and was interred in St. John’s Cemetery. He was the first Vicar-General in South Australia.

Kapunda Herald and Northern Intelligencer 4 August 1871: “Mr. Richard Haimes had died suddenly at St. Johns, near Kapunda. Since then we have been supplied with some further particulars relative to the deceased, from which it appears that he was born in Queen’s County, Ireland; he arrived in Tasmania in 1826, and at one time filled the office of Colonial Architect in that colony; from Tasmania he proceeded to Victoria; and from thence he came to this colony, and took up his residence in Kapunda. For some time he carried on the Kapunda Brewery; but for a number of years previous to his death he has been carrying on the business of general store keeper and Postmaster at St. John’s.”

Baker’s Flat was an area of vacant land settled by Irish Catholic migrants from the mid-1850s. Located just south of the Kapunda copper mine, where many of them laboured, the Irish were notorious for paying no rent and vigorously resisting all attempts by
the landowners to remove them. A unique settlement in Australia, more than 500 people lived there at its peak in the 1860s and 1870s (Forster et al. v. Fisher 1892). The people of Baker’s Flat developed a distinctive community that was physically and socially separate from the broader Kapunda community. They were identified as Irish, but a particular form of unskilled, working class Catholic Irish, based on an enduring stereotypical view of Irish people as dirty, unruly, drunken and lawless. They seem to have been an ‘outsider’ group, travelling to St John’s for services, holding their own sporting activities and dances at Bakers Flat and maintaining Irish traditions, most visibly in the vernacular Irish style of houses that they built. Today, both St John’s and Baker’s Flat have disappeared physically from the landscape and also from the history and dominant discourses on Kapunda, but is the focus on ongoing work by Susan Arthure.

19 The road taken by the parishioners from Kapunda and Baker’s Flat has been named ‘Mary MacKillop Walk’ as it was used by her and her sisters when walking to and from Kapunda.

20 Southern Cross 17 June 1949, p.8
21 Foale, Marie T RSJ. 1989. The Josephite Story. St Joseph’s Generalate: Sydney, p225-6; The Kapunda Herald and Northern Intelligencer Friday 12 November 1869 also noted: St. John’s School, examined on 11th November (Sisters of St. Joseph, who also conduct the Kapunda school).

22 In 1891, Monsignor Frederick Byrne, St. Rose’s parish priest, requested a Catholic school be re-opened in town. Dominican Nuns accepted Byrne’s invitation and his sister gave the land for the site of the new convent, financed the cost of building, and asked only that the Nuns pay Miss Byrne an annuity of £52 as long as she lived. The convent was begun that year and opened the next. In that way, the first Dominican Community of six Sisters came to Kapunda on Easter Monday, April 19, 1892. See the Southern Cross 20 September 1949 p 16.

23 South Australian Register 21 January 1897: “The Archbishop asks that the Catholic girls in the Reformatory should be handed over to him, to be placed in an institution under the charge of three Sisters of St. Joseph. Dr. O’Reily is ready to convert the St. John’s Church and manse, situated near Kapunda, now disused into an establishment for the purpose, and to comply with all the State requirements for the care of the girls. Of course he would expect to receive a proper allowance from the State for the maintenance of the girls.”


26 Gardiner, Paul 1993, p 404.
27 Mary MacKillop to Sr. Monica from St John’s 2 May 1897. Reprinted in Swann from Archives of the SoSJ.
28 Mary MacKillop to Mrs. Holden (SCD) from St John’s 8 June 1897 SA State Records
Mrs. R. Barr-Smith, though not a Catholic, has shown a very deep interest in the work of the institution, and to her generosity the sisters are indebted for some of the magnificent furniture of the church.


Franklin, James, 2013, p 77-78.

There were escapes, and these were documented. Some of the stories were reprinted and perhaps led to the perception of ‘bad’ girls repeatedly escaping the reformatory. These incidents occurred in May and October 1898, April 1899, April 1901, November 1902, December 1904, August 1906 and October 1907. Most girls returned voluntarily and on the same day.

*Kapunda Herald* 27 October 1899

*The Chronicle* 12 June 1897

*Kapunda Herald* 27 October 1899

*The Argus* 12 Oct 1909 (amongst other sources) document the dispute between O’Reily and the SCC. O’Reily had refused permission to the council’s inspector to enter the building and agreed to hand over the Kapunda Girls’ Reformatory for £1,000, the amount of the debt remaining on the building. The SCC alleged “that a priest was residing at the reformatory ‘and that his mental condition was, at the least, unstable, while his physical frame was powerful.’” O’Reily denied that the priest’s form was powerful, but admitted that mentally he was not robust.

These old stories were also noted by Mary MacKillop to Sr Gertrude Mary from St John’s “This is the place which for so long has the name of being haunted but we see no ghosts, though there are plenty of graves around us , for the cemetery is quite close and a nice one too”. Cited in Gardiner, p 405.

Swann, Peter nd, *Kapunda and the Mary MacKillop Connection*

*South Australia Register* 24 August 1904.
Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society

46 Kovesi, Catherine 2006, p 73.
48 GRG 27/1/1093/1897
The Sydney ‘House of Mercy’:
The Mater Misericordiae Servants’ Home and Training School, 1891 – 1919

Lesley Hughes*

The Mater Misericordiae Servants’ Home and Training School was opened by Mother Ignatius McQuoin of the Sisters of Mercy of St Patrick’s, Church Hill and North Sydney, in 1891. It operated in St Patrick’s parish (near present day Wynyard Railway Station) for about 20 years, before moving to Waverley in Sydney’s eastern suburbs, closing in 1919. It was not as illustrious or as long-lived as some other charitable institutions founded by these Sisters or others (Hughes 2003, 2010). It is of interest because it was a ‘House of Mercy’, a core undertaking for all Sisters of Mercy communities. However despite it being a central work there was a gap of some 26 years between the Sisters’ arrival in Sydney and the commencement of the Servant’s Home. An exploration of the possible reasons for this delay throws light on aspects of Sydney Catholic history in the period - particularly the work of women’s religious institutes - whilst raising other questions.

Background

The ‘English Sisters of Mercy’ community in Sydney was founded from Liverpool in late 1865 by Mother Ignatius McQuoin. She and her two companions (one a novice who subsequently left the community) were originally bound for Bathurst to join two Sisters who had gone there earlier on Archbishop Polding’s request. During the period of the voyage, the Diocese of Bathurst was created and the new bishop, Matthew Quinn, secured a community of Mercy Sisters from Ireland to work with him. Consequently Mother Ignatius and her companions remained in Sydney and were joined by the Sisters already at Bathurst. This change of plan meant that no accommodation had been prepared for them in Sydney.

The Sisters took up residence in St Patrick’s parish at Church Hill, under the charge of Archdeacon McEncroe, taking over the government-funded denominational schools there. McEncroe arranged the purchase of a house

*Dr Lesley Hughes is an Honorary Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney. Her research interests include the history of women religious, social work and welfare history, and social work education. Thanks are due to former archives staff of the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney and the Sydney Archdiocesan Archives. This article is based on research originally undertaken for her PhD thesis.

Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society 36 (2015), 61-76
which served as a convent and which the Sisters altered to meet their needs. Because of fears the vendor might not sell if he knew the house was to become a convent it was not purchased directly by the Sisters (McQuoin n.d. p. 2). Thus, although burdened for some years by the mortgage and cost of alterations to the property, the Sisters were not the legal owners of the property. Mother Ignatius records that after the death in 1868 of Fr McEncroe - who had been a friend and supporter since her arrival in Sydney - a legal dispute arose as to the ownership of the convent property. The result was that it was declared Church property and was subsequently given to the newly arrived male community of French Marists, who had been invited to take over the parish and open schools for boys (McQuoin n.d. p. 4). The Sisters had to vacate their convent and start again in the former presbytery, paying for building alterations to make it suitable for the needs of women religious. Mother Ignatius felt this injustice keenly. She described McEncroe’s death as having left her ‘disconsolate… a stranger in the Colony, unknown and misunderstood …’ (McQuoin n.d. p. 2).

The situation became dire when the Sisters lost the two teachers’ salaries, following Polding’s direction that the school be withdrawn from the government system (Sisters of Mercy, n.d. a p. 3). As their remaining source of income was the meagre primary school fees, a ‘select’ or fee-paying high school was opened in the convent to supplement finances. The Sisters taught children in the schools by day, adults at night. They visited the poor and sick in their homes and dispensed material assistance from the convent door. This period was full of tribulations, similar to those experienced by the Sisters of Charity in the early years of their foundation nearly 30 years before – insecure and inadequate accommodation, income so low that daily existence was difficult, and too few members for the work which confronted them (O’Sullivan 1995; MacGinley 2002).

The Mercy community expanded over the years – basically to meet the demand for Catholic schools. In the early 1870s the Sisters opened a branch convent on the North Shore as a type of sanatorium for Sisters suffering from the cramped and unhealthy living conditions at St Patrick’s. Shortly afterwards they were asked by local people to start a school. This brought more work and more financial strain, rather than the respite intended. In 1874 Mother Ignatius also responded to a request from the priest at Parramatta, Archdeacon Rigney, to commence a school there. Sisters and their pupils endured primitive conditions in the school buildings. Mother Ignatius wrote:

Very soon the fame of the infants’ school caused a rapid increase
in numbers, and for their accommodation a shed was erected in the Playground where they went through their exercises to the astonishment of the passers by. The next addition was a stable fitted up with old desks and forms and the walls patched up with old sugar bags to keep out the dust and wind which at times, blew the copy books off the table. The number of children at this date on the Roll would be 200, 150 or so in ordinary attendance. (McQuoin n.d. p. 5)

The Sisters’ account books show their ongoing struggle to make ends meet. Survival of the community became Mother Ignatius’ greatest priority – thus there were simply insufficient resources to devote to charitable works such as a House of Mercy.

The original ‘House of Mercy’

The Constitutions and Rule of the Sydney Mercy Sisters were the same as those of the original Dublin institute of some 30 or so years earlier. The institute’s object included concern for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the poor, particularly women, as well as the spiritual improvement of the women who entered the institute.

The Sisters …. Must also have in view what is peculiarly characteristic of this institute of the Sisters of Mercy, that is a most serious application to the instruction of poor girls, visitation of the sick, and protection of women of good character. (Sisters of Mercy n.d.b Chapter One p.1)

Catherine McAuley, the Mercy foundress, wished not only to relieve immediate distress but also to provide a means for poor women to be able to earn a living (Killerby 1996). She provided general education (long denied the Irish by the penal laws) in schools, and vocational training for young women at the ‘House of Mercy’ she built in a fashionable part of Dublin. Catherine’s perspective on Irish poverty included an awareness of structural factors, primarily the role of years of English oppression. She was of the same social circle as ‘the Great Liberator’, Daniel O’Connell. He opposed the extension of the English system of workhouses to Ireland (Burke 1987 pp. 29 - 27), as did Mother Mary Aikenhead, foundress of the Irish Sisters of Charity (O’Sullivan 1995 p. 7). O’Connell carved the Christmas roast at the House of Mercy in 1828, prior to it becoming a convent (Killerby 1996 p. 19).

Details of the Mercy Rule indicate that it was not assumed that temporal welfare would automatically follow from spiritual well-being.
Catherine believed in the dignity of the poor and their ability to support themselves once provided with the means to do so. The latter is obvious in that education and training are core works of the institute. The former is evident in the Rule’s rationale for undertaking charitable works, and in the detailed prescription as to how the Sisters should carry out such work. The Mercy philosophy was trusting, and was not pre-occupied with questions of deservingness. Catherine wrote ‘It is better to relieve a hundred imposters – if there be any such – than to suffer one really distressed person to be sent away empty’ (Sisters of Mercy 1927 p. 136).

Mercy Sisters were bound by the Rule to have an attitude of compassion and respect for the poor, the ways of ensuring this being explicitly stated. The core documents state that residents of the House of Mercy were not to be treated as servants of the establishment but were there to be trained:

... and for this charitable object alone are the Sisters allowed to employ young women to assist them in domestic duties, not as servants, but that they may teach them; and always with due regard to their strength and health, on which these poor girls’ future prospects so much depend (Sisters of Mercy 1869 p. 100).

This stance contrasts with the tenets of government charity in late nineteenth century New South Wales, where the overriding principles were that poverty was caused by individual moral failure, and that in assisting the poor one had to be very wary of helping those who were not ‘deserving’ as this only encouraged people to be dependent on assistance rather than developing self-reliance (Hughes 2002,2003). Others have commented on the ‘Mercy Spirit’: ‘these responses to perceived needs were clearly not mere temporary solutions to the plight of the poor, especially women, but planned efforts to help the poor better their own lot’ (Ryan 1996 p. 2). So this was Catherine McAuley’s model of assistance to poor women in Ireland. Was it relevant for women in Sydney?

**Women and employment in Sydney**

At the beginning of the last quarter of the nineteenth century there were relatively few ways women could maintain themselves, although recent scholarship reveals a greater diversity than previously identified, particularly for women who ventured into business (Bishop, 2015). However for women without the necessary skills, capital or acumen the major respectable occupations were marriage and domestic service. The former was ‘the only occupation to receive universal approval’ (Fitzgerald 1987 p. 195), whereas
domestic service was seen as being only temporary, until women’s ‘true vocation’ of marriage could be undertaken. Almost all types of women’s employment were insecure and poorly paid, generally barely above poverty levels, perhaps with the exception of some who were self-employed. On average, wages for women were much less than for men, sometimes as low as a quarter of those paid to unskilled male labourers. The situation of middle-class women in Sydney was little better. There were limited openings for work as a governess or teacher, and these positions were also low-paid. Prostitution was sometimes the only other way women could stave off poverty (O’Brien 1988).

In Sydney not even marriage was available to all women because here women outnumbered men for most of the period. Fitzgerald demonstrated that the situation of Irish-born women was even less promising than for Sydney women in general, with a greater surplus of Irish-born women over men, 100 to 64 in the 1871 census. The result was that many Irish-born women remained unmarried and those who did marry experienced a ‘marked downgrading of status’. Similarly many women in domestic service were employed beneath their former social position (Fitzgerald 1987 pp. 178 – 181).

There was a fairly high demand for domestic servants over the last 25 years of the century, reflected in the fact that assisted passage was available to female immigrants who declared their occupation was ‘domestic servant’ (Bishop 2015). However turnover was high, with dissatisfaction on both sides. Many girls from rural areas were not well-acquainted with what was required to help run a middle class household. Frustration with servants, particularly Irish girls, was legendary. For their part women and girls in domestic service were also frequently unhappy with how they were treated. They were also objects of ridicule in the press (Hogan 1987; O’Farrell 2000). Given that domestic service was a live-in occupation, an unemployed female servant was usually also a homeless servant. Cheap housing in Sydney was of a low material and moral standard (Fitzgerald 1987; O’Brien 1988). Affordable, clean and secure accommodation was a definite need. Although a residential Female School of Industry which trained girls for domestic service had been operating since 1826, Catholic girls were not admitted (Dickey 1987 p.10; Godden 1983 pp. 28ff).

When the Sisters of Mercy arrived in Sydney in 1865 there was an existing Catholic Servants’ Home and Registry in Darlinghurst, but it closed a few years later (Sands’ Sydney Directories 1863 - 1869). This home was associated with the Catholic Young Women’s Benefit Society. Information
on this organisation comes from the memoirs of Father John Felix Sheridan, an Irishman and Benedictine priest, described as being ‘one of the leading social workers in Sydney’ (O’Brien 1952 p. 65). From 1877 until 1883 Sheridan was Vicar General of the Sydney Archdiocese with responsibility for St Francis’ parish in the Haymarket, having previously (1857 – 1864) been in charge of the Darlinghurst District. His memoirs state that he founded a Catholic Young Women’s Benefit Society and opened a Servants’ Home and Registry ‘with a matron of his own choosing’ in Darlinghurst (Sheridan n.d; O’Brien 1952 p. 65; Duffy 1976; Cashman 1985). Sheridan’s memoirs state that the establishment closed when the property was resumed by the government, and the 1869 *Sands’ Directory* confirms this. Mother Ignatius perceived correctly that there was a need for a ‘House of Mercy’ in Sydney. Her desire to provide accommodation and training in line with Mercy aims was a pragmatic and appropriate response to the prevailing social conditions in Sydney on her arrival.

The Mater Misericordiae Servants’ Home and Training School

As indicated above the early years of the Sisters of Mercy foundation at the Rocks were not conducive to opening a ‘House of Mercy’. There were insufficient resources of personnel and finance as well as inadequate accommodation for the Sisters to do this in conjunction with their convent at St Patrick’s. The history written by Mother Ignatius states that she approached Archbishop Vaughan about her wish:

> The Superioress began to hope to see her desire realized – however receiving no co-operation without and having no means, she laid her earnest wish before the Archbishop, Dr Vaughan, and through her instrumentality, a Servants’ Home was opened and placed under the care of a matron, the Sisters simply taking upon themselves to visit and instruct the girls, and encourage the matron by their patronage. Still this was not the institution proposed by our Holy Foundress and other works being proposed viz, Schools etc., Branch Houses were opened and the Boarding School in like manner, to meet the wants of the time and pay off the debts incurred. (McQuoin n.d. p.7)

This home opened in 1877 in Elizabeth St, Sydney and was a joint venture with the Catholic Young Women’s Benefit Association, whose president was matron (Price 1987 p.7; Sheridan nd; *Freeman’s Journal* 8th September 1877 p. 14; *Sands Directories* 1879). This was the same model as the previous Servants’ Home at Darlinghurst which closed in 1869. In September 1977
Mother Ignatius wrote ‘the Home in Elizabeth Street takes very well but everyone says the servants want training so they must help me to build a House of Mercy’ (McQuoin to n.k. 17th September 1877). A notice in the Sydney *Freeman’s Journal* the following May confirms that the Servants’ Home was operating and that Mother Ignatius was pursuing her intention of establishing the House of Mercy Training School:

**THE SISTERS OF MERCY**

of

**ST. PATRICK’S SYDNEY**

Having succeeded in establishing – though on a small scale - a Home for Female servants, are desirous of extending their sphere of usefulness by supplying a still existing want, viz: - That of a training school for young women desirous of learning the various duties of domestic life. The want of an institution of the kind is generally felt by the ladies of Sydney, and the colony generally, but hitherto the Sisters have not been able to undertake this good work for want of proper accommodation.

They propose having a Bazaar, in September next, in order to raise funds to build a house in connection with the Convent, where the young women will be under their immediate care, and where they will be taught, in a practical manner, Cooking, Laundry, Housework, Sewing, &c.; in fine [?] trained to fill any situation for which they may be fitted.

The notice goes on to say that:

His Grace the Archbishop fully approves of the undertaking, and the Very Rev. the Vicar General and the Revd. Marist fathers will gladly receive donations in money or goods for the above purposes. Subscriptions also will be gratefully received by the Sisters of Mercy, St Patrick’s. (*Freeman’s Journal* 18th May 1878 p. 10)

It seems however that there were still difficulties for Mother Ignatius. A report of a meeting at St Patrick’s Hall the following month indicates that there was disagreement about where the training school should be:

**Catholic Female Home and Registry Office**

A meeting of the committee in connection with this object was held in St Patrick’s hall on Wednesday evening last, the very Rev. the Vicar General in the chair. There was a full attendance
of clergymen and laymen. The question having been mooted as to where the Home and Registry Office should be erected, and it having transpired that the intention of the reverend mother was to place it on the North Shore in connection with the branch convent there, it was the opinion of the meeting that it would be necessary to have the institution in Sydney as at present. The Rev. Mother not being able to acquiesce in this opinion it was unanimously resolved to suspend all action in the matter for the present and to return the subscriptions received. (Freeman’s Journal 8th June 1878: 14).

This was a fairly unusual report for several reasons. First, it seems to be the only report of conflict between Sisters and other members of the Catholic community reported by the Freeman’s Journal in this quarter century. The Freeman’s was one of the main champions of the Catholic hierarchy, clergy, religious and lay community in the incessant sectarian warfare that characterised the period (Hughes 2002). Additionally, to give back money already contributed was unheard of in that era of frantic school building and fundraising.

In the absence of hard evidence it is possible only to speculate on the reasons for the lack of agreement and paucity of support for the Sisters’ plans. Their Mother House and Novitiate, where the labour resources to run the training school were located, were moving to North Sydney. Mother Ignatius no doubt thought it impossible to open the training school in Sydney because the existing convent there was totally unsuitable. To acquire new premises south of the harbour would not be feasible because the Sisters were so heavily in debt for the new convent at North Sydney. It is interesting that the meeting chair, the Vicar General, was Fr John Sheridan who had some responsibility for the earlier Servant’s Home in Darlinghurst under a lay matron with Sisters visiting. Besides being second-in-charge of the Archdiocese he was a renowned fundraiser, having rapidly cleared debts on the House of the Good Shepherd and St Francis’ parish (Sheridan n.d. pp.3-4). If he had been in favour of the House of Mercy being located on the North Shore as Mother Ignatius wished, it is highly unlikely the laymen at the meeting would have opposed him.

There is a report some five weeks later of a fundraising event for the existing ‘Female Home’ (under the superintendence of a lay Matron). ‘On Monday evening last a very pleasing entertainment was given in St Francis’ Hall in aid of the Female Home, Elizabeth Street and the Cooks’ River Presbytery Furnishing Fund. There was a large attendance...’ (Freeman’s Journal 8th July 20th 1878 p.14). The home was located in St Francis’ parish,
which was under the control of Fr. Sheridan. It is possible that he favoured this model (as well as its location), rather than Mother Ignatius’ proposal.

Mother Ignatius did not give up her dream of opening a ‘House of Mercy’ training school and home. She persisted in fundraising, advertising the bazaar planned for later in the year which ‘… will be opened by His Grace, Most Reverend Roger Bede Vaughan. The Hon. Lady Robinson has kindly signified her intention of being present at the opening …’ (Freeman’s Journal 23rd Nov. 1878 p. 11). The bazaar was duly held on 25th November 1878, however the report the following week indicates only £50 was taken on the first day (Freeman’s Journal 30th Nov. 30 1878 pp. 14-5). This is less than usual for such an event, especially one opened by Archbishop Vaughan, a renowned public speaker who attracted standing room only crowds to his Charity Sermons in St Mary’s Cathedral. Contrary to the usual pattern of reporting there was no account of the close of the bazaar, nor the total profits. It is notable that the text of Archbishop Vaughan’s address at the opening of the bazaar indicates that it was intended that the Home and Training School eventually would be located on the North Shore.

At the time of the bazaar, the Sisters of Mercy were in the process of purchasing the Monte Sant’Angelo property at North Sydney, which cost over £7,000 and there was also the expense of alterations necessary before the Sisters could move in (McQuoin n.d. p.6 ). The Mercy account books reveal that from 1879 to at least 1887 Mother Ignatius had to cope with a great deal of building debt. (September 1879, £663 paid ‘builder last payment’; March 1882, £350 paid to ‘Mr Hayes’; May 1883 ‘3rd installment’ of £500’ to the same person; November 1883, £2,500 borrowed from the ‘Oriental Bank’ and in January 1887, £550 borrowed from the same source, and an identical amount was ‘paid to Mr Hayes, contractor’) (Sisters of Mercy, Account Book Monte Sant’Angelo 1879 – 1904).

It is likely that Mother Ignatius’ desire to build a Servants’ Home and Training School was not shared by the clergy and lay community, for whom schools and support of the existing, established Catholic charitable institutions in Sydney (such as St Vincent’s Hospital and the House of the Good Shepherd Refuge) were the priorities at the time. An additional factor was possibly the Englishness, as opposed to Irishness, of the Mercy community. The Sisters were known as the ‘English Sisters of Mercy’ whereas the local Sydney Catholic community was overwhelmingly of Irish descent. It would not have helped matters that the Sisters received support on the North Shore from a local English, Protestant family, the Whitings. Mr G.R. Whiting acted as financial adviser and agent over a number of
years, assisting the Sisters with selling their initially-purchased small property at North Sydney and buying the Monte Sant’Angelo one after his wife suggested it would suit the Sisters’ needs (Whiting to McQuoin 14th July 1879). Whiting acted as guarantor for the substantial mortgage on the latter and the Sisters’ account books indicate that he gave them money on at least one occasion, including £100 in 1882 (Whiting to McQuoin 14th July 1879; Sisters of Mercy Account Book St Patrick’s and Monte Sant’Angelo 1866-1882, March 1882). Nothing more seems to have happened in relation to the House of Mercy until 1891 when it is reported in the Sydney Morning Herald that the ‘Mater Misericordiae Servants’ Home and Training School’ opened in Princes St, at the Rocks in St Patrick’s parish with a committee of laywomen assisting in fitting it out (Sydney Morning Herald 28th September 1891 p. 6).

What is known about the operation of the Sydney ‘House of Mercy’?

From Sisters of Mercy annual reports, appeals and account books as well as press reports we know a little. Significantly Mother Ignatius’ wish to have the home and training school near the convent on the North Shore never eventuated. As stated above the establishment operated from 1891 until 1919, but was in rented premises for the first 20 years. From 1891 to 1894 it was at 29 Princes St (in the former Goodenough Naval Home) adjacent to the Argyle Cut in the Rocks (Sydney Morning Herald 28th September 1891 p. 6); then at 17 Lang St, Church Hill until 1911. The relocation to Waverley in 1911 was said to be partly to escape the noise and smoke of the nearby electric power station (The Catholic Press 26th October 1911 p. 23). From 1911 until its closure in 1919 the Home was situated in the eastern Sydney suburb of Waverley (at 10-12 Llandaff St).

The Home was opened in the Rocks in 1891 with great ceremony by Cardinal Moran. A number of clergy, lay dignitaries and at least 20 ladies who formed the Committee were also present, including the Mayoress of Sydney. As well as the Cardinal the Postmaster General, Mr Daniel O’Connor, also made a speech in support of the new institution (Sydney Morning Herald 28th September 1891, p. 6). Similar pomp was evident at the opening of the ‘new Home’ by Archbishop Kelly in Waverley in 1911 with speeches by him and two members of state parliament. Women of all denominations, provided they were ‘of good character’ were admitted to the home and inability to pay was no barrier to entry. In 1902 300 women were accommodated over the year with ‘57 in situations, giving the best satisfaction’, in 1911 the number accommodated was 200 per annum ‘on
average’. Prospective employers were charged a fee and the situations they offered were vetted for suitability (The Catholic Press 24th May 1902 p. 12; 26th October 1911 p. 23).

As reported by the Sisters and the press, the assistance provided by the Home seems consistent with the original prescriptions set out by the Mercy foundress Catherine McAuley. The memoirs of the Sisters state that: ‘here respectable girls were trained for domestic service and servants out of employment came to rest while waiting re-employment’ (Sisters of Mercy n.d. a). Press reports from 1891, 1902 and 1911 reiterated this, with the latter two emphasising that the Home provided safe accommodation for girls newly arrived in Sydney from rural areas or overseas thereby ‘preserving them from evil associations’. The high quality of those trained by the Home was emphasised and it was stated that demand exceeded supply. ‘Girls from the Home are eagerly sought by mistresses in town and country, including many Protestant ministers’ wives’ (The Catholic Press 24th May 1902, p.12). The role of the Home in enabling servants to recuperate from ill-health and exhaustion from overwork was expanded on in the later reports. What was not stated but perhaps generally understood at the time was that these conditions were likely to have rendered servants unemployed and therefore at risk of ‘evil associations’ and/or homelessness.

The Mercy ethos of providing education and training to women to enable their economic self-sufficiency is reflected in the tuition provided at the Home: ‘laundry work, cookery in all its branches, needlework, reading, writing and arithmetic’ (The Catholic Press 26th October 1911 p. 23). The reports also indicate that care was taken to interview prospective employers so that an appropriate choice could be made by matching employer to employee ‘…it is one of the principles of the management not to recommend persons for employment in any capacity the duties of which they may not be capable of fulfilling’ (Sisters of Mercy 1891).

The account books of the Home provide additional information on its operation. They show that wages were paid to at least some staff, consistent with Catherine McAuley’s instruction that residents were not to be regarded as servants, and were to undertake work only as part of their training. There are entries for ‘clothing purchased for poor girls’. Like their Irish foundress the Sisters of Mercy in Sydney were mindful of ensuring the employment prospects and longer-term well-being of young women.

What the account books also reveal is that the Home struggled financially at times. In some months the board paid by residents was less than the rent on the premises, with the books only balancing thanks to
‘loans from Rev. Mother’. In 1894, the year of Mother Ignatius’ death, there is a record of a ‘loan from Bridget Gorman’. This loan was not repaid until 1898, and without the interest originally indicated. A substantial portion of the Home’s regular income in the early years was derived from ‘socials’ or dances, with a lesser sum coming from other fundraising events. At various times ‘music lessons’, presumably given by the Sisters, also brought in money as did subscriptions and donations, none of which however were consistent or significant features over the years. In 1902 the Home was said to be ‘urgently in need of funds’ and an appeal was launched (The Catholic Press 24th May 1902, p.12). However, in spite of the poor financial situation of the Home assistance was still given to needy people, evidenced by the entries in most months of at least a few shillings paid out to ‘the poor’.

Regarding the closure of the Home in 1919 the records state that:

On the introduction to Sydney of various industrial factories young girls gave up domestic service and went into the factories, enticed by the prospect of higher wages and more free time for amusement. There was therefore no longer need for the House of Mercy, however it was kept open for a few years as a guest house for Sisters coming to Sydney from the country but was closed on the 21st June 1919’.

(Sisters of Mercy n.d.a)

The available material leaves a number of questions unanswered. Why did it take so long for the House of Mercy to open? Why did it struggle when it did open? The second question is probably easier to answer than the first. The Home and Training School opened in 1891 with great support from the Ladies’ Committee who are said to have furnished all the rooms, and £110 being donated at the opening ‘the Cardinal leading the list with £10’ (Sydney Morning Herald 28th September 1891, p. 6). However, with the 1890s Depression everyone had less money, including the Sisters, many prospective employers of servants and those who might offer financial support. Another possibility is that the Home was not perceived as being so ‘deserving’ of support as some of the other charities run by women religious, such as the various institutions for children, the elderly and the sick or incapacitated. By the 1890s the number of such establishments requiring financial support from the community had increased. In 1900 there were nine other institutional charities run by women religious in the Sydney Archdiocese (Hughes 2002, pp. 37-38).

It seems that fewer young women were choosing domestic service and perhaps those who did were more prepared because of better educational provision in Catholic schools. There also was an increase in employment
options. Factory work had increased, and no doubt was an attractive alternative, despite a general public outcry against it for various reasons including aggravating the shortage of domestic servants, fear of the deleterious effects on physical and moral well-being of young women and the quality of the offspring of these potential mothers, as well as the perceived threat to male employment opportunities and wages (Kingston 1975, p. 69; O’Brien 1988, p. 93). There were also greater opportunities for middle-class women; compulsory education meant there was a greater demand for teachers. The other area of growth in women’s employment was the public service. With domestic service no longer the ‘default’ occupation for women, there was less need for a servants’ home and training school.

Thus there are a number of possible reasons why the House of Mercy did not thrive once opened, but answers to the question of why planning for the home stalled in 1878 for 13 years are not so obvious. I think possible factors lie within the Catholic community, which had other priorities in the 1870s and 1880s. The imminent cessation of government funding for denominational schools meant that building and staffing of Catholic schools became urgent. As noted earlier, from the late 1870s the Sisters of Mercy were undertaking building work at Monte Sant’Angelo. They were also opening schools then convents at various locations on the North shore and in the inner suburbs of Sydney (Pymble, Lavender Bay, Waterloo, Erskineville, Rosebery).

There are indications that the relationships between Mother Ignatius and others in the Catholic community were not always conducive to her gaining the support she needed. She said that she felt unsupported after the death of Fr McEncroe in 1868. The strength of opposition to her plans at the meeting at St Patrick’s in 1878 was certainly unusual. It may not have been solely to do with the proposed location. There were other issues. St Patrick’s parish was under the care of the Marists – there may not have been an uncomplicated relationship with them because of the earlier unpleasantness to do with ownership of the convent. When the Marists arrived the Sisters were asked to leave the convent, which they thought they owned and which they had paid off and renovated with hard-earned money eeked out from school fees. The Sisters’ relationship with parts of the local lay community may also have been strained. The Sisters had closed the boys’ school, finding the Rocks boys so unruly that they could not effectively teach them. This would have made them less than popular. As discussed earlier the fact that the Sisters were a foundation from England, not Ireland may also have been an issue in relations with an Irish-identifying lay community.
Another possible factor was Fr John Sheridan, as discussed above. Did he not support Mother Ignatius’ plans to open a House of Mercy in conjunction with the convent because he favoured the existing model of a home under the auspices of the Catholic Young Women’s Benefit Association (which he had founded) supervised by a lay matron?

The story of the Sydney House of Mercy demonstrates that in late nineteenth century Sydney it was not simple or straightforward for women’s religious institutes to undertake the works of charity and mercy for which they had been founded. Unlike their foremothers in Ireland they had to contend with establishing and maintaining themselves financially. They also had to adapt to the local conditions which included a poor standard of housing and primitive infrastructure such as transport, roads, sanitation and water. Additionally, Australian women’s religious institutes in the nineteenth century were constrained by a Church hierarchy struggling with insufficient resources to meet spiritual and educational needs. The withdrawal of government assistance for education resulted in schooling becoming the priority for all of the Catholic community including the religious institutes. The Catholic population had many demands on its financial resources and was on the whole not wealthy. For the Sisters of Mercy the delay in undertaking one of the core works of their institute meant that by the time it did commence, its financial viability became more difficult. Social changes such as a reduction in female migration from Ireland and wider employment opportunities for women in Sydney meant that in the early years of the twentieth century the need for a Servants’ Home and Training School was not as great as when the sisters arrived in Sydney in 1865.

References


Melbourne.

Freeman's Journal (1873 – 1900), Sydney.


McQuoin to n.k. 17 September 1877. Archives of the Sisters of Mercy North Sydney.


Sheridan, Fr. J.F. (n.d.) ‘Dean Sheridan, the Account of His Life by Himself’. Sydney Archdiocesan Archives.


Sisters of Mercy, Account Book St Patrick’s and Monte Sant’Angelo 1866 - 1882.  
Archives of the Sisters of Mercy North Sydney.


Sisters of Mercy (1869) *The Customs and Minor Regulations of the Religious Called Sisters of Mercy in the Parent House, Baggot Street, and its Branch Houses*, 
Archives of the Sisters of Mercy North Sydney.

Sisters of Mercy (1891) ‘*The Mater Misericordiae Home*’ (Pamphlet), Archives of the Sisters of Mercy North Sydney.


*Sydney Morning Herald*, ‘Roman Catholic Servants’ Home’, 28th September 1891, p. 6,  


Whiting to McQuoin (1879) 14th July, Archives of the Sisters of Mercy North Sydney.
CATHOLICS NEED NOT APPLY?
A CASE FOR ANTI-CATHOLIC BIAS IN THE SELECTION OF AIF OFFICERS

Graham Wilson*

In August 1914 Australia found itself drawn into the world conflict that would become known as the Great War.1 At the time that Australia pledged itself to the support of the Empire in the war, for legal reasons the standing Australian Army—a tiny regular army of staff, technical and coast defence specialists known as the Permanent Military Forces (PMF) and a large part-time force of conscripts known as the Citizen Forces (CF)—could not be ordered to serve outside Australia.2 To address this issue, the government authorised the raising of a special, all-volunteer force, members of which enlisted for service anywhere in the world for the duration of the war and up to four months after the end of the conflict if needed. This force was named the Australian Imperial Force, or AIF. 3

During the war 412,953 men and women enlisted into the AIF and 331,781 departed Australia for active service.4 Of the numbers who embarked, 63,705 were Catholic; this was the second largest religious group

1  The term ‘First World War’ or ‘World War One’ did not come into use until after the outbreak of the second world conflict in 1939. Prior to this date, the conflict of 1914-1918 was known as the ‘Great War’, and this is the term that will be used throughout this paper.

2  When the Universal Service element of the Defence Act 1903 came into effect in 1912, Australia’s army was reorganised into the Commonwealth Military Forces or CMF (not to be confused with the post-1921 Citizen Military Forces, which was also known as the CMF), consisting of the Permanent Military Forces (PMF), the Citizen Force (CMF – Universal Service trainees aged 18 – 25), the Senior Cadets (Universal Service trainees aged 14 – 18), and the Junior Cadets (ununiformed school boys aged 10 – 14).

3  It is common, in fact almost universal, practice for Australia’s overseas expeditionary force of the Great War to be referred to as the ‘First AIF’. This is technically and historically wrong. There was never a force called the ‘First AIF’; there was ‘the AIF’, raised in August 1914, and the ‘Second AIF’, raised in September 1939. As a matter of policy I never use the term ‘First AIF’.

to serve in the AIF and expressed as a comparative percentage represented a number slightly higher than the percentage of Catholics in the national population.

With this in mind, it should be presumed that Catholics would represent an equal or at least close percentage of the officers of the AIF; however, as this paper will demonstrate, this was not so.

One of the ingrained beliefs connected with the ‘history’ of the AIF is the supposed ‘fact’ that the AIF was an egalitarian, democratised force, drawn from a ‘classless’ society where Jack was as good as his master. In particular, this view propounds as fact the belief that AIF officers were drawn from the same recruiting base as the enlisted man and were fully representative of the whole of Australian society—the extension of this was that AIF officers were supposedly inherently both better than their British counterparts and closer to their men.

Various well-known commentators have made this claim. For instance, Lieutenant General Sir John Monash, commander of the Australian Corps from January 1918, wrote after the war:

There was...no officer caste, no social distinction in the whole force. In not a few instances, men of humble origin and belonging to the artisan class rose, during the war, from privates to the command of Battalions. The efficiency of the force suffered in no way in consequence. On the contrary, the whole Australian Army became automatically graded into leaders and followers according to the individual merits of every man, and there grew a wonderful understanding between them.5

As recently as Anzac Day 2011 the President of a large RS&L sub-branch, eulogising the supposed democratic nature of the AIF and its officer corps, is quoted as saying that during World War One British officers ‘could still buy a commission’, the inherent drawbacks of this system being apparently so self-evident that the speaker didn’t bother to expand on it.6 The sheer historical ignorance of this statement boggles the mind, given that commission by purchase in the British Army had been abolished in 1871 as part of the Cardwell Reforms.

The myth of the egalitarian Australian officer is based on the notion

that the officers of the AIF were drawn without bias or discrimination from a largely classless society, whereas the British officer was drawn from the restricted pool of a privileged upper class. On this, Charles Bean, the ‘Bard of the AIF’, wrote that:

…it mattered not whether a man was a labourer or barrister, tradesman or clerk, mechanic or farmer, engine-driver or policeman, baker or stockbroker…

An examination of Australian society at the time and of AIF enlistment records reveals that claims such as these could not be further from the truth.

Australia in 1914 was definitely not classless, it was a society divided sharply between a small elite of ‘haves’ at the top and a mass of ‘have nots’ at the bottom, buffered by a largish middle class. The small, moneyed elite at the top, which might as well be called the ‘upper class’, lived in the leafy, exclusive suburbs of Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide; dined and socialised in the homes of like situated contemporaries or exclusive city clubs; enjoyed extensive leisure time; had access to the best medical treatment of the day; and sent their sons to elite private schools.

The larger ‘middle class’ lived in well to do suburbs, some even managing to infringe into the upper class precincts, usually worked in comfortable surroundings, enjoyed good health care (for the time), enjoyed reasonable leisure hours, and sent their children to ‘good schools’, even private schools, although not necessarily ‘elite’ schools.

At the lower, largest end of the social scale the ‘working man’ (assuming he had a job) had to labour for exceptionally long hours, in poor, often atrocious, conditions, received little pay in return, enjoyed limited leisure time, lived in poor, even squalid, conditions, and sent his children to the poorest schools, either state or denominational. Higher education was almost unknown and it was a very exceptional son of this class who managed to rise above his surroundings and enter into the middle class.

Housing—almost always rented, as semi-skilled and unskilled workers of the working class were unable to afford to buy a house—was poor and unsanitary; houses often did not have sewerage and a standard water supply, and indoor, flushing toilets and even baths were rarities. Poor housing and sanitation inevitably led to dangerous health conditions for the working class. Infectious diseases such as whooping cough, tuberculosis and diphtheria, were rampant in the slums.

To suggest that Australia in 1914 was a single, homogenous, classless

---

whole is nothing short of facile and the popular view of an egalitarian and
democratic AIF is insupportable. Australia had a definite and identifiable
‘upper class’, where money, and to a lesser extent ‘breeding’, equalled
‘class’. This upper class was separated from the ‘working class’ by a larger
‘middle class’. This rigidly class bound society was the recruiting pool for
the AIF and for the AIF officer corps.

Some ground breaking work on defining an Australian or AIF ‘officer
type’ has been carried out by Lloyd Robson in his 1973 work *The Origin
and Character of the First A.I.F., 1914–1918*, and Dale Blair, particularly his
1998 paper on the subject published in the journal of the Military Historical
Society of Australia.8 This current paper draws somewhat on Blair’s work,
however, rather than considering a range of reasons for bias in officer
selection for the AIF, concentrates on the selection (or non-selection) of
Catholics.

Examination of AIF records reveals that its officers very much tended
to be drawn from the upper reaches of Australian society for the duration
of the war. On the other hand, and in direct refutation of claims made by,
for example, Bean and Monash, as the war ground on the British Army—
which incidentally had always appointed a proportion of its officers from
the ranks and promoted, at least in part, on merit—abandoned any pretence
of restricting commissions to the nobility and landed gentry. From January
1916 direct commissions into the Army ceased and the only avenue for a
non-Regular commission was via enlistment or conscription as a private
soldier.9

Of course, as the war progressed, members of the AIF from the ‘middle’
and ‘lower’ classes were appointed to commissions, however, for the entire
war the AIF favoured the upper reaches of society as its officer recruiting
pool.

As an example, and without going into great detail, in 1917 the AIF
abandoned to large degree the practice of raising ‘reinforcement drafts’ for
individual units and adopted the ‘General Reinforcement’ draft principle.
Under this system men joined the AIF as general enlees, received a
bare minimum of training in Australia, and were then despatched to the

8 Blair, Dale James, 1998 ‘An Australian “officer-type” — a demographic study of the
composition of officers in the 1st Battalion, First AIF’, *Sabretache: The Journal and
Proceedings of the Military Historical Society of Australia*, Vol. XXXIX, March,
pp.21-27.

9 Regular Army commissions continued to be granted following a course of study as a
cadet at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst.
Australian overseas base, where they were allotted to arms and units against standing requirements. There were 64 General Reinforcement drafts from the beginning of 1918 to November 1918 (27 NSW drafts, 17 VIC drafts, eight QLD drafts, six SA Drafts, three WA drafts and three TAS drafts), with two officers per draft for a total of 128 officers. Occupations listed for the General Reinforcement officers were:

- Accountant (9)
- Agent
- Architect (2)
- Bank Officer
- Book-keeper
- Brewer
- Builder (2)
- Business Manager (2)
- Carpenter
- Cashier
- Civil Servant (4)
- Clerk (13)
- Commercial Traveller (3)
- Customs Agent
- Departmental Manager
- Engineer (8)
- Farmer (4)
- Grazer (4)
- Grocer
- Insurance Inspector
- Lawyer (including ‘Solicitor’ and ‘Barrister’) (4)
- Miner
- Naval Officer (Retired)
- Prison Officer
- Railway Employee
- Salesman
- Secretary
- Shipping Agent
- Soldier (39)
- University Student (3)
- Surveyor (3)
- Teacher (10)
- Warehouse Keeper
While this list includes a brewer, a carpenter and a grocer, these three represent just 2.4% of the total. Given that official statistics of the time show that the professional and ‘moneyed’ classes (listed by the Commonwealth Statistician as ‘independent means’) represented just 6.55% of the employed adult male population of Australia, theoretically brewers, carpenters and grocers, along with labourers, carter, drivers, carriers, bricklayers, plumbers, electricians, cooks, waiters, hairdressers, barmen, drovers, blacksmiths, glass blowers, jockeys, gardeners, tram conductors, ‘butchers, bakers and candlestick makers’, etc., etc., should have represented 93.45% of the AIF’s officers, if we are to accept the notion of the egalitarian nature of the force. This notion is manifestly not true, as works such as those of Robson and Lloyd demonstrate for us.

Turning to the main theme of this paper, anti-Catholic bias in the selection of the AIF’s officers, an examination of records reveals that this definitely existed.

In 1914 the population of Australia was 4,455,005. Reported religious affiliations were:
- Christian: 4,274,414
- Non-Christian: 36,785
- Indefinite: 14,673
- No religion: 10,016
- Object to state: 83,003
- Unspecified: 36,114

The two largest denominations were the Church of England (1,710,443 or 38.4%) and the Catholic Church (921,425 or 20.7%). Assuming the myth of the egalitarian AIF officer class is correct, it would be reasonable to expect that the major denominational percentages would be reflected in the AIF’s officers, but, again, this is not so.

To demonstrate this, an examination of statistics of a number of units has been used. These units are 1st Infantry Brigade (a New South Wales Formation consisting of Brigade HQ and the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Infantry Battalions); the 2nd Light Horse Regiment (a Queensland unit); and the 4th

---


11 Ibid, p.123.
Field Artillery Brigade (a Victorian unit). 12

Statistics for the units at the time of their embarkation from Australia for overseas service are shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Officers Non-RC</th>
<th>RC</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Other Ranks Non-RC</th>
<th>RC</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HQ 1st Brigade</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Battalion</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>1012</td>
<td>828</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Battalion</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>1009</td>
<td>835</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Battalion</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>1044</td>
<td>824</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Battalion</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1056</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Light Horse</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Field Artillery Brigade</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Percentage of Catholics vs Non-Catholics in 1st Brigade, 2nd Light Horse and 4th Field Artillery Brigade at First Embarkation

Selecting a single unit from the list, the 1st Battalion, senior battalion of the 1st Brigade, this unit began forming at Randwick Racecourse in Sydney on 17 August 1914 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Leonard Dobbin, a former active Militia and Citizen Force (CF) officer on the Reserve of

---

12 In the Great War what would today be referred to as an ‘artillery regiment’ was referred to as an ‘artillery brigade’; a Field Artillery Brigade consisted of an HQ, three gun batteries and an ammunition column. There were three brigades per infantry division and in 1914 doctrinally each of a division’s three infantry brigades was allotted a field artillery brigade in support during operations; theoretically like numbered brigades were linked, i.e., the 1st Infantry Brigade was allotted the 1st Field Artillery Brigade. However, artillery brigades were ‘divisional assets’, controlled by the division’s senior gunner officer, the Commander Royal Artillery or CRA, who, along with the divisional commander, decided how the division’s artillery would be deployed. When doctrine met reality at Gallipoli the idea of field artillery brigades being permanently allotted to a particular infantry brigade was permanently dropped. The term ‘brigade’ was replaced after the war by ‘regiment’. 83
Officers in 1914. 13 The battalion was allotted CF Training Areas 29-36 (Western Sydney) as its recruiting area, although, in reality the battalion drew recruits from all over the Sydney Metropolitan area and surrounding rural environs.14

The embarkation roll for the battalion shows that 184 of its original members listed themselves as ‘RC’ (Roman Catholic).15 While this represented 18% of the battalion’s strength (very close to the national figure), only one of the battalion’s 32 officers was Catholic, a representation of just 3.2%.

The list of occupations held by the officers of the battalion when it embarked for overseas service in October 1914, which will become relevant below, was:

- Auditor
- Bank clerk (2)
- Bank manager
- Carpenter and joiner
- Civil servant (2)
- Clerk (5)
- Draughtsman
- Electrical engineer (2)
- Estate agent
- Federal public servant
- Fencing master
- Medical practitioner
- Mining engineer (2)
- Soldier (5)
- Solicitor
- Student (3)
- Warehouseman
- Woolbroker
- Wool buyer

Of this list, only two could be considered ‘working class’, namely ‘Carpenter and joiner’ and ‘Warehouseman’. It should be noted, however, that the warehouseman, Captain Frederick John Robins (appointed to command C
Company), was a serving captain in the CF 34th Infantry Regiment, while the carpenter and joiner, 2nd Lieutenant Alfred John Shout (later Captain A.J. Shout, VC, MC), was a Boer War veteran and a serving 2nd Lieutenant in the CF 29th Infantry. It should also be noted that while Robins listed his occupation as ‘warehouseman’, his home address was listed in the then reasonably well to do suburb of Glebe Point, so it can probably be surmised that he was more than a shelf stacker in a warehouse.

Things never really improved for the 1st Battalion. Of the 57 officers who were assigned to the 1st Battalion reinforcement drafts, only three were Catholic, a ratio of 5.3%. These three men were all ‘professionals’—2nd Lieutenant Claude Augustus Clarke was a clerk; 2nd Lieutenant John Mortimer Moy was a teacher; and 2nd Lieutenant Harold Lyon Lamb O’Neill was a solicitor.

The situation was no better for the other units examined. The table below lists the number of officer drafted as reinforcements to the various units up to the time of the abandonment of unit reinforcements and adoption of the General Service Reinforcement scheme, with the numbers of Catholic officers noted (Note: HQ 1st Brigade did not receive reinforcements from Australia).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Officers</th>
<th>Non-RC</th>
<th>RC</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Battalion</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Battalion</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Battalion</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Battalion</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Light Horse</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Field Artillery Brigade</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Officer Reinforcements 1st – 4th Battalion, 2nd Light Horse and 4th Field Artillery Brigade to December 1917

The average percentage for the four infantry battalions and the field artillery brigade was 5.5%. As can be seen, the trend was only bucked by the light horse regiment; this is explained by the smaller numbers involved. Of the three Catholic reinforcement officers for 2nd Light Horse, Lieutenant Alan Safino Righetti (3rd Reinforcements) was a storekeeper, but also a serving CF officer (3rd Light Horse Regiment); Captain Simon Bernard Boland (8th Reinforcements) was a Senior Clerk in the Railway Commissioner’s Office;
and 2nd Lieutenant Leo Bede Guiren (21st Reinforcements) was a grazier.

At the end of 1917 the system of providing individual unit reinforcement drafts was dropped and both officers and enlisted men were allotted to ‘General Reinforcements’. Of 124 officers drafted as General Reinforcements, just 14 or 11.3% were Catholic. While the latter figure is certainly an improvement on 3.2%, it is still far from the national percentage of 20.7%. In addition, the figures for the General Reinforcement drafts are skewed by the fact that a large number of the officers appointed were drawn from the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery and the Administrative and Instructional Staff of the PMF. For various reasons, Catholics were proportionally over represented in both of these branches of the PMF, which resulted in a higher number of Catholic General Reinforcement officers being appointed. Interestingly, examination of the pre-war rolls of the PMF Royal Australian Garrison Artillery (RAGA) reveals an astonishingly high number of Irish Catholics in the ranks. This is probably a reflection of the fact that for this sector of society service in the RAGA represented stable, long term, relatively well respected, reasonably well paid employment, with a pension at the end of it. The status side of permanent military service was not unimportant—a warrant officer was a respected professional, and a man who enlisted as a gunner could quite realistically aspire, by hard work and professional education, to eventually join the ranks of commissioned officers, solidly and respectably ‘middle class’. This trend was repeated in the Siege Artillery Brigade raised for service on the Western Front; recruited exclusively from the ranks of the RAGA, an abnormally high number of Catholics appear on the unit’s embarkation rolls.\[16\]

It is indisputable that Catholics in 1914 tended to occupy low paid, unskilled or at best semi-skilled jobs—the most common occupation listed for Catholics on enlistment is ‘labourer’, with the odd ‘billiard marker’, ‘cook’, ‘glass blower’, ‘iron bedstead mechanic’, etc., thrown in for variety. But not every Catholic who enlisted was an unskilled or semi-skilled manual worker.

Referring to the list of 1st Battalion officer employments above, consider the following list of names from the battalion’s original embarkation roll:

- Allan, Ronald Gordon: Journalist
- Arpante, Raphael Edgar: Engineer
- Atkin, Randall: Metallurgist

16 AWM8 13/49 Embarkation Rolls, Siege Artillery Brigade and 36 Australian Heavy Artillery Group.
Backlog, Thomas: Clerk
Beck, Charles Augustus: Government survey draughtsman
Brook, Claude Edward: School teacher
Bruce, William Thomas: Clerk
Buckley, Joseph William: Building contractor
Cody, John Reginald: Clerk
Cody, Vincent de Paul: Architect
Connellan, James Aloysius: Clerk
Coy, Leslie Samuel: Clerk
Cropper, William: Clerk
Dalton, John James: Law clerk
Deuquet, Camille: Teacher
Fahey, Hubert James: Clerk
Fitzgerald, James Noel: Bookkeeper
Galli, Leo: Professor of Geology
Gannon, John: Clerk
Gaunson, Charles William: Bank clerk
Guy, James McGirr: Clerk
Healey, Reginald: Clerk
Heery, Thomas Joseph: Schoolmaster
Hogarth, Darrell: Clerk
Hogarth, Robert: Clerk
Hury, Thomas Joseph: Schoolmaster
Jordan, Sidney Joseph: Salesman
Kelly, Harry: Salesman
Kelly, James: Clerk
Kelly, James Edward: Clerk
Kelly, Frederick: Clerk
Kennedy, Patrick Augustine: Civil Servant
Kleshenko, Joseph: Engineer
Lakeman, Allan: Clerk
Every one of the men listed was a Catholic.\footnote{Ibid.}

Here the question must be asked, why were the Kelly twins—James and Frederick—for example, both clerks, not considered suitable for appointment
as officers when five non-Catholic clerks were? Why was bank clerk Charles William Gaunson not considered suitable for appointment as an officer when two non-Catholic bank clerks were? Why was Nial Mallarkey, a 19 year old university student and serving member of the Sydney University Scouts (an officer producing CF unit) not considered suitable for a commission, when three non-Catholic students (all Anglican) were commissioned?

An original member of the 1st Battalion was Sergeant E.R. Larkin, MLA, a Labor member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly who enlisted in August 1914. Larkin did not actually think highly of AIF officers, writing from Egypt:

Suffice it to say that there would be very few here if the men were free to leave or had anticipated how they would be treated…

Not a particularly glowing endorsement of AIF officer-man relationships. More relevant, however, is the fact that Larkin, a former police sergeant, first Secretary of the New South Wales Rugby League, Director of Royal North Shore Hospital, and State parliamentarian was Catholic. Yet Larkin, although manifestly suited for a commission, was passed over and died a sergeant at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. In all fairness, if Larkin had survived the Gallipoli landing there is every likelihood that he would have been commissioned (this is of course supposition, albeit strongly based on factual evidence), however the point is that even though an obviously suited candidate for immediate commission on enlistment, this was denied him.

Blair notes that the lower percentage of Catholics appointed to commissions may have reflected suspicion about Catholic loyalty toward Britain and the Empire. However, Catholic response to enlistment was consistent throughout the war, with the percentage of Catholics enlisting being slightly above their percentage in the population, and it is clear that neither charges of disloyalty levelled at Catholics during the conscription referenda, nor resentment over British treatment of Irish rebels following

18 National Archives of Australia (NAA) B2455 7376778 Service Record, 321 LARKIN, Edward Rinnix.
21 Ibid. See also Larkin Service Record.
22 Blair, p.25.
the Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916 had any effect on Catholic enlistments. In relation to the Easter Rising, the group of volunteers for the various units most likely to have reflected signs of Catholic disaffection would have been those found in the 1st Brigade’s infantry battalions’ 19th and 20th Reinforcements, recruited during the period that the rebellion and subsequent execution of rebel leaders occurred. Yet, for the four battalions these two reinforcements contributed a higher percentage of Catholic volunteers than the original battalions—24% for the 1st Battalion, 28% for the 2nd Battalion, 22% for the 3rd Battalion, and 27% for the 4th Battalion.23

To be fair, it was not all doom and gloom. Somewhat on the plus side, an examination of VC awards to the AIF shows that there was no religious bias here. Of the sixty-four members of the AIF awarded the VC, fifteen listed their religion as ‘Roman Catholic’, roughly 24% of the total, higher than the national average.24 VC awards, however, are a unique case. Recommendations were rigidly scrutinised at every level of command, and any whiff of religious bias would have immediately been commented on. It is perhaps significant that Brigadier-General Thomas Griffiths, CMG, DSO, Commandant AIF HQ, the man responsible for the administration of the whole AIF, including honours and awards, was a Catholic (convert).25 ‘Tom’ Griffiths, a pre-war regular, had risen from the rank of Gunner in the Victorian Permanent Artillery to Lieutenant in the Corps of Military Staff Clerks in the Commonwealth Military Forces and Secretary of the Military Board; he had a stellar career in the AIF as a staff officer and administrator. It was said of him that he was a ‘...man who knew military procedure, routine and organisation as did few others.’ Tom Griffiths was also a man who had a very firm finger on the administrative pulse of the AIF and who was not afraid to throw himself into a fight. Had he so much as suspected any religious bias in the matter of honours and awards he would have raised an outcry that would have been heard as far away as Melbourne.

In a perhaps wry exercise in cosmic irony, the only area in which Catholics led the rest of the AIF was in military detention in England. In

23 AWM8 Series, Embarkation Rolls 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Battalions. For the 2nd Light Horse (22nd Reinforcement) the percentages were 3% and for the 4th Field Artillery Brigade (11th Reinforcement) zero; however, the numbers for these two units were quite small (33 for the light horse and 18 for the artillery) and more or less statistically irrelevant.

24 Wilson, Graham, 2008 ‘Great-Grandad was Catholic and Didn’t get a VC: An Odd Myth of the AIF, Sabretache, Vol. 49, No. 4, Dec, pp.33-51.

25 NAA B2455 4703497 AIF Service Record, GRIFFITHS, Thomas.
1917 the AIF, which had an average of 350 men per month undergoing detention in British Army detention barracks, established its own detention barrack in the civil prison at Lewes.26 A section of the general history of the AIF Detention Barrack (AIFDB) entitled ‘Denominational’ reveals an interesting anomaly in the AIF’s statistics. The 162,774 members of the Church of England who served overseas with the AIF and the 63,705 Catholics represented roughly 50% and 20% of the AIF respectively. The general history of the AIFDB, however, gives the following denominational break down for inmates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>1875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>1244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Protestant Denominations</td>
<td>535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>3652</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Breakdown of AIFDB Inmates by Religious Denomination27

Note that Church of England members, who represented 50% of the AIF, also represented about 50% of the prisoners in Lewes. But Catholics, who represented approximately 20% of the AIF, contributed almost 35% of the prisoners at Lewes. It should be noted that most of the members of the AIF who ended up in the AIFDB at Lewes were not desperately bad characters; while some fairly serious military crimes were represented, the majority of committals were for extended or multiple periods of absence without leave. It should also be noted that the AIFDB returned 1,105 fully trained men (the equivalent of an infantry battalion at full strength including 1st and 2nd reinforcements) to the line prior to the Armistice.28 What, however, does the number of Catholics committed to the AIFDB mean? Were Catholics discriminated against by the Army authorities and thus more likely to end up in detention? Were Catholics worse soldiers than Anglicans? Were Catholics more likely to commit a serious offence? Who knows? It is, however, an interesting question.

To return to the actual theme of this paper, the myth of the egalitarian

and democratic AIF, as embodied by the force’s officer corps, this entrenched belief is very much just that, a myth, with various biases in selection definitely identifiable. One glaringly demonstrable bias was Catholic officer appointments.

As Blair has noted, looking at who was more likely to be commissioned, the AIF officer was likely to be tall and physically robust, Anglo-Celtic and Established Church, educated at a private school or university, employed in a professional field and living in a leafy, upscale suburb of Sydney or some other capital city.29 The ‘officer type’ of the AIF in fact embodied the self-same characteristics of the stereotypical British officer derided by Bean and others and makes a mockery of the notion of an egalitarian, democratic force.

Was there a deliberate establishment Church of England bias against Catholic and other non-Conformist officer membership in the AIF? This is impossible to confirm or deny; there is certainly no ‘smoking gun’, no official memorandum or unofficial letter or note stating that Catholics were not preferred in the AIF’s officer ranks. However, given the facts and figures listed, the case can definitely be made. Certainly, the over-representation of Anglicans in the AIF’s officer ranks, far out of proportion to their actual representation in society, strongly points to a pro-Anglican bias.

29 Blair, p.27.
THE CCD MOVEMENT 1880 – 2000: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR CATHOLIC CHILDREN NOT IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Ann Maree Whenman*

In 1988 Father Richard Dixon, a Confraternity of Christian Doctrine [CCD] leader in the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney in the 1980s and 1990s, published an article exploring the parish-based nature of the CCD movement, the provision of religious education for Catholic children not in Catholic schools. He acknowledged that the national picture is ‘complex and diverse … and had not yet come into focus’.¹ He provided some anecdotal observations on the CCD movement in the local context noting the ‘absence of an interpretative model’ adequate for description of the ‘unique situation of operation’ of the CCD.² A model, when articulated, would ‘set the CCD undertakings within the pastoral mission of the Church’ and state the catechists’ sense of purpose in ‘pastoral, educational and theological terms’.³ Dixon concluded that the CCD undertakings were a practice seeking a model.

To provide the essential background material for the interpretation of the place of the CCD movement in the pastoral mission of the Catholic Church it was necessary to develop a coherent documented account of the history of the provision of religious education for Catholic children not in Catholic schools in New South Wales. This would address an identified deficiency in the historical record of Catholic education, specifically Catholic religious education in New South Wales. This paper provides discussion of some findings from a doctoral research study that developed this documented historical account.


2 Dixon, 14
3 Dixon, 14

* Dr Ann Maree Whenman is a lecturer in Religious Education in the Faculty of Education and Arts at Australian Catholic University. This paper provides discussion of some of the findings from her doctoral research studies completed in 2011.

Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society 36 (2015), 93-112
Historical Prologue

The first period, 1866 – 1905, was a period in which Colonial governments including New South Wales, introduced free and compulsory schooling and withdrew previous funding arrangements for Church-run schools.

From 1872 to 1895, all six colonies enacted legislation aimed at creating structured and comprehensive educational systems that were able to respond the needs of Australian society. Colonial legislators withdrew state-aid to non-government (denominational) schools. All colonies faced the problem of the place of religion in schools that were ‘free, public and secular’. Around the common premise, ‘religion would not be entirely excluded from Government schools’\(^4\) the individual Colonial responses varied significantly.

In NSW, the Public Instruction Act (1880), made no attempt to alter the religious education provisions established in the 1866 act. Education in Government schools included ‘general religious teaching’ (unchanged from the previous legislation [1866]) and ‘special religious instruction’ where visits by religious teachers were possible for “not more than one hour per week.\(^5\) The Roman Catholic Church strongly opposed this decision.

In 1879 the Bishops of NSW issued a Joint Pastoral, *Catholic Education*, condemning ‘the principle of secularist education and those schools founded on that principle’.\(^6\) O’Farrell noted that ‘at the heart of what was to become a long and bitter debate in Australian society was the preservation of the religious, political and social status of Catholics – Catholic separatism provided security for Catholic interests – Catholic schools became a symbol of Catholic unity’.\(^7\)

The ecclesial and political decision of the Catholic Bishops to maintain existing Catholic schools and establish new schools as an ecclesial priority had far-reaching effects.

In 1882 17% of Catholic school age children in New South Wales were attending Government schools.\(^8\) Catholic parents who sent their children

\(^4\) Rawlinson, R W. *Religion in Education in NSW Government Schools*. Sydney: Government Printer, 1980, no. 2.9, 10

\(^5\) Rawlinson, no. 2.9, 10


to Government schools were to be refused the sacraments. Catholic clergy were not allowed to enter government schools, despite the provisions of the 1866 Public Schools Act (Section 19) and the 1880 Public Instruction Act (Section 17) permitting children of any one religious persuasion to be instructed by a clergymen or other religious teacher of such persuasion for not more than one hour each day. The Sydney Morning Herald in October 1884 criticised this stance of the Catholic authorities:

As matters stand, the Roman Catholic Clergy, rather than give their children religious instruction in a Public School, leave them without religious instruction whatever. That may be a consistent course, but we fail to see it is a remarkably Christian course.

O’Farrell observed, ‘the episcopacy reasoned that to allow such instruction would be to countenance the state system, which the church condemned in principle, and to countenance Catholics attending that system, which was also condemned’. Ecclesial prohibitions on Catholic parents who sent their children to Public schools were to impact on the attitude and actions of clergy and laity well beyond 1955 when they were officially withdrawn.

In 1885 the bishops of Australia and New Zealand met for the first time in plenary council – they ‘determined that the first building in a new parish should be its school. Build the school, use it for Sunday Mass, until you can build a church’. Campion observed that ‘by 1885 Catholic schools had become, what they were to remain, a major focus of parish life, episcopal concern and lay activity . . . the parochial school could be considered the single most distinctive feature of Australian Catholics’.

During this period there is evidence of Parish–based provision of religious instruction to children not attending Catholic schools in the form of Society for Christian Doctrine and regular Sunday Schools in Catholic Parishes.

The Australasian Catholic Directory provided an account of a branch of the Society of Christian Doctrine established in 1882 at St Francis, Sydney, which reported ‘the children (600) assemble in St Francis Hall Sunday

---

13 Campion, 56.
evening for Catechism taught by members of the Christian Doctrine Society assisted by two Sisters of the Good Samaritan'. From 1867 to 1891 the number of Catholic Sunday schools increased from 116 to 429. These schools were principally providing Catechism classes for Catholic children who were not attending Catholic schools.

In 1895, concerned with those Catholic children in rural and remote areas, the Australasian Bishops in the Secondary Plenary Council encouraged clergy in remote and thinly populated rural areas that could not support a Catholic school to provide catechists to teach the children on Sundays or any convenient time.

At the beginning of the 20th century The Freemans Journal in 1906 reported that there were just over 31,000 Catholic children in Government schools in NSW. Three significant groups of Catholic children were not receiving religious education - students at Government schools in towns and cities where Catholic schools were available; those in Public schools in isolated communities with no Catholic school; and, those living in remote rural settings where no form of school was available.

Reports collected in the parish census from Richmond Parish (western Sydney) in 1902 and 1906 noted that the priest regularly went to the public schools of the district to teach catechism. This evidence is supported in a letter from Peter Board, Under-Secretary, Department of Public Instruction (NSW), where he notes 797 visits paid by Roman Catholic clergy to Public schools in 1905 of a total of 42,481 visits to provide special religious instruction.

Catechetical Renewal: Call and Response

The second historical period begins in 1905 with a call for catechetical renewal that was to influence local approaches to religious education in the school and parish settings for children not in Catholic schools. In this period two parallel ‘threads’ of influence on the provision of religious education for these children can be identified.

The first ‘thread’, the influence of the Church hierarchy identified as an ‘influence from above’, was the call for catechetical renewal by Pope Pius X in the encyclical letter Acerbo nimis (On teaching Christian Doctrine). 

15 Barcan, 163.
16 Board, Peter. Sydney, Australia: Sydney Archdiocesan Archives (SAA), 1906, October.
In decreeing the canonical establishment of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine in the encyclical, Pius X\(^{18}\) acknowledged the reality of the scarcity of priests in some areas and the lay support that such an organisation would provide in the teaching of the Catechism. Particular reference was made to the provision of classes of religion to instruct ‘young people who attended public schools from which all teaching is banned’\(^{19}\) and that attention that needed to be given to adult instruction.\(^{20}\)

The encyclical, *Acerbo nimis*, was a document with a pastoral focus calling for an overhaul and renewal of the structures of parish catechetical ministry.\(^{21}\) The essential elements for catechetical renewal available to the Church included: the proposed development of a systematic approach for the provision of religious instruction, regular lessons with specific themes and a methodology of teaching distinguished from that of preaching; a clear inter-generational approach, with children, youth and adults identified as those in need of instruction with implications of life-long learning for both the teacher and those that were being taught; and, the notion that such catechetical instruction should be available to all walks of life, rich and poor, the otherwise well educated and those with little educational experience.

The climate within the Catholic Church in Australia and the place of the Church within Australian society at the beginning of the 20\(^{th}\) century was not conducive to the open and enthusiastic reception of Pius X’s exhortation for catechetical renewal and the establishing of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine in every parish. A response of the local hierarchy to the encyclical can be found in Cardinal Moran’s *Circular to the Clergy* of the Diocese of Sydney.\(^{22}\)

A comparison of the two documents revealed several significant inconsistencies. Cardinal Moran’s descriptive discussion is strongly focused on instruction of children with scant mention of adult instruction. Another inconsistency is the inclusion, by Cardinal Moran, of praise of the teaching of Catechism in Religious Schools, stressing the duty of parents and strong criticism of secular schools and education – a clear response to the

---

18 Pius X, n. 22
19 Pius X, n. 23
20 Pius X, n. 24
local situation, without consideration of the almost contradictory position advocated in Pius X’s encyclical. A third inconsistency lies in Cardinal Moran’s failure to emphasise the distinction made by Pius X between the catechetical roles of teaching and preaching and the importance of training and preparation in the delivery of catechetical instruction.

The issues identified at 3rd Australian Catholic Congress in Sydney on 1909 reflect the complexity of the local situation in the first decade of the 20th century: the separation of religious instruction from the broader school curriculum; the influence of other Christian Churches on the nature of Religious Instruction provided in public schools; the secularisation of education and marginalisation of Religious Instruction; the funding of education; and, the role of parental choice.23

In January 1911 at the Catholic Educational Conference of New South Wales Bishop O’Connor, Bishop of Armidale (1904 – 1930), expressed concern for Catholic children in rural and remote areas – ‘outlying districts where Catholic pupils are forced by circumstances to attend non-Catholic schools, the clergy should make adequate provision for the instruction of such children’.24

Pius X’s call for catechetical renewal the Church in Rome resulted in: the incorporation of specific provision for the establishment of the CCD in the 1917 Code of Canon Law; the establishment of a Catechetical Office in Rome in 1923; and, in a decree specifically focused on Catechetical Instruction, *Provido sane consilio* (On Better Care and Promotion Catechetical Teaching) in 1935.

The second thread, identified as an influence “from below”, was the evidence of the involvement of the clergy and the laity in a variety of activities focused on the provision of religious education for Catholic children not in Catholic schools in the second period.

An example of such a response from ‘below’ can be found in the letter written by Father Peter Klein from St Mark’s, Drummoyne (a city parish in the Archdiocese of Sydney) to Archbishop Kelly (Archbishop of Sydney 1914 -1940). Father Klein requested, from the Archbishop, the names of ‘one or two other priests’ with whom he could share personal experiences

---


24 “Catholic Educational Conference of New South Wales.” Sydney, Australia: Sydney Archdiocesan Archives, 1911, January.
of working with the Catholic children in Public schools.\textsuperscript{25} No response from the Archbishop could be found in the archival records.

Evidence of this influence took a more public face in the broadening of the Catholic education agenda was evident in the proceedings of the first Australian Catholic Education Congress held in Adelaide in November 1936.\textsuperscript{26} At the time of this congress the number of Catholic children of school age in Australia was estimated to be around 334,000 – one third of these children were not attending Catholic schools. At that Congress the need to respond to the growing numbers of Catholic school age children in not attending Catholic schools was clearly articulated. The inclusion of four sessions specifically concerned with the provision of religious instruction was a public statement of the concern that existed within Catholic Education circles and the Catholic Church for these children and their families. Three sessions focused on Catholic children in rural and isolated contexts where there were no Catholic schools and one on religious instruction in State schools in areas where Catholic schools were established.

For Catholic children in isolated rural areas, a comprehensive program of religious education by correspondence was developed. \textit{Religion-by-Post} was initiated by Rev J. T. McMahon in Western Australia in the early 1920s based on the successful model being used by the Western Australian Education Department. McMahon described the aim of the scheme, known as the Perth Plan, as ‘teaching religious doctrine through correspondence programs’.\textsuperscript{27}

In July 1924, at the request of Archbishop Sheehan (coadjutor Archdiocese of Sydney) editor of the \textit{Australasian Catholic Record} (1924-1935), McMahon wrote an article on the a scheme being used in Western Australia of teaching Religious Doctrine by means of correspondence lessons, known as \textit{Religion-by-Post}.\textsuperscript{28} Although aware of this scheme operating in the Archdiocese of Perth, it was not until 1935 that Archbishop Sheehan launched a similar scheme in the Archdiocese of Sydney. He devoted over twelve months to the development of a series of lessons designed to meet the local needs. Each lesson took the form of a letter to

\textsuperscript{25} Klein, Peter. Sydney, Australia: Sydney Archdiocesan Archives, 1917, June 15.

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Australian Catholic Education Conference: Adelaide, Australia November 8th - 15th}, Adelaide, 1936.


\textsuperscript{28} McMahon, J. T. “Religion by Post.” \textit{The Australasian Catholic Record} 1, no. 3 (July 1924)
the pupil and hence the scheme became known as *Religion by Letter*. From the start of the scheme in February 1936, 50,000 copies of the letters were printed and distributed in the country and city/town centres of NSW each month. In the first year of operation *Religion by Letter* provided for the religious instruction of 22,850 Catholic children in New South Wales who were not attending Catholic schools in more isolated locations and rural areas. Six of the eight dioceses in the NSW Province participated in the scheme. The NSW lessons were adaptable for use in correspondence and oral instruction.

In the 1920s and 1930s, groups working in metropolitan areas and in large country towns, such as the *Theresians* and the *Legion of Mary*, developed a well-organised and coordinated response, for both ‘out of school hours’ and ‘within school hours’ religious education. The NSW correspondence lessons were adapted to provide the lessons for children in these contexts. Training programs and detailed lesson plans were developed for the ‘catechists’ who were mainly lay women volunteers.

In the mid 1930s, in response to both these influences, the Catholic hierarchy officially lifted the ban on the laity teaching in State schools whilst maintaining the prohibitions on the clergy doing so and parents from sending their children to those schools. In 1938, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine was officially established in the Archdiocese of Sydney. During this period, the development of Archdiocesan coordination of the activities related to the provision of religious education for Catholic children not in Catholic schools was evident.

With the official establishment of the CCD, *The Catechists’ Guild*, (founded in the 1930s), turned its attention to providing religious instruction for Catholics in State schools. Courses were organised for catechists in
parochial guilds. In the early 1940s there were approximately 300 Guild members, attending 190 schools and instructing 7,540 children. By the end of 1942 the number of children receiving instruction from Guild members had reached 10,000.

In 1945, a report in the Catholic Weekly (4 January, 1945) named several significant groups also involved in religious education of Catholic children in State schools at that time. These groups, active in the period from the 1920s to 1960s, included, the Theresians, the Legion of Mary, St Joseph's Guild for Catholic Laymen and the Grail.30

In the early 1950s, the official policy of the Catholic Church was, as it had been for the previous 70 years, opposed to the provision of religious education to Catholic children in government schools with penalties for parents who chose to send their children to those schools. The reality was that local responses continued to vary considerably from that policy.

By the mid-1950s, the provision of religious education for Catholic children attending State schools in the Archdiocese of Sydney was operating with the official support of the Cardinal. The local Parish Priest was responsible for the recruitment and training of lay catechists to undertake this work in the State schools of his parish. In many cases the Catechist Guild, particularly the Theresians and the Legion of Mary provided that support for the priests.

The response to the call for catechetical renewal, whilst not universally taken up in local parishes, had resulted in the development of training courses for catechists, textbooks for them to use in the classroom and support and recognition of the CCD movement within diocesan structures.

Reestabishment of the CCD in NSW

The post-World War II period was a time of rapid social change within Australia. Population growth through increased birth rates and migration placed pressure on many institutions including schools. In many instances the Catholic schools were unable to cope with the numbers of Catholic children. In 1955, due to social pressures and political realities related to funding of Catholic schools, the Australia Catholic hierarchy lifted all prohibitions related to Catholic children attending State schools. This marked the beginning of the third period in the history of the CCD movement in NSW, 1955 -1966.

A local census in 1955 indicated over 15,000 and possibly 20,000 Catholic children attending State Schools in the Archdiocese of Sydney. At the Clergy Conference in September 1955 Cardinal Gilroy called for the CCD to be established in every parish. A plan was announced ‘for the more thorough religious instruction of Catholic children attending public schools in the archdiocese of Sydney’. Father Kevin McGovern was appointed to assist the priests and Bishop Patrick Lyons (Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney - 1950 to 1956) was asked to be responsible for ‘giving effect’ to this plan. Monsignor Freeman (later Cardinal Freeman), Chaplain to the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, and Father Slowey, Diocesan Inspector of Schools, were appointed to assist Bishop Lyons in this task.

In a Circular to the Parish Priests of the Archdiocese, in late January 1956, Bishop Lyons outlined the details of the plan for ‘Religious Instruction of Children in Public Schools’. The proposed date for commencement of this strategy was Monday, 13 February 1956. The plan described in the circular was as follows:

Over and above the instruction of these children by catechists during school hours, which should continue to be given as at present, religious teachers will take the children for extra instruction outside school hours at a time to be arranged by the parish priest with the religious.

A comprehensive system was set up to support the Parish Priests in their response to the directions in the circular.

The response from the clergy was poor. Prior to the next Archdiocesan Clergy Conference in September 1956, Father McGovern prepared a Report on Public Schools for Cardinal Gilroy. The report he noted that ‘in many Parishes there does not appear to be a full realisation of the gravity of the situation . . . there is a tendency to look on Catholic Public School children...
as hopeless, for whom nothing can be done’.

McGovern observed that an improvement in the overall response in the Archdiocese was achieved in 1956 through the work of the laity in organisations such as the Legion of Mary, the St Vincent de Paul Society and the Theresians and through direct appeals to the Catholic trainee teachers. He reported the Legion of Mary organising retreats for State School children with the plans for an extension of the scope, number and location, of this activity. Local conferences of the St Vincent de Paul Society in the southern part of the Archdiocese, Sutherland-Cronulla area, had organised a retreat for boys.

Bishop Lyons recommended that the Cardinal speak to the priests at the Clergy Conference of the importance of the Archdiocesan initiative to teach the Catholic children attending State schools saying:

I think it is essential to emphasise that this scheme for the souls of so many children is a serious matter of conscience for the priests. I cannot imagine anything more important in their pastoral visitation. If they take an interest, the scheme will be a success. Otherwise it will not be a success.

The minutes of the Archdiocesan Clergy Conference held on 26 September 1956 recorded the Cardinal’s direction to the clergy on the matters of extra instruction for children in State schools as follow:

Each Pastor has the onus of seeing that there are catechists to give Religious Instruction to Catholic pupils in all the Public schools in his parish. He has further obligation for arranging for such children to attend additional religious instructions to be given outside school hours by Religious sisters and brothers.

With the appointment of Bishop Lyons as coadjutor Bishop of Sale (a Victorian rural diocese) in October 1956 the responsibility for the promotion of the apostolate for the Catholic children in State schools in the Archdiocese of Sydney was transferred to Monsignor James Freeman.

At the next Archdiocesan Clergy conference in June 1957, Cardinal Gilroy once again appealed to the clergy to address the responsibility in the provision of religious education for the Catholic children attending

37 McGovern, 1956
38 Lyons, Patrick F. “Correspondence: Bishop Lyons to Cardinal Gilroy.” In Lyons Papers, Sydney Archdiocesan Archives, 1956.
39 “Clergy Conference Minutes 1940 - 1960.” Sydney Archdiocesan Archives, 1956, n.14
State schools in their Parish. This time the appeal was presented as a legal obligation conforming to the 1917 Code of Canon Law. The minutes of the conference record the Cardinal’s appeal:

In order to conform with the Code of Canon Law and in view of the critical situation arising from very large numbers of Catholic children in State Schools, it is desirable that the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine should be established in every Parish without delay.\(^{41}\)

In 1958, after attempting to promote the religious instruction of Catholic children in State schools as a parish-based (parochial) initiative for three years with mixed success, the Archdiocesan leadership looked for a new direction. This direction consisted of two complementary strategies.

The first strategy was the establishment of a centralised Diocesan management structure for the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine – providing strong leadership and tangible support for the growth of the work in the parishes of the Archdiocese. The aim was to establish the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine in each parish. The development of diocesan support structures was to assist the parishes in this task. By 1959, a Diocesan CCD office had been established to coordinate activities ranging from in school hours religious education in State school to out of school hours Parish CCD activities such as extra lessons, sacramental programs and retreats and camps. Metropolitan dioceses Australia-wide also adopted this second strategy establishing centralised Diocesan management of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.

In the Archdiocese of Sydney the established work of the Theresians and the Legion of Mary continued in a number of parishes but was not able to keep up with the rapidly growing number of Catholic children enrolled in State schools. The second strategy took the form of a direct request from the Archdiocesan leadership to Religious Orders to supply personnel for the religious instruction of Catholic children in State schools in the Sydney metropolitan area. Many Religious Orders responded generously to this request. This approach was adopted in a number of other dioceses in New South Wales and across Australia. Many of the Religious Brothers and Sisters who worked in this area of religious instruction for Catholic students attending State schools were known as Motor Missioners.

The Catholic Apostolate known as the Motor Mission is a uniquely Australian response to a need to provide religious education to Catholic

children not attending Catholic schools. The unique circumstance of the Catholic Church in the Australian cultural and physical environment was the impetus for such a response. Originating from the pastoral response of the clergy and religious ministering to the families in the isolated areas of the Australian outback, the name, Motor Mission, was derived from the need in this apostolate for a motor vehicle, as the distances to travel from school to school for weekly lessons, visiting homes and conducting sacramental programs were significant. The activity of the Motor Mission is part of the history of many of the metropolitan and rural dioceses of Australia.\footnote{Fagan, S. “The Motor Mission - Its Story.” \textit{Go: Spread the Good News}, May/June 1983.}

In 1959 the Archdiocesan leadership invited the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart to establish a Metropolitan Motor Mission in the Blacktown area of western Sydney. This was the first metropolitan Motor Mission in Australia. Following similar invitations to several other religious orders, metropolitan missions were established in 1960 by the Sisters of Charity at Liverpool, south western Sydney; Good Samaritan Sisters at Dee Why, the Northern beaches; and the Sisters of St Joseph at Central Bankstown. The Christian Brothers commenced teaching boys in Secondary schools in all of the established mission areas.

The Motor Mission became an important structural element in the
establishment of Diocesan/Archdiocesan Confraternity of Christian Doctrine leadership and management in the 1960s. Initially, as much needed teachers in the local government schools, the Motor Missioners then responded to the increasing need for catechists by recruiting and training lay catechists and finally they supported local parish catechists in roles as regional and diocesan leaders. Motor Missioners provided leadership in all areas of the CCD ministry in the 1970s and 1980s. The work of religious in the CCD in this era involved the provision and development education programs for both the students in the government schools and the lay volunteers who came forward to assist in the teaching of these children. The Motor Missioners continued to have a direct influence on the CCD movement until the mid–1990s. In the 1990s they prepared the ministry for the transition to lay leadership of the ministry at the Regional and Diocesan levels.

This period, 1955-1966, was one characterised by rapid growth in the CCD activities in the metropolitan area supported by the enthusiastic involvement of religious sisters and brothers (motor missioners) and volunteer lay catechists. A curriculum for State school Catholic religious education was formally developed using the material from correspondence courses as its foundation. Training programs were also developed for the hundreds of lay catechists who volunteered to teach the Catholic children attending State schools. The earlier work of the Legion of Mary and Theresians were the foundation for these programs. A newsletter style magazine, The Catechist, was introduced in 1963 for ongoing support of those catechists who had completed all three levels of training. A Catechetical Resource centre was established in 1964. There was even a television program, Flying High, produced by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. A training program in catechetics was introduced for the seminarians at Manly.

In the rural dioceses of NSW, religious sisters (motor missioners) travelled hundreds of miles each week to teach Catholic children attending the State schools. Local lay catechists, in many cases, supported their work.

This was the beginning of a ‘golden age’ for the CCD. During this period, the CCD Diocesan operations received the necessary resources to develop the support structures to encourage the establishment of the CCD in each local parish. Strong regional support networks were established to ensure ongoing support for the Parishes in their expected role in the provision on religious education for Catholic children in State schools.

Between 1960 and 1966, there was a 62% increase Catholic students attending State schools in the Archdiocese of Sydney: In State Primary
schools - an increase of 52%; and in State Secondary schools – an increase of 82%. The number of parish-based lay catechists had increased by 50%.

Expansion and Growth

This ‘golden age’ continued from this first period of establishment to the next period from 1966 – 1971, one of expansion and growth. The resourcing of the local and diocesan operations continued at a level that allowed for consolidation and development of CCD activities.

Curriculum revision saw the CCD material aligned with the material being used in Catholic schools. The *Joy for Living Series* was developed. The three-tiered Catechist course was centralised under the CCD Diocesan leadership and further developed and refined. The influence of the documents of the Second Vatican Council was evident in the catechist training courses and the consultative practices adopted. From 1967 to 1971, over 6,000 parish-based lay catechists, mainly women, received a minimum of fifteen hours of basic training.

During this period, consultation with the clergy was formalised by a series of regular meetings and a Diocesan CCD Council was established to advise and direct the full-time Diocesan Secretariat. Parish-based activities were promoted.

This was a time in which it appeared to many Catholics that the long fought campaign for the provision of government funding for non-government schools was lost. A period in which it was thought that many Catholic schools would need to close due to the apparent failure of the Church to obtain Government funding. There was insufficient funding to open new primary and secondary schools for the rapidly growing areas on the outskirts of the metropolitan areas. It had become essential to address the needs of the rapidly growing numbers of Catholic children who were not attending Catholic schools and to prepare for the time when this would be a major priority in the Church’s work.

For a period of approximately thirteen years, from 1959 to 1971, the CCD movement in NSW experienced a level of human and financial resourcing that allowed for the development of curriculum materials, training programs, resource centres and local and regional support structures.

In 1970, the Australian Bishops acknowledged the growing numbers of children outside the Catholic system in *The Renewal of Education in Faith*. These children were recognised as ‘a special and vitally important field of apostolate’. The task of providing Christian formation for these children within the local church in Australia was seen as one ‘as important
From Mission to Maintenance

From 1963, State and Federal governments began to provide funding for Catholic schools through a variety of aid packages. Luttrell (1996) noted that:

The biggest boost came in 1973, when the newly elected ALP Federal government . . . brought in a school funding program based on ‘needs’. Since Catholic schools were the most needy, they received an enormous injection of funds. This took the heat out of the State aid debate.44

With funding now available for Catholic schools, their survival seemed assured. This also ‘took the heat out of’ the diocesan efforts in the provision of religious education for Catholic children not attending Catholic schools. The urgency evident in the re-establishment of the CCD in the late 1950s and energy and initiative of the 1960s and early 1970s dissipated. As a result, in the final decades of the 20th century, 1972 – 2000, the pastoral imperative expressed in the Renewal of Education in Faith was not reflected in the provision of resources, both human and financial, at a local, diocesan, provincial or national level.

The resources made available for the task of the religious development of Catholic children not in Catholic schools were not provided at a level that could sustain the growth and responsive capability evident in the previous thirteen years. The local and central activity of the CCD movement was devoted to maintenance of structures and practices developed in the 1960s. In these final decades of the 20th century several significant factors have been identified that influenced the nature of the CCD movement in NSW. One factor was the impact of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council on the nature and purpose of catechesis and religious education in the Catholic Church.

Another factor was the contribution of the enthusiastic leadership of individuals who were motivated by a passionate belief in the mission embodied in the CCD movement. Initially members of the clergy and religious brothers and sisters provided leadership in the metropolitan and rural dioceses. Gradually, in the 1980s and 1990s, laymen and women began to replace these early CCD leaders. In particular, the work of the Motor Mission was a foundational influence in the development of the CCD.45 The Motor Missioners continued to have a direct influence on the CCD movement until the mid–1990s. The Motor Mission became an important structural element in the establishment of Diocesan/Archdiocesan Confraternity of Christian Doctrine leadership and management in the 1960s. Initially, as much needed teachers in the local government schools, the Motor Missioners then responded to the increasing need for catechists by recruiting and training lay catechists and finally they supported local parish catechists in roles as regional and diocesan leaders. Motor Missioners provided leadership in all areas of the CCD ministry in the 1970s and 1980s. The work of religious in the CCD in this era involved the provision and development education programs for both the students in the government schools and the lay volunteers who came forward to assist in the teaching of these children. In the 1990s they prepared the ministry for the transition to lay leadership of the ministry at the Regional and Diocesan levels. Father Carol Grew in the 1982 Annual CCD Report endorsed the impact of the Motor Missioners where he noted, ‘to date the most successful venture in the Public school apostolate is the Motor Mission’.46

Welbourne identified the value of the expertise of the diocesan leaders and their resilience in the face of the many challenges presented in their

---

45 Fagan, 1983
work.\textsuperscript{47} One such challenge was the isolation faced when working in their local dioceses.

A third factor in these final decades of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century was the influence of networking within the CCD movement and with external groups where there was a common interest or goal. This networking assisted in the development of internal and external resilience of the organisation.

In 1972 the informal relationships that had been established with other Christian Churches in the teaching Special Religious Instruction [SRI] in local State schools in NSW assumed a more formal structure when the first meeting of the \textit{Inter-Church Commission on Religious Instruction in Schools} was held. The initial membership of the Commission consisted of four Anglican representatives from the Province of NSW; two Presbyterians; two Methodists; one each of Baptist, Congregational, Church of Christ and Salvation Army; three Roman Catholics; one Greek Orthodox; and one Lutheran.\textsuperscript{48} This timely alliance was a significant influence in the formal review of the place of religious education in State schools that took place in the late 1970s.

In the mid-1970s two state-wide conferences were convened for those involved in various contexts of the CCD work within the Catholic community. The conferences were organised by a steering committee made up of Diocesan Directors and Coordinators from across the Catholic dioceses of NSW. For the first State conference in, August 1974, each Diocese (nine at that time) was invited to send ten delegates and religious congregations working in this area of CCD ministry were asked to send one delegate. Ninety delegates attended the five-day conference - twenty-eight clergy, fifty-eight religious sisters and brothers and fourteen lay people. All NSW dioceses were represented.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s State conferences were held for members of the Motor Mission, Catechist coordinators and regional secretaries (local leaders).

In July 1987, a meeting of CCD Diocesan Directors /Coordinators was convened at Vaughan College, Marsfield (North-west Sydney). Eight of the eleven NSW dioceses were represented at the two day meeting - Sydney, Broken Bay, Armidale, Wagga Wagga, Maitland, Canberra-Goulburn,


Wollongong and Bathurst. This inaugural meeting was held to determine the value of inter-diocesan discussions on matters related to the provision of religious education for Catholic children in State schools. The following issues related to the provision of SRE were discussed: Secondary SRE; joint denominational format and parental choice; catechist training and formation; catechist accreditation; communication with catechists; recruitment of catechists; the status of the CCD; and, matters related to resources. This inaugural meeting was held to determine the value of inter-diocesan discussions on matters related to the provision of religious education for Catholic children in State schools. In 2007 CCRESS [Catholic Conference of Religious Educators in State Schools], as it was named, celebrated its 20th anniversary.

A National CCD Convention was conducted in December 1973 hosted by CCD in Melbourne. A second National CCD Convention, to be hosted by the Archdiocese of Sydney, was planned for 1975. There is no evidence that these national meetings continued to take place in the late 1970s and the 1980s. With Australian education structures operating at a State or Territory level, the changes in legislation in each State in the 1970s influenced the access of the religious groups to State schools. During this period, the development of approaches in the provision of religious education for Catholic children not attending Catholic schools began to diverge.

In 1992, the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) sponsored a consultation and gathering in Sydney as part of the preparation of a statement intended ‘to raise the awareness of the Catholic Church in Australia to the apostolate of the catechists’.\(^49\) Twenty-seven of the twenty-eight Australian Catholic Dioceses were represented at the meeting convened to provide a critique of data collected by the NCEC from a nationwide consultation focused on ‘the education in faith’ of ‘Catholic students who do not attend Catholic schools’.\(^50\)

Patricia Brady, who represented the Archdiocese of Adelaide at the 1992 Sydney gathering, recalled the experience:

The coming together of so many people engaged in this ministry was an opportunity to set up very worthwhile networking systems. While no formal attempt was made to do this as part of the gathering outcomes, a few diocesan directors expressed the desire continue the contact made at the gathering. A few informal meetings took place within the gathering itself. These meetings and the subsequent

---

\(^{49}\) NCEC. *Emmaus: Sharing Our Christian Story*. Braddon, ACT: NCEC, 1993, iii

\(^{50}\) NCEC, iii
phone contacts resulted in the first meeting of what was to become the Australian CCD Association.\textsuperscript{51}

During the last three decades of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century the CCD movement in New South Wales was sustained by its local leadership. In this period limited resourcing, both human and financial, and increasing numbers of Catholic children attending State schools had meant that the capacity of the leadership of the CCD movement, at all levels, to respond adequately to the changing nature of the task and the challenges inherent in those changes was severely restricted. These leaders, in both metropolitan and rural dioceses, held the strong conviction of the significance of the provision of religious education for Catholic children and recognised the need to support the many thousands of lay volunteers who also held the same conviction. This vision was evident in the emerging lay leaders of the CCD in the last decade of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century and the first decade of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. A new generation of CCD leaders were to face the 21\textsuperscript{st} century challenge in the provision of Religious education for increasing numbers Catholic children not in Catholic Schools in New South Wales.

Canon Law and Child Sexual Abuse Through the Ages

Kieran Tapsell*

In 2014 two senior members of the Marist and Christian Brothers in Australia told Justice McLellan, the Chair of the Child Sexual Abuse Royal Commission that in the 1980s the brothers would not have regarded touching a student’s genitals as a crime but only a “moral failure”. McLellan asked Br Shanahan.

Q. Can you explain how the Orders would have brought themselves intellectually to that position, describing it only as a moral failure and not a criminal offence? How would they have arrived at that position?

A. No, I can’t explain it.  

This paper is an attempt to explain it: how bishops, priests and religious all over the world came to regard the sexual abuse of children, not as crimes punishable by the State, but as moral failures that should be dealt with by treatment, and by dismissal from the priesthood or religious life only as a last resort. The explanation lies in a gradual but radical change of culture within the Catholic Church that took place in the latter part of the 19th century that can be traced through changes in canon law.

The Concepts of “Canon Law” and “Child Sexual Abuse”

The title of this paper, Canon Law on Sexual Abuse through the Ages, is in some senses anachronistic. Despite claims that it is the oldest continuing legal system in the Western world, canon law, in the sense of a volume of laws that applied to the whole Church, only became a reality around 1140 CE when an Italian monk, Gratian compiled and tried to harmonize canon law up until that time.  

The term “child sexual abuse” is also partly anachronistic. Until about 1700CE, there was no concept of “childhood” in Western thought. Children were “small adults”, and were regarded as “chattels” of their parents. Around 1700 childhood came to be seen as a separate state from adulthood, characterised by innocence and naivety. Despite that, there were very ancient laws against the sexual abuse of some children. In Ancient Rome, the Lex Iulia de vi publica of Caesar Augustus in 18 BC imposed capital

* Kieran Tapsell is a retired civil lawyer, has degrees in Theology and Law, and is the author of Potiphar’s Wife: The Vatican’s Secret and Child Sexual Abuse (ATF Press, 2014).
punishment on those who ravished a “boy or a woman or anyone through force”, and those who successfully seduced “free” children. This protection was not extended to slaves, and was motivated more by the impact of sexual relations upon social order rather than controlling sexual behaviour towards children generally. The age of minority, like the ages for marriage and death, were lower than they are today.

The term “child sexual abuse” is defined more broadly these days in terms of the involvement of immature children in sexual activity with adults. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this discussion it is convenient to apply the term to past practice while bearing in mind that it did not always carry the wider significance that it has today.

Law and Culture

There is a very strong connection between law and culture. Law is a reflection of the dominant culture at the time. Once passed, those laws will reinforce, perpetuate and deepen the culture that gave rise to them in the first place. Law shapes culture as much as culture shapes law. It is a two way interactive process, with both influencing each other. Laws can “stay on the books”, and no longer be enforced because the culture has changed. Nevertheless, if there is a succession of laws that provide for substantially the same thing – in this case, severe punishments for the sexual abuse of children – it is legitimate to conclude that this was continuing Church policy, reflecting the dominant culture of its lawmakers, the popes and Church Councils.

The history of canon law demonstrates that the attitudes expressed by the Australian religious brothers started gaining traction in the Church only in the last 150 years, and became the dominant culture with the promulgation of the first Code of Canon Law in 1917. Prior to that time, the dominant Church culture was that the sexual abuse of children required at least some form of imprisonment, and often worse.

Canon Law on Child Sexual Abuse from the 4th to the 11th Centuries

Despite some tolerance of child sexual abuse, particularly of males in the Greek and Roman Empires, the Judaeo-Christian tradition had always condemned it as a sin. The first century handbook for Christians, the Didache, expressly prohibited adult men having sex with boys. But it was not long before Church communities came to accept that it was more than a sin punishable in the next life. It was also a crime, punishable in
this one. The first Church law against the abuse of boys was passed at the Council of Elvira in 306CE, and required offenders to be excluded from communion “even at the end”, which suggests that they were permanently excommunicated.\textsuperscript{15}

In the fourth century, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, and from then on, the Emperor legislated for the Church. The Emperor’s decrees were effectively canon law because the Church regarded the Emperor’s powers as coming from God.\textsuperscript{16} Church Councils continued to promulgate their own rules for their local communities, but they generally dealt with ad hoc situations that were additional to the imperial laws. In about 312CE, the Emperor Constantine gave to the Church a number of privileges, including the “privilege of clergy”, the right of clergy to be tried exclusively in the Church courts.\textsuperscript{17}

St. Basil of Caesarea, the fourth century Church Father, was the main author of monastic rule of the Eastern Church. He wrote that a cleric or monk who sexually molests youths or boys is to be publically whipped, his head shaved, spat upon, and kept in prison for six months in chains on a diet of bread and water, and after release he is to be always subject to supervision, and kept out of contact with young people.\textsuperscript{18} Leaving out such antiquated punishments as whipping, spitting and head shaving, St. Basil seems remarkably modern in understanding the tendency of abusers to be recidivists and the need for them to be supervised.

The Emperor Justinian’s \textit{Digest} of Roman Law of 533CE continued the tradition of the \textit{Lex Iulia de vi publica} of Caesar Augustus, and imposed the death penalty for anyone who abducts or persuades a boy or a woman or girl to engage in an act of indecency.\textsuperscript{19} Homosexuality was punished by burning.\textsuperscript{20} The Church under Justinian also adopted the military’s practice of dishonourable discharge or “\textit{degradatio}” to dismiss a priest for misconduct. Even if the priest was not dismissed, the privilege of clergy did not protect him from imprisonment or worse imposed on him by the bishop who, at that time was also a secular judge.\textsuperscript{21}

The practice of private confession developed in monasteries in Ireland in the 6\textsuperscript{th} century and quickly spread. The \textit{Penitentials}, books of punishments for certain sins, and used from the 6\textsuperscript{th} to the 12\textsuperscript{th} century for this new form of the sacrament, had a number of authors who came to rank as canonical authorities.\textsuperscript{22} These books contain quite detailed lists of sexual sins and their punishments, which were more severe for clergy than for laymen. The sexual abuse of children by adults came within the general description of the various sexual sins.\textsuperscript{23} The \textit{Penitentials} recognized that many of these
sins required imprisonment, and that dismissal from the priesthood or religious life, was insufficient. The word “sodomy” was used from the time of the *Penitentials* to describe any kind of non-reproductive sexual activity whether alone or between people of the same or opposite sex.\(^{24}\)

The Development of Canon Law in the 11th and 12th Centuries

In the 11th and 12th centuries, canon law as we know it today, a separate set of laws that apply to the Universal Church, started to develop through scholars, such as Burchard, Ivo and Gratian. Burchard, the Bishop of Worms (d.1025CE) wrote 20 books of canon law in which he quotes St. Basil’s rule about the proper punishment for monks who have sex with boys, making it part of the Western canon.\(^ {25}\)

St. Peter Damian in his *Book of Gomorrah* (1051CE) was particularly harsh on clerics who had sex with young boys. The significance of this book from the point of view of canonical history is that it was endorsed by Pope Leo IX, and quotes Burchard’s *Decretum* that the appropriate punishment for clergy who sexually abuse boys and adolescents is as set out in St. Basil of Caesarea’s rule.\(^ {26}\)

Ivo of Chartres (d.1115) emphasized the need for cooperation between Church and State, and regarded the decrees of Christian princes as having the force of canon law on the condition that they did not conflict with Church doctrine. He mixed rules of Roman law and laws of the Frankish kings with purely canonical rules.\(^ {27}\) Following Burchard, he provided severe penalties for fellatio, bestiality, pederasty and sodomy. The Council of Nablus in 1120 CE, decreed that in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, those guilty of sodomy should be burned.\(^ {28}\)

In 1140CE, Gratian from the University of Bologna wrote his “*Decrees*”, which combined all the previous collections of canon law, and provided the basis for other collections.\(^ {29}\) It has many sections dealing with the sexual transgressions of clerics. Punishments for clerics were to be more severe than for laymen, but he goes further than Burchard and Ivo who were content with St. Basil of Caesarea’s punishments for the sexual abuse of young boys. Gratian adopted the ancient Roman law of *stuprum pueri*, which prescribed the death penalty.\(^ {30}\)

Church Council and Papal Decrees from the 12th to the 18th Centuries

The Church prohibition on clerics issuing sentences that “shed blood” was formalised at the Fourth Lateran Council under Innocent III in 1215CE. Such punishments henceforth were to be carried out by secular authorities.\(^ {31}\)
A practice then developed requiring clergy sex abusers to be “degraded”, and then handed over to the civil authority to be dealt with by the civil law. The Church still effectively had a veto over a priest being tried by the State for any kind of crime, because unless a priest was “degraded”, he still had the benefit of “privilege of clergy” to be tried only by the ecclesiastical courts. It was this veto that was the centre of the dispute between Henry II and Thomas A’Becket in 1170.32

The Third Lateran Council in 1179 under Pope Alexander III decreed that clergy guilty of a “crime against nature” were to be imprisoned indefinitely in a monastery or subjected to “degradation”.33 Nevertheless, even if the decision was made not to “degrade” the priest, the punishment was exile and extreme penance.34

In 1209, Pope Innocent III ruled that the degradation of a cleric should take place in the presence of someone from the secular authority who would then take custody of him.35 The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 continued the condemnation of “crimes against nature”.36 The Council also decreed that bishops who covered up the sexual irregularities of their priests were to be “deposed in perpetuity”.37

At the Fifth Lateran Council in 1514, Pope Leo X decreed that clerics involved in “crimes against nature” are to be punished “respectively according to the sacred canons or with penalties imposed by the civil law.”38

The Council of Trent in 1551 marked a hardening of attitude towards priests who committed serious crimes. Whereas the previous decrees provided for a general discretion as to whether a cleric should be imprisoned in a monastery or “degraded”, the Council of Trent accepted that some crimes were so serious that priests who committed them had to be dismissed, and delivered over to a secular court.”39

Ten years later, in 1561, Pope Pius IV continued this stricter policy with his papal bull, Cum Sicut Nuper, in which he directed the Spanish Inquisition to “degrade to the secular state”, and to hand over to “a secular judge to be punished” all priests guilty of soliciting sex in the confessional.40

In 1566, Pope St Pius V (1566-72) issued his encyclical, Cum Primum requiring clerics who committed “an unspeakable crime against nature” to be first “degraded” by a canonical court and be subject to “fitting punishment”.41 Two years later, the same Pope issued his constitution, Horrendum Illud Scelus against clerics who sinned “against nature” and decreed that were to be deterred by “the avenging secular sword of civil laws”. Those degraded by the ecclesiastical judge were to be “immediately delivered to the secular power”.42 An example of this was the case of Canon
Fontino from the Italian town of Loreto, who was charged in 1570 before a canonical court with sodomy of a choirboy. He was degraded, and then handed over to the secular authority to be beheaded.43

Between 1570 and 1630, the Spanish Inquisition handled over 1000 cases of “sodomy” in Aragon, and in some tribunals as many as one fifth of the accused were clergy. They were amongst the first to be executed.44 In Valencia between 1565 and 1785, most of the priests or religious were accused of committing sexual crimes with adolescents, either novices or students, or boys plying the “street trade”.45 A Jesuit chaplain in Seville remarked that Jesuits rarely sin with women because they can so easily find partners amongst their students and novices.46 The experience of modern times is that opportunity is a powerful factor in the sexual abuse of children, and there is every reason to think that it operated in the same way in earlier times when schools were attached to monasteries.47

In the 1780s, the Inquisition in Valencia and Zaragoza handed over to the civil authorities to be burned at the stake several monks where their sodomy had become public knowledge affecting the credibility and image of the Church.48 In some cases where the crime had not become public, the monk was garrotted in prison, rather than being burned at the “so that the faithful did not hear about such a bad monk” and lose their respect for religion.49 Depending on the circumstances, priests and monks were burned at the stake, garrotted in prison, whipped, sentenced to long periods in the galleys, imprisoned in monasteries with forced labour and fasting and sent into exile.50

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the Church’s stand against these priests seemed to be very close to adopting what we might call these days, “zero tolerance”. In 1635 and again in 1726 the Holy See refused to reinstate priests who had served their sentences under the civil law for the sexual abuse of boys.51

The Beginnings of a Cultural Shift

By 1842, under the reign of Pope Gregory XVI, we start to see a reluctance to hand over priests to the secular authorities in some countries. In that year, the Holy Office issued a decree absolving penitents of their canonical obligation to denounce priests who solicited sex in the confessional in the lands of “schismatics, heretics and Mohammedans”, noting that it was easy for such priests to escape punishment at the hands of schismatic bishops or infidel judges.”52
In 1866, we start to see a change, not only on the question of handing over priests to the civil authorities, but also a reluctance to dismiss priests even for soliciting sex in the confessional. An instruction from Pius IX through the Holy Office imposed absolute secrecy on these proceedings, but it makes no mention of handing over such priests to the secular authority, and states that restraint must be exercised in demoting priests to “the secular branch”.53

On 20 July 1890, the Holy Office, under Pope Leo XIII, issued a further instruction imposing quite detailed procedures for keeping the proceedings for soliciting in the confessional secret. Now we start to see a heightened concern of the scandal that such trials might create.54 The procedures outlined in this decree were designed to keep hidden not just the evidence that might be given, but the fact that a trial was being held at all. The trial was not to be conducted in the Chancery. Witnesses were to be called on different days, sworn to secrecy, interviewed alone, and examinations were to take place in sacristies or some other private place.55

The First Code of Canon Law 1917

In 1904, Pope Pius X set up the Pontifical Commission for the Codification of Canon Law under Cardinal Gasparri. His assistant was Monsignor Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pope Pius XII.56 The work of creating the first Code of Canon Law involved adopting, modifying or discarding decrees that the Church thought were relevant or irrelevant for the time.57 The Commission discarded the decrees of Innocent III, Leo X, Pius IV, St Pius V, the Third, Fourth and Fifth Lateran Councils and the Council of Trent, requiring priests guilty of serious crimes to be degraded and handed over to the civil authorities. The canon law and practice of handing over the priest for punishment in accordance with the civil law was officially abandoned everywhere, and not just for those countries ruled by “schismatics, heretics and Mohammedans”. The Code provided that those who sexually abuse children were only to be dismissed in “more serious cases”.58

Crimen Sollicitationis 1922

Five years later, in 1922, Pius XI issued his secret instruction Crimen Sollicitationis. On the front page of the document are these words: “To be kept in the secret archive of the Curia for internal use. Not to be published or augmented with commentaries.” The “curia” referred to in this heading is the central office of the bishop’s diocese under the care of the chancellor,
who alone was to have the key.\textsuperscript{59} No one was to have access to this safe without the consent of the bishop, the vicar general or the chancellor.\textsuperscript{60} Evidence of these crimes was to be burned on the death of the priest or after ten years, with only a brief summary of the facts and the decree retained.\textsuperscript{61}

The requirement to dismiss for “more serious cases” had become one where dismissal was available only where there was an impossibility of reforming the priest.\textsuperscript{62} Information about clerics committing child sexual abuse, homosexuality and bestiality, obtained through the Church’s internal inquiries and trials, was made subject to the “secret of the Holy Office”, a permanent silence, the breach of which incurred automatic excommunication that could only be lifted by the Pope personally.\textsuperscript{63} These provisions reflected the twin concerns of the Holy See at the time: the avoidance of “scandal” and treating priests differently because they had been “ontologically changed” when they were anointed by God at ordination. The creation of a de facto privilege of clergy through the back door of secrecy had begun.\textsuperscript{64} If the civil authorities did not know about these allegations, there would be no State trials, and the matter would be dealt with exclusively in the canonical courts where the maximum punishment was dismissal from the priesthood. The effect of this change of policy turned on its head the Church’s previous tradition of seeing child sexual abuse as a crime that demanded at least imprisonment, which by the 19th century, had become an exclusive punishment of the State. There are a number of explanations for why this happened.

**The Priest as an Ontologically Changed Being**

The theology that a priest is someone special reaches back to before St. Augustine, but it seems to have reached a peak around the early 1900s, and was personified in the 1905 beatification and 1925 canonization by Pope Pius XI of the French priest, John Vianney, who proclaimed, “After God, the priest is everything!”\textsuperscript{65} It seems that the Church had accepted as orthodoxy, Lord Acton’s worst heresy that “the office sanctifies the holder of it.”\textsuperscript{66} This theology was reflected in the Concordats entered into by the Holy See with sympathetic Catholic countries to provide special privileges for priests convicted of State crimes. They would serve their term of imprisonment in a monastery rather than in jails. Concordats providing for these kinds of privilege were entered into with Latvia in 1922, Poland in 1925, Italy in 1929, Spain in 1953, the Dominican Republic in 1954 and Colombia in 1887, 1928 and as recently as 1973.\textsuperscript{67}
The Rise of Anti-Clericalism

In the 16th century, the Protestant Reformation saw the Church lose influence over large sections of northern Europe. The subsequent religious wars and persecution of Catholics in Protestant countries may have had some effect on Church thinking over the next four hundred years as to what to do with clerics who had breached the criminal laws of those States hostile to the Church. The rising anti-clericalism in Catholic Europe and Latin America may also have been a factor. The fear that priests might not receive a fair trial may have been justified in Germany prior to 1945 and in the Soviet bloc until 1989, but there was no justification for it in the West, certainly after 1945. The reimposition of the pontifical secret in 2001, and again by Benedict XVI in 2010, long after this anti-clericalism had disappeared, suggests that the fear of scandal and the protection of priests were the main reasons for the change in culture. But in the 1920s, there was another factor, a radical new development in technology that could ensure that scandals about clerical behaviour could be spread at the speed of light.

The Invention of Radio and the Spread of Scandal

The first commercial radio licence in the United States was issued to Westinghouse in 1920, and the BBC was established in 1922. The Holy See itself was not slow to recognise the propaganda benefits of the new invention, and it was the first religious faith to use it for proselytising purposes in 1927. In 1931, Marconi set up the Vatican Radio for Pius XI. Two years after the first commercial radio station started broadcasting, Pius XI imposed “the secret of the Holy Office” on all information about child sex abuse, homosexuality and bestiality by clergy. One solution to the “scandal” problem was to cut off the information at its source.

The Reissue of Crimen Sollicitationis 1962

The secret of the Holy Office on all information obtained in the Church’s internal investigations of child sexual abuse was continued by Pope Pius XII. It was confirmed and expanded by Pope John XXIII in 1962 when he extended the procedures under Crimen Sollicitationis to priests who were members of religious orders. This expansion had the effect of increasing by 50% the number of clergy who would be protected by the secret of the Holy Office when accused of the sexual abuse of children.
The Instruction *Secreta Continere* 1974

In 1974, by his Instruction, *Secreta Continere*, Pope Paul VI renamed the Church’s highest form of secrecy outside the confessional, the “pontifical secret”, and extended it even to cover the allegation of child sexual abuse itself, and not just the information obtained in the Church’s internal inquiries and trials. It had only one exception to the pontifical secret: the accused priest could be told of the allegation if it were necessary for his defence. There was no exception for reporting to the civil authorities. It was a permanent silence and it even applied to those who accidentally come across the information subject to the secret.

The 1983 Code of Canon Law and the Repeal of *Crimen Sollicitationis*

The 1983 *Code of Canon Law* repealed *Crimen Sollicitationis*. *Secreta Continere* continued in force after the promulgation of the Code. These documents governed the treatment of child sexual abuse under canon law from that date. *Secreta Continere* expanded by a further 250% the number of Church personnel who would be protected by the pontifical secret because it applied to allegations of child sexual abuse by members of religious orders who were not clerics.

*Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela* 2001 & the 2010 Revision

In 2001, Pope John Paul II, by his *Motu Proprio, Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela*, introduced some new procedures for child sexual abuse, and confirmed that the pontifical secret applied to them. In 2010, in the revised norms, Pope Benedict XVI extended the secret to cover clerics who sexually abused intellectually disabled adults and to those who possessed child pornography.

In the same year, the Vatican announced that bishops would be instructed to obey civil laws on reporting. Very few countries have comprehensive reporting laws. All Australian States have laws about reporting children at risk, but only New South Wales and Victoria provide for reporting historical abuse.

Attempts by Bishops Conferences to Change Canon Law

In 1996, the Irish bishops approached the Holy See with a proposal to allow mandatory reporting of all allegations of child sex abuse by priests. The Holy See rejected it, saying that it conflicted with canon law, and it did. In 1996, the Australian bishops in *Towards Healing* required compliance
with civil reporting laws, despite the potential conflict with canon law. The British bishops wanted mandatory reporting in 2001. The Americans asked for it in 2002, and this time the Holy See agreed to a compromise whereby reporting was allowed but only where the domestic law required it. There was a very serious risk of bishops going to jail for breaching reporting laws that existed in some American States. This dispensation was limited to the United States, but it was extended to the whole world in 2010.

The United Nations and the Holy See on Mandatory Reporting

In January 2014, the United Nations Committee for the Rights of the Child required changes to canon law by abolishing the pontifical secret over child sex abuse allegations, and imposing mandatory reporting. In May 2014, the United Nations Committee against Torture requested the same thing. In September 2014, Pope Francis said no, with the weak excuse that mandatory reporting would interfere with the sovereignty of independent States. Mandatory reporting under canon law would only interfere with their sovereignty if their domestic law prohibited reporting of clergy sexual abuse to the police. No such country exists.

The Church’s Disciplinary System

The secrecy requirements imposed by canon law since 1922 may not have been so damaging if the Church had a decent disciplinary system for getting rid of these priests. But the 1917 Code and Crimen Sollicitationis introduced the “pastoral approach” to dealing with clergy sexual abuse of children by preventing dismissal except where it was impossible to reform the priest. So, they were sent off to be “cured”, and reassigned to other parishes.

Within two years of his being elected Pope, John Paul II started dismantling the already defective canonical disciplinary system. He made it almost impossible to dismiss a priest for child sexual abuse. In 1980 he abolished the simplified administrative procedure for dismissing a priest. The 1983 Code continued the “pastoral approach” of Crimen Sollicitationis, and required the bishop to try to cure the priest before even putting him on trial for dismissal. The standard of proof was effectively the criminal standard, of proof of beyond reasonable doubt, instead of the balance of probabilities imposed by civil law in disciplinary matters. He imposed a Catch 22 defence: a priest cannot be dismissed for paedophilia because he is a paedophile. Full “imputability” was required for dismissal. A diagnosis of paedophilia had the same effect as a diagnosis of insanity in civil law.
Two serial paedophiles in Ireland, Fr Tony Walsh and Fr Patrick Maguire had their dismissals by a Dublin canonical court overturned in Rome because they were diagnosed as paedophiles. Under canon law, the more children a priest abuses the less likely can he be dismissed.95

But the most serious impediment of all was the imposition of a 5 year limitation period for child sex abuse cases. *Crimen Sollicitationis* had no limitation period.96 Under the *1983 Code*, if a child did not complain within 5 years of the abuse occurring, the canonical crime was “extinguished”.97

The end result was that there were virtually no canonical trials for paedophile priests after 1983.98 There were some before then in Ireland and the United States, but as far as I know, none in Australia. The American Jesuit, Fr Thomas Reese, the editor of *America* magazine, in a report to the 1992 United States Catholic Bishops Conference wrote that the *1983 Code of Canon Law* makes it “almost impossible for bishops to dismiss priests for sexual abuse.99 At the various inquiries in Australia, Cardinal Pell, Archbishops Hart and Coleridge, Bishop Malone and Fr Brian Lucas said similar things.100

In 2001, Pope John Paul II’s *Motu Proprio, Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela* introduced some modified procedures, making dismissal easier.101 The limitation period was extended from 5 years to 10 years from the 18th birthday of the complainant. In 2003, the simpler method of dismissing a priest by “administrative” action was restored by an authorisation to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.102 In 2010, Pope Benedict XVI revised the procedures and extended the limitation period to 20 years from the 18th birthday of the victim, but he made no changes to the “pastoral approach”, the standard of proof or to the Catch 22 defence.103

**The Current Situation**

In a meeting with the American bishops, in March 2002, Pope John Paul II said “there is no place in the priesthood or religious life for those who would harm the young.”104 It suggests that the Church would be adopting a “zero tolerance” of clergy sexual abuse of children, and that those priests who had been abusing children should be dismissed.105 On 19 March, 2014, Pope Francis said that Pope Benedict had supported “zero tolerance” for clergy who sexually abused children.106 On 27 May 2014, he promised that he would apply the same “zero tolerance” standard.107 But the figures produced by Archbishop Tomasi show less than one third of all priests against whom credible allegations of sexual abuse of children had been made had been dismissed.108 Despite some improvements to the Vatican
disciplinary system since 2001, there are still significant systemic problems with it that can only be cured by changes to canon law.\(^{109}\)

**Conclusion**

Brothers Crowe and Shanahan told the Royal Commission that during the 1980s the Marist and Christian Brothers would have regarded the sexual abuse of children as only being a “moral failure”.

Cardinal Francis George, one of the Church’s foremost intellectuals has stated, correctly, that law acts as a teacher.\(^{110}\) Canon law from 1917 onwards taught that the first obligation was to try and cure the perpetrator of child sexual abuse. It also taught that such matters were not crimes because in 1922 it prohibited reporting to the police, and continues to prohibit it with one exception that is useless in most countries. It is easy to understand how bishops and others lower down in the Church hierarchy, like the Marist and Christian brothers would come to think that the sexual abuse of children was nothing more than a “moral failure”. That is how the popes, the Vicars of Christ regarded it when they radically changed canon law from 1917 and continued and expanded it thereafter.

The pontifical secret forms the legal basis for the cover up of child sexual abuse. Cardinal Francis George also said that if you want to change a culture, you have to change the law that embodies it.\(^{111}\) That applies equally to canon law as it applies to civil law. The culture of secrecy in the Church over child sexual abuse will never disappear while canon law imposes the pontifical secret on all allegations and information about it.

**Endnotes**

3   Ibid
4   The attitude that the sexual abuse of children was only a moral failure went right to the top of the Vatican. Cardinal Dario Castrillon Hoyos, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy stated it expressly in an interview with Patricia Janiot on CNN Colombia on 2 June 2011, see the author’s *Potiphar’s Wife: The Vatican Secret and Child Sexual Abuse*, (ATF Press 2014) p.181. See also p.230, 262-264.
5   The claim is made by Dr Edward Peters, an American canon lawyer: http://www.canonlaw.info/ (Accessed 21 June 2013). See also Hartmann & Pennington: *The History of Medieval Canon Law in the Classical Period, 1140-1234: From Gratian to


8 James A. Brundage: Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe, (University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 47 - 49, quoting Dig. 48.6.3.4 (Marcianus); Mestieri Estudio p.12.


13 A good example of law being “on the books” but not enforced is provided by Michelle Armstrong-Partida in Priestly Marriage: The Tradition of Clerical Concubinage in the Spanish Church (Brepols Publishers 2009). She says that the visitation episcopal records in 14th century Catalunya show that clerical concubinage was widespread despite 200 years of condemnation by canon law and synodal decrees: Nevertheless, over time, the culture of celibacy reflected in the law did eventually prevail.

14 Aaron Milevec: The Didache, Text, Translation, Analysis and Commentary (Liturgical Press 2003) p. 54


17 Gibbon: Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol 2, p.335

18 St. Basil of Caesarea, as quoted in St. Peter Damien, Liber Gomorrhianus, cols.
174f. Randy Engel: *St. Peter Damian’s Book of Gomorrah: A Moral Blueprint for Our Times* - Part I: “Other Church Fathers favoured defrocking the offending cleric and then turning him over to the State for punishment”, footnote 5. http://www. ourladieswarriors.org/articles/damian1.htm (Accessed 6 May 2005). Nicholas Cafardi in *Before Dallas* at p 3 cites Burchard, the bishop of Worms for this decree. Burchard wrote 20 books of Canon Law, and it was quite usual for compilers to incorporated decrees from older sources. The fact that Burchard did so in 1012CE would suggest that he regarded such punishments as still being appropriate almost 700 years later.


24 From the time of the *Penitentials*, sodomy was “treated as a fluid and wide-ranging sin made up of a variety of non-reproductive bodily acts which can be, and presumably were performed in groups by men and women.”: William E. Burgwinkle in *Sodomy, Masculinity and Law in Medieval Literature: France and England, 1050-1230* (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, Cambridge University Press, August 16, 2004), loc 92. Archbishop Hincmar of Reims’s (806-882CE) even described lesbian activity as “sodomy”. When Burchard, Bishop of Worms (d.1025) published his famous *Decretum* – the forerunner of the great collections of canon law of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries – he followed Hincmar in classifying homosexual acts as a variety of fornication: John Boswell in *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (University of Chicago Press 1980) Loc 5263 – 5313.


26 Cafardi: *Before Dallas* p.4 and Peter Damian: *Book of Gomorrah: An Eleventh Century Treatise against Homosexual Practices* (Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 1982), p.61. Damian’s final chapter is an appeal to Pope Leo IX to take action. But the Pope’s response was to dismiss only repeat offenders, ignoring the effect on the victims and emphasising the need for forgiveness of the perpetrator. Fr Thomas Doyle: Affidavit in the case of Jane Doe v Oblates of Mary Immaculate, District


29 Van de Wiel: *History of Canon law*, par 128, loc 1013. Gratian’s *Decrees* were very influential in the teaching of canon law, but it was never recognised as the official version. Gregory IX (1227-1241) commissioned Raymond of Pennafort to prepare a new, uniform and simplified compilation that would contain only the laws in force, but he included in them Gratian’s *Decrees*. The *Decretals of Gregory IX* became the first official publication of canon law as a whole and it remained the most important collection until the *1917 Code*: id par 141-143, loc, 1081-1092, and Doyle and Rubino: *Clergy Sexual Abuse Meets the Civil Law*, Fordham Urban Law Journal (2003) Vol. 31 Issue 2 p.582,n. 224: http://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1888&context=ulj (Accessed 18 Jan 2015). There were subsequent attempts at compilations but none of them abrogated the old law of Gratian’s *Decrees*: Wiel, supra par 161, loc. 1164.

30 *Decree of Gratian*, D. 1, de pen., c.15 in *Decretum Magistri Gratiani, editio Lipsiensis Secunda*, editor, A.L. Richter,( Graz, Friedberg, 1879, 1959). Here, Gratian was talking specifically about the sexual abuse of boys and not just homosexuality in general: John Boswell in *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (University of Chicago Press 1980), loc 6232. See also Fr Thomas Doyle: *Affidavit Jane Doe* par 22 http://reform-network.net/?p=1464 (Accessed 6 May 2013); Cafardi *Before Dallas*, p.4. Gratian also included in his *Decrees* a canon from the 1102 Synod of London stating that clerics found guilty of sodomy, should either be deposed or excommunicated: Doyle and Rubino: *Clergy Sexual Abuse Meets the Civil Law*, p.583. John Boswell in *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*: loc 7967 says that legal records for the Middle Ages are inadequate to determine the extent to which the death penalty was actually carried out.


34 Mark D. Jordan: *The Silence of Sodom: Homosexuality in Modern Catholicism*, (University of Chicago Press, 2000) p.123. Pope Alexander III prohibited secular punishments to clergy and limited canonical punishments to dismissal, and disapproved of any further punishment under the civil law: John F. Wirenius: *Command and Coercion: Clerical Immunity, Scandal and the Sex Abuse Crisis in the Roman Catholic Church*: Journal of Law and Religion, Vol 27 No.2 2011-12 p.448. Later popes, such as Innocent III had a different idea about handing over degraded clerics to be further punished by the civil authorities.
Rosamond McKitterick: *New Cambridge Medieval History* pts.1-2.c.1024-c.1198, p. 441


Canon 14, Ibid:

Cafardi, *Before Dallas* p. 5 and footnote 27


Canon 14, Ibid:


http://www.awrsipe.com/patrick_wall/selected_documents/1566%20Cum%20primum.pdf (Accessed 21 September 2014.) “Sins against nature” or “sodomy” for the moral theologian, Cardinal Cajetan in 1517 included any form of sexual activity that could not result in conception. So male/female sodomy was sinful, but not as seriously sinful as male/male sodomy: Mark D. Jordan: *The Silence of Sodom: Homosexuality in Modern Catholicism*, (University of Chicago Press, 2000)p. 64.

By the time of St. Alphonsus Liguori in 1757, any sexual contact with a person of the same sex is sodomy: Ibid p.72


Mark D. Jordan: *The Silence of Sodom*, p 126


Carrasco: *Inquisición y represión sexual en Valencia*, p179-181, and cases such as that of Fray Jeronimo Estruch, p.180.

Id, p.61.

Mark D. Jordan: *The Silence of Sodom*, p.123. Rafael Carrasco gives examples of lesser sentences for clergy imposed by the Inquisition from the 16th to 18th century in
Valencia, such as 4 years imprisonment in a monastery, 3 and 5 years in the galleys and 200 lashes and heavy fines for “touching” or “embracing” boys: Carrasco: *Inquisición y Represión Sexual en Valencia*, p.48. In 1617, a priest named Ferrer was “degraded” and given 10 years on the galleys (p.64). Carrasco says that after about 1630, the Valencia Inquisition was less likely to hand people over to the civil authority to be burned at the stake, and preferred sentencing to the galleys, whipping and exile. In the case of clergy and religious, where they were not “degraded”, they were imprisoned in a monastery designated by the Sacred Congregation of the Inquisition, and had forced labour imposed on them. They were forced to fast, as well as being forbidden to say Mass and preach. (p.82). Carrasco also says that 30% of all males brought before the Inquisition were between 9 and 19 years old, with an average of 15.4 years. Young males were the favourite prey of homosexuals (clerical or otherwise), whose methods of persuasion were perfectly adapted to the misery in which most of the population were living. Sex was a source of social mobility, or provided access to comforts and pleasures reserved to the economic elites. Very few of these young people were punished by the Inquisition, which tends to confirm that the Inquisition accepted that the fault was mainly with the adults who seduced them: (p.222-224). The same inequality in social position between sexual partners is found in studies of the Peruvian Inquisition of the 16th and 17th century, although there were also long standing relationships where there seemed to be more equality: Molina: *Los Sodomitas Virreinales*, p.36


55 In the revised historical introduction to *Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela*, Pope Benedict XVI said that strict confidentiality was imposed originally because cases of soliciting in the confessional involved the seal of confession. He then said: “Over time and only analogously, these norms were extended to some cases of immoral conduct of priests.” This statement is supported by the documentary record set out above. But it does not answer the question as to why the secret of the Holy Office was required for some cases of sexual misconduct where the confessional seal was


60 Id, Canon 377.

61 Id, Canon 379


63 Id, Crimen Sollicitationis Art 11.

64 Fr Thomas Doyle: http://reform-network.net/?p=3006 par 27 (Accessed 3 July 2013)

65 http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/letters/2009/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20090616_anno-sacerdotale_en.html (Accessed 15 May 2013). The idea, at least as it applies to bishops, can also be traced earlier to St. Ignatius of Antioch: Catholic Catechism par 1549: http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c3a6.htm (Accessed 26 October 2013). Gary Macy argues that this concept of the priest having a special power, rather than being called to perform a particular role in the Christian community only dates from the 12th century. http://scu.edu/ic/publications/upload/scl-0711-macy.pdf (Accessed 6 September 2013). But there seems little doubt that this culture of clericalism reached a peak at the beginning of the 20th century. Pope Pius X in a 1906 encyclical insisted that the Church was made up of two divisions, the hierarchy that led and the flock whose only duty was to obey: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_x/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_11021906_vehementer-nos_en.html. (Accessed 1 October 2013) The theology is also expressed in Canon 1008 of the 1983 Code: “By divine institution, some of the Christian faithful are marked with an indelible character and constituted as sacred ministers by the sacrament of holy orders. They are thus consecrated and deputed so that, each according to his own grade, they may serve the People of God by a new and specific title”. See David Timbs: Clericalism, OMG! Journal of Religion and Culture 1 April 2015, http://ohmygodjournal.org/?page_id=434 (Accessed 6 April 2015)

66 Lord Acton (1834 – 1902) “I cannot accept your canon that we are to judge Pope and King unlike other men, with a favourable presumption that they did no wrong... There is no worse heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it.” Acton is best
known for the words that follow in his letter to Bishop Mandel Creighton, ‘Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.’ Letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton, April 5, 1887 published in Historical Essays and Studies, edited by J. N. Figgis and R. V. Laurence (London: Macmillan, 1907)


68 José Mariano Sánchez, Anticlericalism: a brief history (University of Notre Dame Press, 1972)

69 Cardinal Pell told the Australian Child Abuse Royal Commission that this thinking pervaded the Vatican until 2002 when the American bishops persuaded the Vatican that the people making the complaints were not just the “enemies of the Church”, like the “Nazis and possibly Communists” had done, but were good people.”: Transcript on 14 March 2014 at p.6260


71 Id, p.126,

72 http://www.vatican.va/resources/resources_crimen-solicitationis-1962_en.html (Accessed 4 August 2013). A number of Church personnel have claimed that no one knew about Crimen Sollicitationis, but there is strong evidence that it was both known and used at least outside Australia: Fr Thomas Doyle http://reform-network.net/?p=3006, par 14 (Accessed 5 December 2013) John P. Beal: The 1962 Instruction, pp. 229 – 231: http://www.vatican.va/resources/resources_introductoria_en.html (Accessed 5 August 2013). In Australia, even if it was not used,


74 Art I(4) and II(4): see English translation in William Woestman: Ecclesiastical Sanctions p. 235. These figures are based on the number of clerics as against the number of members of religious orders who were not ordained clerics at the time: http://cara.georgetown.edu/caraservices/requestedchurchstats.html (Accessed 7 August 2015).

75 Potiphar’s Wife, Ch. 9


77 Some confusion in canon law arose in the late 1990s by claims made by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that Crimen Sollicitationis had not been repealed: see Potiphar’s Wife, Ch.9


79 http://www.vatican.va/resources/resources_lombardi-nota-norme_en.html (Accessed 21 July 2013). In making the announcement, Fr Lombardi created some uncertainty as to the extent of the reporting allowed and implied that once the canonical proceedings started, it was too late to report to the police. This seems to be supported by the recent case where the CDF refused to hand over to Italian magistrates documents from canonical disciplinary proceedings against Fr Mauro Inzoli. http://www.globalpulsemagazine.com/news/pope-francis-issues-statutes-overseeing-financial-reform/887, Accessed 7 March 2015. Very few countries have reporting laws for “historical abuse”, that is allegations by adults who were abused as children. In Australia only New South Wales and Victoria have them. The Commissioner for the Melbourne Response stated to the Victorian Parliamentary

S.316 of the Crimes Act 1900 (NSW). The Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014 (Vic) was passed by the Victorian Parliament and assented to on 3 June 2014, and has similar provisions to S.316 of the NSW Crimes Act relating to the abuse of vulnerable persons. It was proclaimed to commence on 27 October 2014.


Canon 1321, the author’s Potiphar’s Wife, pp.189ff, 216, 223


Canon 1362§2: Ladislas Orsy SJ, says that the canonical “prescription” is different to civil law statutes of limitation because the former extinguishes the cause of action, but the latter only prevent reliance on it (estoppel). That may be the situation in the United States, but many limitation statutes in Australia provide for extinguishment. http://www.bc.edu/dam/files/schools/law/lawreviews/journals/bclawr/44_4/04_FMS.htm (Accessed 2 October 2013)

The author’s Potiphar’s Wife, ch 9 and 14.

Id p.36 and America (December 5 1992) 443-44 at 444


109 Potiphar’s Wife, p.327-332.


Father Con Reis and the Movement’s attempted takeover of Catholic immigration ministry: 
a Melbourne and a national issue, 1950-53

Val Noone*

A Williamstown window on a wider world

On 3 March 1951, John Donovan, a Catholic layman, manager of the Migrant Workers’ Hostel at the Old Racecourse, North Williamstown, wrote a confidential letter to Father Con Reis, director of the Catholic Immigration Office (CIO), about a problem with the Sunday Masses at the hostel.¹

The Williamstown hostel on the southwest fringe of the city of Melbourne housed about 1100 displaced persons (DPs) recently arrived from war-torn countries such as Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Hungary.² The largest group were the Poles. Later known as the Wiltona Hostel, Altona, it was closed in 1982.

In the saga of the post-war migration phenomenon, Donovan was writing to Reis about a small matter, but one that would turn out to have wider implications. “A few months ago.” he wrote, “we had a Polish priest who was irregular in his attendance as were the times of Masses. Again, all hymns and sermons were in Polish irrespective of the fact that the congregation consisted of as many as ten nationalities.” In those days, Mass was celebrated in Latin with a vernacular of choice for the hymns and sermon.

Donovan recorded complaints from other Catholics in the hostel about unfairness. The net result of this was the dropping away of all nationalities other then Polish, with congregations dwindling to as few as twenty persons, Donovan said.

While I have yet to learn details of the biography of John Donovan, I

1 John Donovan, Migrant Workers’ Hostel, Old Racecourse, North Williamstown, ‘Letter to Fr Rees [sic]’, 3 March 1951. This letter and other papers of Father Conrad Reis cited in this article are in my possession. I intend to place them with the Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission (MDHC). I wish to thank Mary Doyle for assistance with research and analysis; Rachel Naughton, archivist at MDHC, for research assistance; and members of the Victorian chapter of the Australian Catholic Historical Association for their comments on an earlier version.

2 Con Reis, [Notes on Skudzryk matter], n d [1950-52].

* Dr Val Noone is a fellow of the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne. With Rachel Naughton he recently co-edited Daniel Mannix: His Legacy.
knew well Father Con Reis (1914-2007) to whom he wrote. This article is based on a set of papers which he entrusted to me. While our friendship influences my views, and thus I am not neutral, nonetheless, I aim to be objective, that is, I am willing to change my mind as demanded by the rules of evidence.

Conrad (Con) Reis was born in Albury in 1914, of German, Catalan and Irish ancestry, the second of three children of Charles Reis and Susan Parer. Educated at Catholic schools in Albury and then Xavier College, Kew, Reis studied for the priesthood at Corpus Christi College, Werribee, before being ordained for the archdiocese of Melbourne in 1939.

Two years later, at the age of 27, came a searing and life-changing appointment as a chaplain to the Fourth Brigade of the Australian Army. Reis had especially close links to the 29/46 Battalion, which included many men from Richmond, and the Fourth Field Ambulance. The men gave him the nickname, “The Little Digger”. “Our unit”, as he always called them, went into battle for the first time in September 1943 in New Guinea. Afterwards he said a Requiem Mass for the ones who had died. When they got back to Australia he did that for 52 years, on the first Friday in December, at whichever parish he was stationed. You will find a plaque at the back of St Columba’s, Elwood, marking this link.

In later years, Reis would recall that at the end of propaganda or entertainment films shown to the troops during the war a photograph of King George VI (or was it prime minister Winston Churchill?) would be shown accompanied by photographs of US President Franklin Roosevelt and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. In the language of those days, they had fought in an alliance of democratic and socialist forces against Fascism and Japanese militarism. This is a relevant piece of background information towards understanding the rejection by Reis, and many others, of undiscriminating anti-communism.

In March 1951, when opening Donovan’s letter about the problem of organising Mass for ten nationalities at Williamstown Hostel, Reis was 37 years old and in his eighth month in the job as director of the CIO, and residing at St Columba’s, Elwood.

His office, which had been set up just two years earlier under Father John Pierce, was in a Nissen hut, shared with the Young Christian Workers, at the back of St Francis’ Church in Elizabeth Street, Melbourne. From 1949 until 1970 Marie Toner was the only other worker in the CIO. Indeed, she had worked in that building since 1945 in an office for the rehabilitation of
Father Con Reis and the Movement’s attempted takeover of Catholic Immigration

war personnel under Pierce’s direction; and for a time in 1953 she managed the CIO alone.³

The Catholic Church, like the rest of Australia, was striving to respond to the arrival of some half a million people in the first six years after the end of World War II. The Australian population in 1950 was around 8,000,000. Resources and attitudes were being stretched in unprecedented ways. The federal government had actively encouraged the Australian bishops to set up their Federal Catholic Immigration Committee.⁴

Foremost of the wider questions touched on by Donovan in his nuanced way was to what extent were the Government and people of Australia expecting migrants to assimilate; in what ways was the Catholic Church to adapt its liturgical and parish life for the migrants; and how to handle the range of linguistic, cultural and political histories among worshippers. These questions, which are as relevant today as they were then, were central concerns of Reis and the CIO, and also, from a different perspective, also of Mr Bartholomew Santamaria, director of the Australian National Secretariat of Catholic Action (ANSCA).

After the Polish priest had lost the support of the bulk of the hostel’s Catholics, Donovan continued, a local Australian priest started coming regularly at 10.00 am on Sundays without fail, and things improved. All nationalities attended and, he noted, they “now regard themselves as Australian and are in favour of having an Australian priest”.

Stepping outside his official role, but speaking as a Catholic, and asking that Father Reis “keep the text of this letter strictly confidential”, Donovan concluded, “I have purposely refrained from pointing out that the Government frowns on any attempt to segregate New Australians into nationalities.”

Donovan’s homely, indeed heart-warming, intervention on this pastoral problem offers us a window on a local concern over the work of a particular priest, but also on wider matters of church and state.

³ Philippa Merchant, *The History, Evolution, Function and Contribution of the Catholic Immigration Office in Melbourne, 1949-1985*, North Fitzroy (Vic), Catholic Intercultural Resource Centre, n d [1986?], p 2. Thanks to Brenda Hubber for directing my attention to this publication. In contrast to Reis’ figure of 1100 displaced people at Williamstown hostel, Merchant said 760. This can be explained by change over time.

⁴ Frank Mecham, *The Church and Migrants, 1946-1987*, Haberfield (NSW), St Joan of Arc Press, 1991, pp 23ff. The national body was known for a time as the Federal Catholic Migration Committee but, in recognition that their work was only with arrivals and not departures, soon became the Federal Catholic Immigration Committee. However, the word migration, then as now, was often used for immigration.
The priest was Father Stanislaus Skudzryk, Polish and a Jesuit, who had arrived about a year before and was based first at Richmond and then at Hawthorn. The Advocate said at first that during the war he had spent “several years in a concentration camp” but a later issue said that he had “worked in disguise among the persecuted refugees in the countries neighbouring Poland from 1939 to 1949”. He promoted a then new special devotion to the ‘Merciful Heart of Jesus’, also known as the devotion to ‘Jesus of Divine Mercy’.5

While Father Joseph Krasocki SDB (a Salesian) was the official diocesan Polish chaplain, Father Skudzryk visited migrant hostels at Broadmeadows and Somers as well as Williamstown, acting as a chaplain to Polish newcomers. Father Joseph Janus SJ then, and for decades, also ministered to Polish Australians.

In ways that are not clear, Father Skudzryk played a part in the conflict which is the topic of this paper, namely that between the CIO under Father Reis, and Mr Santamaria, director of ANSCA. As we shall see, this soon involved Monsignor George Crennan and the Federal Catholic Immigration Committee.

Some presuppositions

Remembering E H Carr’s advice that “the first concern” of one reading a work of history should not be the facts it contains but “the mind of the recorder”, I will name here five presuppositions which I bring to this study.6 Firstly, as noted, I am a friend of Father Con Reis.

Second, I believe that 1950s Australian Catholics have considerable achievements in welcoming immigrants, which are overlooked in some current writings.7 Within that framework, the phrase “New Australians”

5 Advocate, 28 September 1950, p 4; and 2 November 1950, p 7. In January 1951 Father Skudzryk was posted to the Jesuit Provincialate, Hawthorn. One website says that Skudzryk arranged the transport of the first picture of Jesus of Divine Mercy to Melbourne which was solemnly blessed by Archbishop Mannix on the Sunday of Divine Mercy, 20 April 1952.


Father Con Reis and the Movement’s attempted takeover of Catholic Immigration

which Reis, like the architect of the post-war scheme Arthur Calwell and others, used was at the time an attempt at constructive engagement with the newcomers, a positive step that stands despite any later pejorative use. For example, in August 1950, after a concert by newcomers at the Melbourne Town Hall, Archbishop Daniel Mannix began by introducing himself as “an old new Australian”?8

Third, I will use the colloquial name, The Movement, for the initially secret organisation of which Mr Bartholomew Augustine (B A) Santamaria was the best-known leader. The names of this organisation have included The Show, the Catholic Social Studies Movement, the Australian National Secretariat of Catholic Action and the National Catholic Rural Movement, and after 1956 the National Civic Council.

Fourth, while Santamaria and the Movement said that they were attacking Communists, in their day-to-day activities in church organisations, community groups and trade unions, they often concentrated their energies on opposing not Communists but social democrats, lay and clerical, whose views differed from theirs. This study offers further proof of this proposition, which is often ignored these days.

Fifth, after the Chifley Labor Party government used troops against the striking coal miners of 1948, a takeover of Australia by the Communist Party was not an imminent possibility. Those who spoke of such a danger were ignoring the available evidence, or else were distorting reality for other purposes.9

Santamaria’s proposal to expand ANSCA

Before going deeper into the matter of Father Skudzryk and Masses at migrant hostels, let us look at two background factors which will show that this local matter was indeed more than a storm in a teacup.

Firstly, the proposal to bring the Catholic immigration ministry under

---

8 ‘Catholic Jubilee welcome to New Australians: delightful music and colour at Town Hall entertainment’, Advocate, 9 August 1950, p 3.

9 In a December 1952 letter to Archbishop Mannix, and in contrast to some of his public statements, Mr Santamaria said that the threat of revolutionary Communist takeover of Australia was past, claiming that the Movement’s work in the trade unions was the determining factor: “The result of the activities of seven years is roughly that the Communist Party, at the present moment, cannot hope to seize control of Australia by revolutionary means.” See B A Santamaria to Archbishop Daniel Mannix, 11 December 1952, pp 73-79 in Patrick Morgan (ed.), B A Santamaria, Your Most Obedient Servant: Selected Letters 1938-1996, Melbourne, Miegunyah Press and State Library of Victoria, 2007, p 74.
ANSCA. At the beginning of August 1950, just a couple of weeks after Reis commenced his appointment as director of the CIO, Santamaria, 36, then director of the Australian National Secretariat of Catholic Action, called on him, also 36, to suggest that the Catholic church’s work for migrants be made an arm of official Catholic Action under Santamaria’s guidance.\(^\text{10}\) As we shall see, Reis declined the suggestion.

At the time Santamaria was accustomed to speak of a crisis in our society due to the danger of the Communist Party in conjunction with the Soviet Union and the Peoples’ Republic of China taking over Australia. Moreover, like Prime Minister Robert Menzies, he spoke of the likelihood within a few years of World War III. In November 1951, 80,000 gathered at the Melbourne Cricket Ground to welcome the statue of Our Lady of Fatima in a form of Catholic devotional practice which was linked to preparing for the last days and an apocalyptic division of the world into good and evil.\(^\text{11}\)

In this framework, Santamaria, with the backing of the majority of the Australian Catholic Bishops, was trying to arrange not only that the CIO become part of ANSCA but also that the Young Christian Workers (YCW) and the National Catholic Girls Movement (NCGM), as well as the Newman Society of Victoria (NSV) do the same.

Indeed, in 1951, under the leadership of Father Frank Lombard, the YCW rejected an attempt by ANSCA and Santamaria to bring YCW under his umbrella, maintaining an opposition to control by Santamaria, which dated back to 1942.\(^\text{12}\) The next year, Father Jerry Golden, Bill Ginnane, Vin Buckley, John Dormer, Jerry Fernando and others succeeded in preventing such a takeover of the NSV.\(^\text{13}\) In his autobiography Santamaria wrote:

Throughout 1952 and 1953 a well-organised Catholic opposition to the Movement established itself, particularly in Melbourne and Sydney. It

\(^{10}\) Letter from Father Con Reis to Monsignor George M Crennan, 13 Jan 1952.


provided the atmosphere without which the eventual split in the ranks of the hierarchy would have been impossible to achieve.\textsuperscript{14}

My impression is that at this time the opposition to the Movement was real but, contrary to his description, it was not well organised and lacked a public voice. As Bruce Duncan remarked, at this stage, most people in the pews and the general public were not aware of the internal Catholic opposition to the Movement.

The YCW, NCGM and NSV followed Joseph Cardijn in his insistence that “to be merely anti-communist or anti-socialist is doing nothing”.\textsuperscript{15} In this, the coadjutor archbishop of Melbourne, Justin Simonds, supported them.

At this time, a couple of years before Dr H V Evatt’s attack on the Santamaria Movement and on the eve of the Split in the Australian Labor Party, Santamaria, in a phase of hubris, had over-estimated his power. On 11 December 1952 he wrote to Archbishop Mannix that within a few years his Movement would have taken over the labour movement and there would be Movement members in state and federal parliaments. Thus, wrote Santamaria, for the first time in the Anglo-Saxon world since the Reformation, Australian governments would soon be implementing Catholic social programmes. These included state aid for Catholic schools and the settling of Catholic migrants on small farms.\textsuperscript{16} Contrary to this prediction, by 1955 Santamaria’s power within the ALP would be curtailed and his supporters would start a separate political party. Nonetheless, at this time, Santamaria was influential in both state and church. For instance, Gerard Henderson wrote:

> What in effect happened was that Santamaria was accepted, albeit temporarily, as a kind of quasi-bishop who ran a political machine and reported directly to the bishops.\textsuperscript{17}

However, in the years 1951-53, as if in a prelude to his loss of power in the ALP, Santamaria’s attempts to bring the YCW, the NCGM, the Newman

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Santamaria, \textit{Against the Tide}, p 156.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Joseph Cardijn, \textit{The Hour of the Working Class}, London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1955, p. 61.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Henderson, \textit{Mr Santamaria and the Bishops}, p 76.
\end{itemize}
Society and the Immigration Office under his control were being thwarted.

In the meantime, Santamaria continued with his plans for re-organising Catholic immigration ministry. Sometime between August 1950 and December 1951, that is, after Reis declined the verbal suggestion that ANSCA take over the Catholic Immigration Office, Santamaria gave him a written proposal. He submitted a three-page ‘Draft constitution of The International Federation of Catholic Associations’, accompanied by an eleven-page briefing paper entitled ‘The Work of Catholic Action among the European Migrants to Australia’, which gave his assessment of political, cultural and religious affairs among the European migrants to Australia.18

The Santamaria proposal was that a federation of Catholic organisations of European migrants to Australia be created as an official movement of Catholic Action under the auspices of the bishops and ANSCA. Its stated aims were to be educational and social service. He gave it the name of International Federation of Catholic Associations (IFCA). He wrote within the framework of crisis and Communist threat mentioned above:

The migration program must be seen in the perspective of Australia’s new and dangerous position vis-à-vis the new Pacific nation-states. That we will face a military challenge within twenty years is as certain as anything in the international field. … [a] process of internal disintegration is already well advanced in Australia.

Reis kept copies of both documents along with a similar one sent by ANSCA to Catholic Young Men’s Society (CYMS) branches, and the roneoed outlines of similar presentations to an unnamed Catholic university group and also to the seminarians at Corpus Christi College, Werribee.

The briefing paper – all indications are that Santamaria was the author – begins with several pages of overview of the new migrants, British, Italian and Displaced Persons, and related government policies. He then argued for increased European migration on grounds of Christian charity, national defence, development of resources and “great advantage to the cause of Catholicism”. He alleged that the Communist Party and leftists opposed an increase of European migration. In several pages on the situation of European migrants he emphasised an “unbridgeable gulf dividing the attitudes of the native born Australian and the newcomer”.

The Santamaria paper made a number of points in sympathy with the

---

18 Anon [B A Santamaria], ‘Draft constitution of The International Federation of Catholic Associations’ [draft A in Reis papers], 3 pp, n d {1951}. Anon [B A Santamaria], ‘The Work of Catholic Action among the European Migrants to Australia’ [draft A in Reis papers], typescript, 11 pp, n d {1951}.
situation of the newcomers. He put the case for tolerance of second-language
speakers and foreign-language newspapers. He opposed the two-year work
contract and the concept of “assimilation at all cost”. Nonetheless, the paper
proposed the integration of newcomers into Australian society. Special
comment was expressed for the professionals among the migrants, whose
qualifications were not being recognised. In addition, Santamaria said that
migrant intellectuals were in danger of becoming “that very intellectual
proletariat which is the never-failing harbinger of social revolution”.

He wanted as many as possible of the newcomers to join his political
groups and take part in their campaigns within trade unions and the
Australian Labor Party, to oppose industrial militants and support increased
military spending. He concluded with a premature pronouncement that “the
International Federation of Catholic Associations has been formed. The
draft constitution is appended.”

In the Santamaria papers at the State Library of Victoria, both documents
are to be found in revised form, most likely dating to mid 1952 or later. Among a handful of editing changes the following section was deleted:

(c) There is great advantage to the cause of Catholicism in the
migration. … If those who come are properly handled, and carefully
absorbed into the Australian community with their religious beliefs
intact, Catholics would not be a minority in this country for more
than half a century. The results of this transformation in every field
– purely religious, social, economic, cultural, political – does not
require any description.

These considerations are of sufficient importance to raise the
problem of policy in relation to the newcomers to the highest level
of priority. This problem ranks with the problem of communism and
the trade unions, or rural and regional development, and of external
threat from Asia in is claim on the attention of Australians.

Also edited out was an attack by name on Dr Evatt, Eddie Ward, Clive
Turnbull and Arthur Calwell. A section was added claiming that increased
migration was anti-inflationary, a much-needed argument in the years

19 Papers of B. A. Santamaria MS 13492, State Library of Victoria. Box 143-2,
Migration: Catholic Policies and Organizations. c 1953-1958: Anon [B A Santamaria],
‘The Work of Catholic Action among the European Migrants to Australia’, [draft B in
Santamaria papers], typescript, 13 pp, n d, [after Passion Sunday 1952], marked “after
1952”. Anon [B A Santamaria], ‘Draft constitution of The International Federation of
Catholic Associations’ [draft B in Santamaria papers], 3 pp, n d {1952 or later}. I wish
to thank Patrick Morgan for advice on researching the Santamaria Papers.
when Robert Menzies who had been elected prime minister on a promise to “put value back into the pound” was presiding over inflation and economic recession.

The later draft of the constitution of Santamaria’s proposed ANSCA-affiliated migrant body tightened up the central control aspects of the proposed organisation, making room for ANSCA to appoint native Australians to positions within the federation. It also added a reference from 1 Corinthians 12:12-35 to harmony within the Mystical Body of Christ. A major addition to the later version of the Santamaria briefing paper is a two-page section on the experiences of Polish newcomers drawn from a Polish priest, most likely Father Skudzryk. I am not sure what to conclude from this increased focus on Polish matters. The central point was that official Catholic immigration work was to come under the direction of ANSCA and Santamaria.

Reis policy: ‘moderate cultural democracy’

A second important background factor is Reis’ advocacy of a policy on assimilation known as ‘moderate cultural democracy’. This was a national policy, expressing an Australian preference against ethnic parishes and Cahenslyism. During the early years of the massive post-war migration the Australian Catholic Church faced decisions about whether or not to have ethnic parishes as had been allowed in the United States of America. The bishops sent a delegation whose composition I do not recall to study the American experience. They reported against ethnic parishes and in favour of migrants joining existing English-speaking parishes but with roving national chaplains and with Confessions and Masses available in selected parish churches at certain times in their native languages. Reis and the Federal Catholic Immigration Committee supported that policy.

In his 1953 apostolic constitution, *Exsul Familia*, Pope Pius XII spoke in favour of national or ethnic parishes. This papal letter reflected increasing Vatican involvement in migration issues linked to the setting up in 1951 of the International Catholic Migration Committee. Indeed, the Australian bishops persisted with their policy of not forming national parishes. In his book on the Australian Catholic Church and migration, Frank Mecham commented that the Australian bishops “neither agreed to change their system nor did they confront the Roman system head on”.

As part of his work as director of the CIO, Father Reis delivered

---

20 Mecham, *The Church and Migrants*, pp 83-8. The quotation is on p 86.
occasional sermons and addresses on migration policy. In the course of preparing this paper I re-read and was impressed by his talk on Catholic approaches to immigration to the De La Salle Old Boys and was surprised to find him speaking against Cahenslyism. I had to look it up. Around the 1890s, Peter Cahensly, a wealthy German Catholic parliamentarian, proposed that the Pope divide the American Catholic immigrants into ethnic groups each with their own bishop. Indeed, the American Catholic church did not go that far but some cities did have distinct ethnic parishes. (During discussion of this paper at the March 2015 meeting of the Victorian chapter of the Australian Catholic Historical Association, Father Larry Nemer and Dr Donna Merwick spoke of their experiences of living in ethnic parishes in USA, pointing out some of their positive achievements.) A comparison of post-1945 Australian Catholic immigration policy with American Catholic practices deserves attention on another day.

Some ten months into the job at CIO, Reis delivered a major address advocating “moderate cultural democracy”, that is, freedom of cultures within adoption of English language. Talking to the Catholic Women’s Social Guild on Monday 14 May 1951, he examined five stages of American migration policy, indicated that Australia should learn from American mistakes, and urged that Australia seek “only such uniformities as are necessary for the maintenance of democratic society”. He echoed this policy in other speeches and in the actions he took.

Reis rejected the concept that assimilation meant “the complete loss of cultural identity on the part of the immigrant”. For him, “full freedom to various cultures [was possible] provided the laws of the land are kept” but should be “moderated by including a fairly rapid adoption of the English language”. Reis anticipated, with humour, some objections to his position. He said:

One can easily weary of the patronising foreigner or the superior Australian who tells us that we have no culture and that we are even a race of barbarians and Philistines. We are told that our Australian culture cannot rise above Comic Court or League football, and our deepest intellectual effort centres around the six o’clock closing

21 ‘Catholic Immigration’, outline of talk to De La Salle Old Boys, 18 May 1952.
22 Father C W Reis, director of Catholic Migration, Melbourne, ‘New Australians and cultural democracy: how are DPs to be assimilated?’ Advocate, 17 May 1951, p 11. And compare, in addition to the De La Salle talk already mentioned, ‘Opening of school year’, St Patrick’s Cathedral, 10 February 1951; [Address to and about YCW on migration], n d; ‘Talk to YWCA Interstate Conference’, 3 April 1952; ‘Catholic migration’, outline of a talk, n d, no place.
problem. … The average Australian may not wake up in the morning singing a Gregorian motet, but he will not miss the Sunday Mass from which, perhaps, the motet was taken. … We are a young nation; … we have played a major part in two world wars and I, for one, am not ashamed of our origins or of our record.

In addition, he noted that in some cases the displaced persons may need to be “taught the elementary doctrines of the Church, that they keep the laws of the Church, especially with regard to marriage in the Catholic Church, and sending their children to Catholic schools”.

He suggested that Australians seeking to welcome the newcomers could find inspiration in the life and work of Caroline Chisholm, giving a succinct and telling summary of her work. (Five months later, with a volunteer lay group, Reis set up the Caroline Chisholm Guild which held fortnightly socials for all nationalities at Cathedral Hall in Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, as well as conducting English classes.23) He concluded:

By a practical – and I repeat – practical and Christian approach to the problem of assimilation, Australia hopes to achieve the ideal of one national family. As we have seen, the term “assimilation” is often used to suggest a complete loss of cultural identity on the part of the immigrant. A deeper appreciation of the values of our democratic way of life makes us realise that not standardisation and conformity, but cultural diversity within the Australian Catholic framework should be our goal. The development of Australia is only beginning. Given people, energy, wise government and Christian social institutions, there is no reason why Australia should not become really great in the not far distant future.

His overall point was that both old and new Australians need to make adjustments so that “this moderate cultural democracy will enrich the Australian way of life by adding to it new ideas as more people are added to the population”.

The publication of this speech by Reis drew positive written responses from, among others, both Archbishop Daniel Mannix and founding minister

---

for immigration, Arthur Calwell. 24 Fox wrote to Reis: “The archbishop has asked me to tell you that the article in the Advocate last week was excellent.” This positive response of May 1951 from Mannix contrasted with Mannix’s public slight to Reis the previous August, just at the time when Reis had rejected Santamaria’s verbal request to bring the migration office under ANSCA control. At the concert at Melbourne Town Hall by newcomers mentioned earlier, Archbishop Mannix thanked various people who had made the evening possible, except Father Reis, the director of the CIO, who was on the platform and a key person in the event. 25 Their response to Reis’ Advocate article shows that, despite tensions over Father Skudzryk and the ANSCA attempt to control the CIO, Mannix and Fox maintained respect for Reis’ insights and pastoral practices.

In this speech and other documents, as in his practice, Reis, like a good number of his cohort among the Australian Catholic clergy and lay leadership, took account of American experiments and sought to find an appropriate Australian solution. Mass schedules and formation of Movement cells were two examples of the specific challenges they faced.

**Dispute over Mass schedules in context**

How then was a dispute in Melbourne archdiocese about Mass schedules and the role of a Polish priest connected to the ANSCA takeover attempt and the policy of moderate cultural democracy? As activists in the trade union movement used to say, Everything is connected to everything else. Let us outline the Mass schedules issue while remembering that Reis had already said No to bringing the Catholic Immigration Office under the control of Santamaria and the Movement. Notes made by Reis at the time and my notes of later conversations with him provide the following partial account of a puzzling Movement intervention regarding Mass times and


25 See Val Noone, Notes of conversation with Father Reis, 10 September 1983. Kevin Reis, who was present and furious about what he perceived to be a public insult to his brother, was an important source of support and encouragement to Father Reis at this time.
The difficulties and tensions outlined by John Donovan in the letter with which this article began lasted for at least twelve months with Father Skudzryk seemingly at the centre of the trouble. Problems arose not only at Williamstown but also at Somers and Broadmeadows, in each of which Father Skudzryk was involved.

Somers seems to have arisen first. Reis began his appointment on 15 July 1950 and within a fortnight Monsignor Arthur Fox, administrator of the Melbourne archdiocese on behalf of the 86-year-old Archbishop Daniel Mannix, asked him to arrange regular times for Masses at the Migrant Holding Centre at Somers. Father Skudzryk went to the Somers Hostel on at least one occasion but when rostered there again refused to go. By the end of the year, Mr F G Wood, director of the Somers camp, notified Reis that the arrangements were not working, “We are often in doubt as to whether anyone is coming, if so what time they are arriving and time of Mass.”

While the Somers difficulties continued, Father Harold Lalor SJ, a close collaborator of Santamaria, intervened to suggest that Father Skudzryk celebrate a regular Polish Mass at Williamstown. Lalor – famous for his passionate Movement recruiting speeches on the theme of “Five minutes to midnight” – had no official role in migrant matters. In support of his plan for Williamstown, Lalor claimed that Father Skudzryk had doubled the Mass attendance at Broadmeadows.

However, Reis found out from officials at Broadmeadows that Lalor and Skudzryk’s claims were false. At one point Father Skudzryk claimed that 1000 people attended Mass at Broadmeadows but an officer of the St Vincent de Paul Society active at the Broadmeadows Migrant Hostel said that there was space for only 60. One of the officials there recorded that the Broadmeadows Chapel measured 7m x 16 m, containing 16 forms and 5 chairs. Sixty might have been an underestimate because, on another occasion, when the alleged attendance was 300 people the actual count was 150. However, 1000 seems impossible.

The question of Polish Masses at Williamstown kept coming to the fore and the language used became harsher, with not only clerical but also lay and secular voices both for and against Father Skudzryk. While Reis’ notes

26 As cited elsewhere in this paper: Con Reis notes on Skudzryk matter; and Conversation with Father Con Reis, 10 September 1983.
do not record his surname, a certain Henry, a Polish layman, maintained the call for a Polish Mass at Williamstown, apparently “taunt[ing]” Marie Toner in the CIO about the issue. In March 1951, a public servant named Leo Quinn refused a request from Father Skudzryk for the use of facilities at Williamstown, for which Father Skudzryk called him a Nazi. Quinn’s ruling was backed by Mr Dunn, an inspector of migrant hostels, Mr Larkin, regional director of migration programs and Mr Guinane, group manager.

A certain Stanley, another Polish layman, said that Polish people wanted not Father Skudzryk but the return of Father Krasocki. According to Stanley, Father Skudzryk spoke to the people like peasants and named individuals from the pulpit in a way that was similar to what was done in the Polish National Church in the USA.

At this time, Poles were the largest Catholic national group among the displaced people in Melbourne. Of some 170,000 displaced persons who came to Australia through the International Refugee Organisation between 1948 and 1952, 60,000 were Polish.29 Indeed, according to Frank Mecham, by 1958 17,000 Poles lived in Melbourne, nearly double the 9000 in Sydney, while 7000 settled in Adelaide and 6500 in Queensland.30 Reis calculated that in February 1951 Poles made up 40 per cent of those in the hostels at Maribyrnong, Broadmeadows, Williamstown, Newport, Pascoe Vale, Fisherman’s Bend, Royal Park and Somers. Hostels at Holmesglen, Preston and Brooklyn were for British migrants. Nunawading was still under construction, he noted.

In February 1951, Monsignor Fox gave an instruction that a Polish Mass was to be held at Williamstown. The following month, as explained earlier, John Donovan wrote to Reis to say that Father Skudzryk’s Polish Mass at Williamstown had driven away Catholics of other nationalities.

However, on 4 March Monsignor Fox intervened again, this time saying that Archbishop Mannix was personally directing Reis to allow the Polish

30 Mecham, The Church and Migrants, pp 65-68.
priests to make whatever arrangements suited them. That same weekend, Father Skudzryk refused to go to Somers for a Mass arranged by the CIO. And, in a confusing message, Monsignor Fox asked Reis to arrange a Polish Mass at Williamstown. Father Lalor intervened again. Reis noted that Lalor had made a trip to Queenscliff to talk with Archbishop Mannix about the Polish Masses.

Notes made by Reis at the time show that he was unable to follow Father Skudzryk’s reasons for changing Mass times and insisting on Polish Masses where Mass for multiple nationalities was needed. At a meeting between Monsignor Fox, Fathers Reis, Skudzryk and Leo Ryan (a diocesan priest with pastoral involvement with migrant groups) to resolve some of the tensions, Fox said that Reis was accusing Skudzryk of lying, presumably about attendance numbers, outlined above. According to Reis, Father Ryan replied with another instance of a false claim by Skudzryk about attendances.

While this account comes from Reis’ side only, it is reasonable to conclude that Father Lalor and Father Skudzryk had access to Archbishop Mannix and Monsignor Fox which gave them power to intervene in the affairs of the CIO at times over-riding the director, Father Reis.

At the same time, the second key context is the policy of the CIO. As far as I can tell, in regard to Mass schedules and choice of celebrants, and working with over a dozen migrant chaplains from various nationalities, Reis was consistent in applying the policy of moderate cultural democracy.

**Catholic immigration ministry retains independence, but Reis loses position**

By 1952, Santamaria’s attempt to bring migration work under ANSCA and Movement control had become a national matter. He took his proposal to the Federal Catholic Immigration Committee. On 9 January 1952, Monsignor George M Crennan, Sydney-based secretary of Federal committee by appointment of the hierarchy of Australia,
wrote to Reis about the ANSCA proposal, seeking his comments ahead of a meeting of the committee on 22 January. 33 Crennan, born in 1900 in Mount Gambier, held the position of national director of Catholic migration from 1949 to 1995, and is famous for living to the age of 101.

Writing to Reis, Crennan began diplomatically by saying that he had heard that ANSCA have done some good work for the newcomers by representing them to government bodies and so on. However, Crennan thought that the ANSCA proposal would duplicate work already done or about to be done by Federal and diocesan Immigration offices, and he opposed ANSCA’s request for control and for funding. He stressed to Reis the need for confidentiality in his reply.

Four days later Reis wrote to Crennan with his analysis of the Santamaria/ANSCA proposal. He stressed the personal and confidential nature of his reply – “I am not speaking for the diocese.” 34 Reis wrote that much of the ANSCA document entitled “The work of Catholic Action amongst European Migrants to Australia” comes from “a coterie of apparently disgruntled intellectuals advising the Secretariat”. However, he wrote as if there was one author, though not named, that is, Santamaria. Among other things Reis wrote:

[This document] is a classic of presumption, ignorance or lack of information and destructive criticism. Not one constructive idea contained in the whole document unless the IFCA draft constitution could be considered constructive – rather I think, it is the height of presumption.

… The two-year contract, rather than being described as industrial conscription, should be seen as a guarantee of good work to migrants, the vast majority of whom are quite satisfied (hard cases are adjusted by local Commonwealth Employment offices) and most of whom are staying in their allotted jobs as their contract runs out. Would our advisers have preferred to let newcomers either set up quick-paying luxury industries or drift about, ignorant of language, laws and customs, to be picked up by unscrupulous employers? No human organisation is perfect and the critical tone of the “statement’ must do immense harm to Catholic prestige in Government Department circles which I have found most helpful in the past.

33 Letter from Monsignor George M Crennan to Father Con Reis, 9 January 1952. As yet I have not consulted the Crennan papers.

34 Letter from Father Con Reis to Monsignor George M Crennan, 13 January 1952.
Where did the author get his information? Obviously he has not consulted official policy statements or the aims and ideals of the Citizenship Convention held annually at Canberra. Possibly he is labouring under the delusion that no other body, Catholic or secular, has thought of these things before or that they have not done much to help the plight of migrants.

Reis engaged with what he saw as an over-simplification in the ANSCA document:

… In the statement we read: “The only remedy is, of course, to bury the whole stupid idea of assimilation”. Such a statement clearly marks the writer as completely incompetent to speak on migration. Gradual understanding and two-way assimilation is the heart and soul of any successful immigration scheme.

Here Reis was re-stating his position on assimilation, outlined above, namely not “assimilation at all costs” but a mutual process.

Reis explained further why he rejected the Santamaria proposal: it involved needless duplication, it reflected a lack of involvement by ANSCA, particularly its rural arm, in pastoral work with immigrants, and it was based on ignorance about the concrete practical work already undertaken by existing Catholic groups:

… In August 1950, Mr Santamaria of the Catholic Action Secretariat approached me about the formation of something similar to the proposed IFCA, complete with blue print and all, to be a “front” behind which Anti-Communist work would be carried out. This latter purpose was given to me only verbally. As his proposed scheme took in the title of this office and as he approached me on a diocesan level, I would have nothing to do with it, pointing out that they already have a movement for this purpose, rather than repeat entia sine ratione.

I suggested he undertake the less spectacular work of incorporating people from national groups into this worthy movement. When it comes to robbing coaches I believe in one man per coach and I still fail to see what is to be gained by the duplication of migration work unless, of course, the bishops of Australia wish our offices to fold up and the ANSCA take over these duties.

If, on the other hand, they are genuinely interested in Catholic Action, it might be good to remind them that the Young Christian Workers
and National Catholic Rural Movement (NCRM) are represented at the Citizenship Convention at Canberra and that the Young Christian Students to my knowledge are doing splendid Catholic Action work among newcomers to Australia. I believe there is a whole field of work as yet not sufficiently exploited for the NCRM in helping migrants on the land and assisting Australia back to its fundamental mission of being a primary-producing country.

Reis firmed up his case and, with humour, finished his comments to Crennan as if they were working together on a campaign:

The more I think about this proposed Federation the more I am likely to lapse into incoherence or bad language, and that would never do in writing to a Monsignor. … With best wishes for a successful campaign.

In a short time, the ANSCA proposal was dropped. Reis and Crennan, presumably with the support of Cardinal Norman Gilroy and some other members of the hierarchy such as Archbishop Simonds, had blocked the second and national stage of the Movement attempt to take over Catholic immigration affairs.

Then came what seems at first sight to have been a setback for Reis. On 19 January 1953 Archbishop Mannix appointed him founding parish priest of Sacred Heart, St Albans. In her 1986 outline history of the Catholic Immigration Office, Philippa Merchant wrote:

Both in 1952 and 1953 the intake of migrants was severely curtailed, resulting in a decline in work for the CIO. Thus, in 1952, Father Reis applied to be transferred to a parish, and for a brief period, he combined CIO duties with that of establishing a new parish.35

I had not read Merchant’s account until this year and thus did not have a chance to question Reis about it. I have no record or memory of his citing the reduction in numbers of immigrants as a reason for his move to St Albans. Moreover, 80,000 people was the intake for that year, which meant a continuing need for the work of the CIO. On the other hand, my memory is that he spoke of being pushed out of his post as director of the CIO because of his clash with Santamaria and ANSCA.

As with clergy and other personnel placements, a given decision about an appointment may have several components. Furthermore, an obedient priest who was told he should apply for a certain appointment may well have done so even though he knew that the shift was due, at least in part,

to other factors. Thus, Merchant may be correct about the formal record of appointment. In a recent conversation, she explained that her account was based on interviews with the then CIO director Father John Murphy, and also with Rafter, Reis and Toner. She was unaware of the background issue concerning Santamaria and her interviewees had not spoken of it.36 With organisational histories, many people prefer to leave out accounts of conflicts: this may have been the case with Merchant’s interviewees. Then again, at the time, Reis may have decided to leave the issue for another day. At a minimum, I wish to record that Reis told me that, in his view, Santamaria and the Movement influenced Mannix to move him from the CIO to St Albans. Moreover, he went to some trouble to leave to posterity documents about his clash with Santamaria and ANSCA.

In an intriguing and as yet unexplained twist, in 1953, as Reis moved to the western suburbs, Father Skudzryk left Melbourne, seemingly never to return.

The precise details of the events outlined above may never be known. Throughout this time Coadjutor Archbishop Simonds backed Reis. Reis also had support from Arthur Calwell. According to Reis, both he and Simonds saw Santamaria, Mannix and the Jesuits as their opponents. Yes, they had Jesuit friends but the leaders of the Australian province of the Jesuits as well as individuals such as Harold Lalor, Vic Turner, Bill Smith and Stanislaus Skudzryk were committed participants in the Santamaria Movement. In passing, it is worth recording that throughout this and later stages, Reis maintained respect for Monsignor Arthur Fox as a “kind” person.

Summary of Movement role and opposition to it

On balance, it is likely that in regard to Mass schedules and Father Skudzryk’s pastoral work, as well as in regard to the proposed incorporation of the CIO into the Movement, an interlocking network of the Santamaria Movement had opposed Reis. In summary:

• At the beginning of his two and half years as director of the CIO, Reis said No to a verbal proposal from Mr Santamaria to incorporate the office into ANSCA and the Movement.
• Over the ensuing year Reis and hostel officers found that otherwise manageable pastoral problems with Father Skudzryk over Mass schedules at migrant hostels escalated out of proportion.
• Father Skudzryk had support from Father Lalor, a close associate of Mr

36 Conversation with Philippa Merchant, 15 April 2015.
Father Con Reis and the Movement’s attempted takeover of Catholic Immigration

Santamaria.

• Father Lalor and Father Skudzryk gained the intervention of Archbishop Mannix and his administrator, Monsignor Fox – for a time – to over-rule the day-to-day authority of Reis as director of pastoral work at migrant hostels.

• Public servants and lay Catholic volunteers advised and supported Father Reis in the pastoral work of the CIO, including his handling of disputes over schedules for Masses.

• In 1952 Father Reis assisted Monsignor George Crennan of the Federal Catholic Immigration Committee, with support from Archbishop Simonds and probably Cardinal Gilroy, to resist a formal attempt by Santamaria to incorporate national Catholic migration work into ANSCA and the Movement.

• In January 1953, Archbishop Mannix appointed Reis as parish priest of St Albans.

• In the opinion of Reis these events were of a one. He experienced the problems with Skudzryk and his move from his post as director of the Melbourne CIO as resulting from his part in preventing Santamaria, ANSCA and The Movement from taking over Catholic immigration ministry. On available evidence it is reasonable to say that he was correct.

• Without going into detailed analysis here, we can deduce that Reis, Crennan and others who opposed the incorporation of Catholic migration ministry into ANSCA and The Movement acted on the basis of their pastoral expertise combined with their understanding of democratic procedures.

Epilogue: 1953-1973, a pioneering pastoral career with migrants

Father Con Reis was the founding parish priest of an 85-per-cent migrant community at Sacred Heart, St Albans, in Melbourne’s west, a post he filled for twenty years with extraordinary skill and success. Starting in January 1953 with an empty paddock, the parishioners and Reis constructed fine buildings, often with voluntary labour, and a remarkable multicultural spiritual family, where people of dozens of nationalities, some former enemies in World War II, worshipped side by side, and their children went to school together. In October 1954, Archbishop Mannix, then 90, made a trip to St Albans to bless and open the church. He praised and supported the new parish and its parish priest.
Bearing in mind the Polish factor in our discussion, it is noteworthy that during the late 1950s and early 1960s, under the leadership of Reis, Sacred Heart parish and its hall were home to one of Australia’s most thriving Polish religious, cultural and sporting communities. Moreover, Father Joseph Krasocki celebrated Mass there every Sunday and remained a lifelong friend of Reis.

For the six main Masses on Sunday, sermons were in English but priests of a dozen nationalities came on a rotating roster to celebrate an additional Sunday Mass, to hear Confessions and preach in their own tongue, every month or so. In his parish Reis implemented the plan which he had earlier sought to make a diocesan one.

Reis’ seeming defeat as director of the Catholic Immigration Office led to a victory for pastoral care of Australia’s immigrants, both by defeating the Movement takeover of migration ministry and by bringing him to St Albans. I write the latter assessment as an eyewitness – in the 1960s I was fortunate to be appointed as one of his assistant priests and learned much by working with him and the parishioners. Half a dozen other curates and a thousand parishioners will give the same report. Father Con Reis deserves to be remembered, as do others of his cohort who laboured mightily in the aftermath of World War II to make Australia a democratic and multicultural nation.
Biographies and memoirs figured prominently in my reading in 2015. Outstanding among them was Santamaria: a Most Unusual Man (The Miegunyah Press), Gerard Henderson’s thoroughly researched 506-page life of Bartholomew Augustine (Bob) Santamaria (1915-97). This epic biography, supplemented by recent publications from, among others, Greg Sheridan (When We Were Young and Foolish, Allen and Unwin), Michael Sexton (On the Edges of History: a Memoir of Law, Books and Politics, Connor Court Publishing) and Paddy Manning (Born to Rule: The Unauthorised Biography of Malcolm Turnbull, Melbourne University Press), added much to my knowledge of an important public figure, in Church and State, whom I had known, although not intimately, for fifty of his eighty-two years.

I was a 16-year-old schoolboy attending the Jesuit-run St Patrick’s College, East Melbourne, when my path briefly crossed that of Santamaria. Efforts were being made that year to revive the Campion Society, which had influenced him as a young man in the 1930s and which had gone into abeyance during the war. A few senior students at our school, led by my classmate Paul Duffy (a future work associate of Santamaria and in later years a Jesuit Provincial), were invited by those keen to reactivate the Society to attend study and discussion sessions and also, in Paul’s and my cases, a trainee writing group. Those hoping to form us as potential Campions and writers included Ted Madden, the editor of News-Weekly (the organ of Santamaria’s anti-communist Movement), the future NSW lawyer and judge, Jim Macken, and the author Niall Brennan, who ran the writing classes.

We met in rooms at the Catholic Action Secretariat which included the office of the man to whom members of the group deferred, Bob Santamaria. Not a participant in our sessions himself, he once or twice looked in on our meetings, where he was introduced with a certain deference. On one occasion we were asked if any of us would care to join a working bee helping Bob over the following weekend to build the house into which he was soon to move with his young family. My
parents decided that homework for the Jesuits had to take precedence that time.

The first hint I had that Santamaria, unknown in the public arena, was already a contentious figure in at least one Catholic circle came during 1948, my final school year, during a meeting of the Young Catholic Students organisation. The main speaker, Father (later Monsignor) John F. Kelly, the erudite Director of Melbourne's Catholic Education Office, made in passing a slightly critical reference, without naming Santamaria, to the anti-communist activities led by him.

During my seminary years at Corpus Christi College, Werribee, 1949-52, Santamaria and his close associates like Father Harold Lalor SJ were among the outside speakers invited to the college by the Rector, Father Charlie Mayne SJ. Santamaria himself impressed most of us by his spellbinding oratory and by the force and conviction with which he presented his case about the danger facing Australia from communism and for the need for urgent action. Our Rector, who made no public display of the reservations he held about aspects of the approach adopted by Santamaria and his Movement, tried to balance things by introducing other speakers, notably priests and lay personnel associated with Catholic Action agencies like the Young Christian Workers and the National Catholic Girls Movement. They had clear misgivings about any suggestion that the Santamaria Movement could be classified as authentic Catholic Action.

While I have no doubt that the majority of the Werribee seminarians, myself included, accepted the Santamaria line unquestioningly, there were some sceptics. Many of the supporters were to maintain their enthusiasm for his views during later years as priests, when a good number of them were to influence the attitudes and votes of parishioners.

During my years as a seminarian and ordained postgraduate in Rome (1952-61), I followed with interest some of the happenings in the Church and the wider community in Australia. These included Dr Evatt’s sensational attack on Santamaria and his Movement in 1954 and its consequences in the following years, such as the Labor Party split and the sundering divisions arising among Catholics and their priestly and episcopal leaders.

I was present with other clerics in Rome’s Australian Embassy in November 1956 when the Ambassador, Paul McGuire, hosted a reception for Cardinal Norman Gilroy, his Auxiliary and close adviser...
B. A. Santamaria Remembered by One Who Knew Him a Little

Bishop (later Archbishop) James Carroll and Brisbane's Coadjutor Archbishop Patrick O'Donnell. They had come to Rome on what was to become, for them, a successful mission “to put the skids under the Movement”, as my friend and fellow priest, the historian Tom Boland, remarked to me during the reception.

In the next year, 1957, I took advantage of the long university summer vacation to return briefly to Australia, travelling there and back as the chaplain on an Italian ship. While in Melbourne in September, at the suggestion of the Movement's chaplain, Father Eric D'Arcy, I called on Bob Santamaria in his office in Gertrude Street, Fitzroy. Received by him with typical cordiality, I found that Santamaria was understandably bruised by the instructions sent to Australia from the Holy See in May and July. As related by Father Bruce Duncan (Crusade or Conspiracy? Catholics and the Anti-Communist Struggle in Australia, UNSW Press, 2001, page 339), he had told Archbishop Mannix that the July instruction represented a “complete rejection” of the position he had tried to uphold. He had felt that the victory for the Gilroy-Carroll view about the Movement's future meant that “the ground has been taken completely under my feet”.

While Bob did not discuss what had happened in detail with me, his despondency was evident, in spite of his display of the kind of humorous self-deprecation which I was to observe at other times and which Gerard Henderson and others have described as characteristic of him. He asked if, on returning to Rome, I could send him anything I came across that I thought could be of use to him.

At the time I was about to enter the second year of a four-year course in canon and civil law at the Pontifical Lateran University. There I was coming under the influence of one of the best teachers I ever had, Monsignor (much later Cardinal) Pietro Pavan, whose subject was socio-political economics. In expounding it, he had much to say in a progressive vein on Church-State relations, democracy in the Church, religious freedom and the role of the laity. His liberal approach echoed that of the American Jesuit John Courtney Murray, the French thinker Jacques Maritain, the Archbishop of Milan, Giovanni Battista Montini (the future Pope Paul VI) and my friend Rosemary Goldie, a Rome-based church bureaucrat, academic and lay apostolate expert.

What I did not discover for a number of years was that Pavan had been commissioned by the Holy See after the Gilroy group's representations to Rome to study their case and to prepare a submission...
in defence of it. Simultaneously, Father Antonio Messineo SJ was given the task of advocating the contrary position articulated by Archbishop Mannix and others, in association with Santamaria. I was soon aware, however, that Pavan was interested in the Australian situation, which he sometimes mentioned in class as well as in conversations with me. I approached him eventually to ask if he would supervise the preparation of my doctoral thesis and if I could make Pope Pius XII’s expounding of principles relevant to the case of the Movement, about which I had already written in a dissertation, the subject of my doctoral thesis. He thought it would be better, taking a concrete and practical rather than a theoretical approach, to research the Movement itself as a case study.

I wrote to Santamaria on 7th May 1959 to seek his view about Pavan’s idea and to inquire if necessary documents in his possession could be accessed. Replying on 10th June he said he agreed with Pavan, whom I had quoted, adding that he had run it past Archbishop Mannix, who said all the documents that were not strictly reserved by Rome should be given to me. These included any that went out over his own name. Santamaria, however, also drew my attention to formidable practical difficulties in taking on such a project when working so far from Australia and when also needing documents in possession of those who had opposed him and the Movement.

Soon afterwards, Pavan changed his mind and suggested I stay away from an explicit treatment of the Movement saga. He asked if instead I would revert to my own first idea of examining exhaustively the relevant principles found in the teaching of Pope Pius XII on the relations between the hierarchy and the laity in what he termed “the Christian animation of the temporal order”. In retrospect, with knowledge now of Pavan’s central role in resolving the Australian conflict in Gilroy’s and Carroll’s favour, I wonder if he was protecting me from possible adverse repercussions after returning to Mannix’s service in Melbourne.

After I wrote on 12th July to inform Santamaria of the change, he replied on 7th August with an alternative suggestion – “a thesis on voluntary lay organisations of Christian inspiration, considering them both from the viewpoint of papal doctrine and from the viewpoint of their action within a democratic society”. He was good enough to send me copies of two articles, one in Twentieth Century about the rights of subordinate bodies within mass democratic political parties (by Lloyd Ross) and the other in Social Survey with the title “The Idea of a
Church Party”. But in the end, while appreciating his help, as I told him in the last item in our eight-month exchange, my letter on the subject dated 17th December, I had elected to stay with what Pavan had finally suggested.

While writing the thesis on the revised subject, I took advantage of a visit to Rome by the Apostolic Delegate to Australia, Archbishop Romolo Carboni, to seek his views on some of my work-in-progress. I knew of his interest in the area I was researching, as well as his support, costly to him career-wise, for the Mannix-Santamaria line. It was in his discussion with me that, after criticising Gilroy and the other anti-Movement Australian bishops, he declared solemnly, as quoted from me by Bruce Duncan in Crusade or Conspiracy? (page 373), “I judge them severely, and God will judge them severely too.”

Soon after my return to Australia late in 1961 and my appointment by Dr Mannix as Associate Editor of the Advocate, I had a phone call from Bob Santamaria inviting me to lunch in his office, now in Melbourne’s Elizabeth Street. It was a friendly, low-key occasion, where controversial matters were not explored at length. I have no doubt Bob’s purpose was to size me up as the appointee to a position which would have some relevance for all he was trying to achieve in the Catholic community. My long-term predecessor, the priest-historian James Murtagh, had been one of his loyal supporters, who ensured that the weekly Advocate was not unfavourable to the entities carrying on the work and policies of the theoretically suppressed Movement - the National Civic Council and the Democratic Labor Party. His task had been reinforced – and continued to be during most of my time with the paper – by the fact that Santamaria’s ally and one-time mentor D.G.M. (Denys) Jackson was engaged on a casual basis to contribute a foreign affairs column and to take part in the writing of editorials as required, after consultation with the news editor, Frank Murphy, and me. Jackson would come to our office every Monday morning, usually, we believed, via Santamaria’s. With engaging simplicity he declared one day that he was tired of writing Advocate editorials for Bob Santamaria. A good man, he was a friend with whom I had once spent a week as his guide in Rome, at Santamaria’s request, conveyed to me through the Archbishop’s office.

During the following years Santamaria and I met occasionally at functions, one memorable occasion being a closed gathering of Catholic editors, organised by Santamaria in April 1963 at the
Essendon headquarters of the Columban Fathers, to hear and question the visiting Archbishop Ngo Dinh Thuc of Hue, Vietnam. The historian Val Noone reports on this clandestine meeting in *Disturbing the War* (Spectrum Publications, 1993, page 80). The visitor’s upbeat description of the struggle with the communists in his country was also covered in the *Advocate* (18th April 1963). The claim in the headline, probably composed by me, that the Church was flourishing in spite of the communist threat, makes odd reading when it is recalled that, on 2nd November 1963, barely six months after Thuc’s visit to Australia, his brother, President Ngo Dinh Diem, himself a previous Santamaria-sponsored Australian visitor, was assassinated in Saigon. Thereupon, the regime blocked the Archbishop’s return to Vietnam from Rome, where he was attending the Vatican Council’s second session. He was to live for nearly twenty more years in exile, during which, perhaps affected by mental illness, he incurred excommunications for his practice of illegally ordaining priests and bishops who were rejecting Vatican II and the papacy of Paul VI. In his student days in Rome, Thuc had been a friend and companion of some Australians, among them such future bishops as Norman Gilroy, Matthew Beovich and James O’Collins.

Shortly after Thuc’s April 1963 visit, his and President Diem’s nephew, Father Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan (1928-2002), a future Cardinal and now a candidate for beatification, came to Australia, where he had friends from his time as a student in Rome in the 1950s. I had known him there myself and was much later to have many close contacts with him in Rome and Sydney, after he had been imprisoned, as Coadjutor Archbishop of Saigon, for long years. When finally allowed to go into exile like his uncle before him, he received high appointments in the Roman Curia from Pope John Paul II, mainly in the justice and peace areas. In his years of freedom Thuan often visited his family in Australia, where they had come as refugees and where Bob Santamaria was among his friends, as had been the case with his uncles.

Growing tensions entered my own relations with Santamaria in the years following the visits by Thuc and Thuan. Reporting Vatican II, which I attended as an accredited priest-journalist in the Italian autumn of 1963, changed many of my attitudes towards the Church and its need for reform, while reinforcing some of the kind of views on human rights, social justice, freedom, democracy and Church-State
relations that I had taken on board while sitting at the feet of Pietro Pavan. In making judgments on the activities and methods of the NCC, the DLP and the many other organisations created by Santamaria to pursue his aims (Henderson offers helpful information about some of them), I was also influenced by the liberal views of friends like Rosemary Goldie, Frank Costigan QC (my late twin brother), Max Charlesworth, Brian Doyle, Xavier Connor, Paul Ormonde, John Ryan and other progressively minded lay people, academics, university graduates and journalists, as well as priests like John F. Kelly, Frank Martin, Pat Crudden, Roger Pryke, Edmund Campion, Val Noone, Bob Wilkinson, Michael Parer, Garry McLoughlin and Julian Miller.

My disenchantment with the Santamaria approach and viewpoint, as defended by most members of the Victorian hierarchy, especially Melbourne’s Auxiliary Bishop Arthur Fox, grew and came into the open in the mid and late 1960s when the Coalition Governments chose to send 18-year-old conscripts, selected by lottery, to serve in the already controversial Vietnam War. Frank Murphy and I, over-riding the thinking of Denys Jackson, saw to it that the Advocate, risking the ire of Bishop Fox and others, would oppose the decision editorially. Frank placed much weight on the well-known fact that his hero, the now deceased Daniel Mannix, whose life he had written, had opposed conscription in principle during the First World War. He believed, rightly or wrongly, that, if alive, Mannix (also Fox’s and Santamaria’s hero) would have argued against it for Vietnam.

Santamaria and his followers were appalled that Victoria’s main Catholic organ had taken this stand. Bishop Fox, who administered the Archdiocese during the terminal illness of Mannix’s successor and critic of Santamaria, Archbishop Justin Simonds (1890-1967), denounced us in public for what we had done, while some indignant readers voiced their indignation loudly or gave up buying our paper. Others, however, wrote letters to the editor supporting us and criticising the bishop and his most outspoken defender and colleague, the philosopher Father (later Archbishop) Eric D’Arcy. One of these was a young Melbourne Catholic, Michael Sexton, now the Solicitor General of NSW and a well-known author. In his recent memoir, On the Edges of History (pages 50-51), he quotes his letter to the Advocate (15th December 1966), in which he claimed that history would have “no praise for those who, like Bishop Fox and Mr B.A. Santamaria, advocate a holy war against communism which can justify any means of achieving its end”. Sexton also kindly
pays me the challengeable compliment of being more liberal-minded as editor than any of my predecessors – or successors. He goes on (pages 51-53) to quote from subsequent Advocate issues (22nd December 1966, 12th January 1967 and 2nd February 1967) featuring D'Arcy’s attack on him for writing and on me for publishing his criticism of Fox and Santamaria – and letters from two of his philosophy colleagues defending us and taking him to task.

Whatever judgment may be made at this distance in time about the whole episode and its participants, it was a departure from the unanimity with which Victoria’s Catholic media, with the exception of the small circulation maverick Catholic Worker, adhered to the policies advocated by the Santamaria faction.

The appointment of a new Archbishop of Melbourne in May 1967 created a need for many of us to adjust to new relationships and attitudes. Archbishop (later Cardinal) James Knox, a friend of Pope Paul VI, had been a successful papal diplomat in Africa and Asia. As described by Father Ian B. Waters in the Australian Dictionary of Biography (Volume 17, pages 635-6), his main achievements during his seven years in Melbourne were the much needed reorganisation of the diocesan governance structure, the implementing of Vatican II’s decisions and the organising of a successful International Eucharistic Congress, with an emphasis on social justice and ecumenism, in 1973. Firm in his opposition to communism, Knox, without using the extremist and undiplomatic language of Bishop Fox, sided with Santamaria and the NCC in supporting the Vietnam War, opposing the anti-war moratorium and withholding his blessing from the Catholic peace organisation, Pax. Val Noone’s Disturbing the War has much to say about this.

Personally kind to me at a time when, as he knew, I was preparing to leave the priestly ministry, Knox did not take exception to my engaging in a prolonged debate with Bob Santamaria in the Advocate’s pages (18th and 25th July and 1st and 8th August, 1968) about the relative merits of Christian-Marxist dialogue, which Bob opposed and I supported (or at least held it proper for our readers to be informed about it, which Bob did not). This had followed an ABC television documentary This Tiny Ship in Space, on the subject. Produced by my friend Father Michael Parer, it featured a number of interviewees, including myself. One of the others, the celebrated academic poet Vincent Buckley, had objected, unreasonably in my opinion, to the cuts made to his interview.
My part in the dialogue debate and previous hassles I faced during my Advocate years form part of an informative article in the July 2015 Australian Journalism Review (pages 133-147) by the former Adelaide priest-journalist and present journalism lecturer Robert Carey. The well researched article is titled “Vacated marketplace: a lost battle for editorial independence in the Catholic press”.

The fact that we had differed quite vigorously in public did not at this stage affect the reasonable personal relations that existed between Bob Santamaria and me.

While the debate was going on and at other times that year, Santamaria, who lived close to the Deepdene area while I was housed in the presbytery there, sometimes attended my Sunday Mass and waited for me afterwards on one occasion to say his regard for me was not affected by our differences and to express the hope that our good relationship would remain. It showed the kind of courtesy which many of his adversaries have acknowledged in him.

Some eighteen months after that incident occurred, Santamaria gave his own account of it in a letter to me dated 19th March 1970. He wrote: “When we were engaged in our controversy on ‘Dialogue’ in the Advocate, I approached you one Sunday in the sacristy and assured you that ours was a conflict of principles, without any personalities. I kept the debate on those terms. You assured me then, and later you wrote to me from London, to say that you were happy that this was our relationship.”

The letter, a very angry one, was occasioned by a short article I had written, at the direction of my editor at Melbourne’s Sunday Observer, where I had been employed from October 1970, after my resignation from the priestly ministry and the Advocate associate editorship had taken place in June of that year. The article was meant to be a news item, not a book review, as Santamaria called it, about his just published book The Defence of Australia (Hawthorn Press, 1970). I had recalled the author’s eloquent plea for peace in a famous speech he gave at the age of twenty-four in Melbourne’s Exhibition Building at a huge peace rally on 28th May 1939, just over three months before the outbreak of the Second World War. Speaking of “the measureless blessings of peace”, he had intimated that war was unthinkable now that bombs could be dropped on innocent citizens from the air. I contrasted this with his advocacy in the new book for a heavily armed Australia, even with nuclear weapons. The heading on the article, not my choice, was...
“An Exercise in Rattling the Sabre”.

The degree of indignation in this two-page typed letter took me by surprise. He twice suggested that “any intelligent person” would see there was no real contradiction between the attitudes he had in 1939 and thirty-one years later. He suggested that the headline was accusing him of being a warmonger, a term I had not used in the article. Thinking I had insulted him, which was certainly not my intention, he said that, if he entered into public controversy with me he would retaliate in similar terms by affirming that no change in his viewpoint “could possibly compare in terms of consistency with that of a man who had entered the priesthood under the most solemn vows, but later abandoned it.” Referring to what he saw as my double standard, he asked me in the end to determine the standard according to which I wished to conduct controversy.

At the time I found the letter so hurtful (and I have quoted only a few passages) that I did not reply to it. I wonder now if I should have – and indeed if I should have agreed to write the offending article in the first place. More than twenty years later I made a reference to it and to his unanswered letter in a perfectly polite exchange of correspondence I had with Bob Santamaria in my capacity as the administrator of social justice consultations for the Bishops’ Conference. I said that I regretted any offence I had given. His reply was that he had no recollection of the episode.

About a year before he died, I approached Bob’s office to ask if I could interview him in connection with an entry I was preparing for the Australian Dictionary of Biography (Volume 15, pages 455-6) about Father James Murtagh, who I understood had been close to him in their younger days and during Murtagh’s twenty-three years (1936-59) as the Advocate’s Associate Editor. The meeting was arranged and I travelled to Melbourne from Sydney to see Bob in his office, now in North Melbourne. I felt there was a slight stiffness at first on both sides and even a hesitation to use first names when we sat down together, but that did not last long. As well as talking about Murtagh, we had a friendly conversation skimming over a number of subjects – how I found living in Sydney, the present group of bishops (few of whom he knew any more, he said), our families, the education of the young, the economy, the state of the Church and so on. As we parted I wished him many more years, saying I expected that both he and Don Bradman would reach centuries. Sadly I was wrong on both counts.
I was on a holiday with my wife in Marrakesh in late February 1998 when an email to our hotel from our daughter in Sydney informed us that Bob Santamaria had died. Then, as now, I had many reasons to reflect on his life and his many gifts, flaws, achievements and failures, as I imperfectly knew them.

While this article was never conceived as a book review, the recent publications I have named, together with others in earlier years, provide abundant material for such reflection. Excellent as it is, Gerard Henderson’s painstaking biography, which can never be overlooked by future researchers and commentators, cannot be called the final word on an undeniably great Australian, whose enormous influence on Australia and the Catholic Church in the 20th Century has been extended well past the year 2001 through, among other things, extraordinary and unexpected political and ecclesiastical appointments. We can be sure there will be more to be said in future about a complex and truly unusual man.
The Two Ronnies: Priestly influence on a neophyte – a case of clerical grooming?

John De Luca*

No, not the Ronnie Corbett and Ronnie Barker, of recent television fame, but rather two Ronnies who, in different ways, have had a definite influence in my life. One I never met, but was a distant hero of my youth, the other changed the direction of my life to a significant degree. The former was Monsignor Ronald Knox, who flourished as a writer and Bible translator in the mid twentieth century; the latter was Father Ronald Harden, a priest of the Archdiocese of Sydney since 1951, whose recent death (2015) has occasioned these recollections. Both were Ronnie to their friends.

My twelfth birthday in 1954 was a momentous occasion for me in that, from thence forward, I was entitled to use and borrow from the Randwick Council senior library. Previously I was restricted to the children’s library, which, though interesting enough for a young reader, lacked the challenges that the world of adulthood was about to unleash. There was never a time in my adolescence that I was without a couple of books in my hands from that inexhaustible source, which was a great boon since right through my secondary school years I was spending thirty hours a week working in our family business – a fruit shop, milk bar and general store near Coogee beach. The idle hours were an opportunity to read of things that stimulated the imagination and opened my mind to a wider world than the church-orientated milieu of a suburban Sydney boy from a mixed Italian and Irish, and intensely Catholic, background. My father once told me that one of his customers had said, speaking of me, ‘You’ll have to watch that boy. He reads a book walking down the hill to the shop, and doesn’t look as he crosses the road!’ Not wanting to waste time, I did indeed read as I walked, but, I assured my father, I always looked-out for traffic (not that there was much then) as I crossed the road. Two indicators of the infrequency of passing cars in those days come to mind: Keith Rowe and I used regularly play tennis (emulating Lew Hoad and Ken Rosewall) in Oberon Street, vacating the roadway for the occasional vehicle. And our local G.P. (Dr Kevin Hume) would borrow my father’s pre-war Vauxhall each week to do his house calls. Cars were rarer then. How times have changed!

* Rev. Dr John De Luca. Historian, musician and Pastor Emeritus of the Parish of St Mary and St Joseph Maroubra Bay/Beach.
Ronald Knox’s translation of the canonical Gospels, in a paperback edition, was a staple source for religious instruction given daily by the De La Salle brothers in my senior years at their small Coogee school. The brothers themselves were extraordinarily impressive. Five men, living in cramped conditions, taught every class from third class primary to fifth year secondary, every period, every day. As well, they had to do all the cleaning and administrative work. In those days, when there was no government assistance to Catholic (or other private) schools, the working-class Catholic community made demands on the religious dedication of the sisters and brothers who ran our schools to an extent that would be simply unimaginable to-day. Every class (except for first year high school) was a composite class, everyone following the curriculum of the higher grade in the composite, and discipline maintained by cane or strap. Or at least that was the practice until Brother Xavier John Hayes came as our principal in 1956. Almost his first action was to ban the use of corporal punishment on the boys – an unheard-of example of liberal thinking for the time. He maintained that it was unthinkable for one person to hit another, and certainly no way for a teacher to communicate Christian values to those under his care. I benefited greatly from Brother Xavier’s humanity in more ways than one. In his senior religion classes, he would speak discursively about current trends in Theology, certainly opening my mind to the world of the theologians who, though under a cloud from the Roman authorities in the narrower world of the 1950s, were to come into their own at the Second Vatican Council in the next decade.

Ronald Knox was not one of those progressive theologians. His world was redolent of the certainties of the Chester-Belloc – G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc, Catholic apologists from another age who are coming back into fashion of late. But Knox could write, and what he wrote was always worth reading. A convert to Catholicism from Anglicanism, Ronnie Knox had to support himself in life as a Catholic priest. His Anglican bishop father cut him out of his will in punishment for Ronnie’s ecclesial defection. When he was ordained as a Catholic priest, Knox’s title of ordination was not one of the customary ones. A ‘title of ordination’ in Catholic usage indicates how the neophyte is going to be maintained in the years ahead. So a member of a religious order is ordained to the title of the ‘common table’. He works for the order, and is entitled to be supported for life by the order. The secular (or diocesan) clergy are ordained to the title ‘of the mission’. They are supported by the people they serve. These days, however, with retirement now more common amongst the secular clergy, it falls to the
bishop to whom one is answerable to provide for the priest’s maintenance. Ronald Knox, however, was not ordained to either of these two titles, but rather ‘ad suam patrimoniam’ (to his own patrimony). In other words he had to fend for himself, and his bishop was absolved from the responsibility of keeping him. So Ronnie had to sing for his supper; and what he wrote was an inspiration to me in those formative years. Aside from the scriptural, ecclesial and spiritual themes that he tackled, underlying it was the world of pre-war Oxford University, and the social-set evoked in the more secular writings of Evelyn Waugh, a world as far from that of a suburban Sydney fruit shop as could be imagined! I have often thought that it was discovering that world, and reading everything about it that I could lay my hands on during the long eight years that I spent in a transplanted Tridentine seminary system here in Sydney, that kept me sane. At least it opened vistas that perhaps not all my contemporaries were then aware of. Evelyn Waugh’s 1959 biography of Knox was the happiest of conjunctions, so far as I was concerned, especially as it was published in the year of my arrival at St Columba’s College in Springwood.

Ronald Knox came back into my orbit recently when reading a substantial article in The New Yorker magazine on Hermione Lee’s new biography of Penelope Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald, a late flowering English writer, was Ronald Knox’s niece, and the daughter of ‘Evoe’ Knox, long-time editor of London’s Punch magazine. Punch was one of those magazines that I used to read weekly as part of my schoolday borrowings from the Randwick library. I had forgotten that I had read Penelope Fitzgerald’s quadripartite biography of the four Knox brothers which was published in 1977, but there it was staring at me from the bookshelf – waiting to be read anew. If this world is of interest to you, I can recommend reading Evelyn Waugh’s biography of his friend Ronald Knox, Knox’s own ‘A Spiritual Aeneid’, Fitzgerald’s ‘The Knox Brothers’, as well as Hermione Lee’s ‘Penelope Fitzgerald’.

But these recollections were first prompted by the news of Father Ronald Harden’s death, and I should now turn to him, setting down for the record my association with Ronnie Harden, and how it changed my life.

After four years as a student at St Columba’s College, Springwood (now Winmalee) between 1959 and 1962, I progressed to St Patrick’s College, Manly, for the next four years, preparing for ordination to the priesthood in 1966. In those first Manly years Ron Harden was not directly involved with the life of St Patrick’s. He had been involved years earlier in the time leading up to his own ordination in 1951. Prompted by his own interest in music, and on his own initiative, he had undertaken some musical studies at the then
N.S.W State Conservatorium of Music. Curacies at Roseberry and Surry Hills parishes made his part-time attendance at the Sydney Conservatorium logistically possible. Ron’s fondness for liturgical music, and his awareness of the current of thought calling for the renewal of musical practice in the Catholic church that had engendered the Cecilian movement in nineteenth century Europe, and which was given encouragement and the force of law by Pope Pius X in 1903, led to his advocacy for a change in the musical regime at St Mary’s Cathedral, and later, throughout the archdiocese of Sydney. Before Ronnie’s time at St Mary’s a mixed choir sang generally in the (liturgical) west gallery under the direction of William Caspers, with Harry Dawkins as organist. Ron Harden convinced the then archbishop, Cardinal Norman Gilroy, that the existing choir should be replaced with a choir of men and boys, robed and singing from the chancel. The men of the choir were all volunteers; the boys were to be given scholarships to attend the cathedral schools (primary and secondary), paid for by the archdiocese. Ron was to be choirmaster, and a lay organist was to be engaged. An existing organ located in the eastern transept was to be replaced with a neo-baroque style instrument built by the then engineer and later recognised organ builder, Ronald Sharp. (Sharp was not then an organ builder. His instrument for St Mary’s is his Opus 1. The major reference on file at St Mary’s attesting Ron Sharp’s technical competence to build an organ came from the De Haviland aircraft company!) This new but never completed instrument was located, without case, in the triforium (the blind gallery above the chancel arches, and below the clearstory windows), with the console placed adjacent to the chancel floor. This organ was only conceived as one to accompany the choir which by then was singing from the chancel. Ronnie himself told me years later that, having made the suggestion of replacing the existing musical arrangements, it had fallen to him to break the news of their impending redundancy to Bill Caspers and Harry Dawkins. This was effected while while taking them out to dinner. To soften the blow, they were each to be given a small pension, which was still in effect when I succeeded Ronnie as cathedral director of music in 1971.

As a student at St Patrick’s College, Manly, I first encountered Ronnie when the college choir sang at ordinations to the priesthood in the cathedral. First as a chorister, and later as college organist, I would see Ronnie darting round the cathedral sanctuary, in cassock and lace surplice, with a camera round his neck (photography was one of his hobbies) recording the proceedings for posterity.

In the time of Pope Pius XII, and preceding the years of the Second
Vatican Council, liturgical reform was being promoted by the Vatican under the direction of the Vincentian priest, Annibale Bugnini. One of the first fruits of this reform was the Restored Rite of Holy Week dating from the mid 1950s which formed the paradigm for much of the later liturgical reforms, including the Dialogue Mass, and eventually revisions of the Second Vatican Council in the next decade. Trials of the Holy Week reform were made in various places throughout the world, including at St Patrick’s College Manly. Ronnie was involved with this experimentation, leading to the eventual publication of a musical setting for the reformed rite, the financial proceeds of which went not to himself, but rather to the Guild of St Pius X (originally The Guild of Blessed Pius X), the active organisation that promoted liturgical reform in Sydney and beyond that Ronnie had helped found, and which occupied much of his time over the next two decades.

It was not until 1965 that Ronnie was asked to become involved once again in the liturgical musical life of St Patrick’s Manly, replacing Fr Tom Connolly who had left Sydney for advanced musical studies in the U.S.A. At that time I was a third year divine at the college, and served as college organist. As a schoolboy I had learned piano for a couple of years, but only to the level of third grade AMEB examinations. I had received some lessons on the pipe organ at my parish church, St Brigid’s Coogee, from the parish organist, Mrs Mason, who, as a pianist, would sometimes be heard on the Catholic radio station 2SM. With some musical background, however, I had to play the harmonium in the chapel at St Columba’s, Springwood, and later, on the rather then state-of-the-art Hammond organ in the new chapel at Springwood. So it was that, in 1965, Ronnie inherited me as his organist at choir practices at Manly.

At this time of his life, Ronnie had been on the staff at the cathedral for over a decade, and had led a life of extraordinary busyness. He was a full-time member of the parish team, with chaplaincy duties at Sydney Hospital, teaching Catholic Scripture at the Conservatorium High School, giving liturgical lectures to religious sisters at the Xavier Institute of Sisters’ Formation at Lavender Bay to explain the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, as well as supporting the work of the Guild of St Pius X, particularly through printing its monthly journal on the offset printer that he had acquired (another of his hobbies). On top of all this, he had to largely finance the cathedral choir through his own efforts. Cardinal Gilroy paid for the choristers’ scholarships, but not much else. Apart from a small stipend for the organist, Ronnie was left to garner money for the purchase of music scores, choir robes, etc. etc. (Ron’s mother, and other
helpers, made cassocks and surplices for the choir). The choir’s Eton-style collars were bought as a job-lot of redundant business-shirt collars from a city department store (those were the days when men wore their shirt to work all week, only changing the detachable collar when soiled). Mrs Harden sewed the collars to the cassocks. In that tight financial situation, Ronnie knew that if he was ever to get out of the cathedral and acquire a parish of his own, he would have to recruit a replacement for himself who would continue the work that he had begun, and who would be prepared to endure similar strictures. So it would have to be priest since there was little likelihood that the cardinal would pay a layperson to do the work. So Ronnie set his eyes on me.

After choir rehearsal one night at Manly in 1965, Ronnie took me aside and asked whether I would be prepared to study music at the Sydney conservatorium. I immediately declined, saying that I hadn’t gone to the seminary to study music. Also I had no illusions about my own level of competence, thinking that the conservatorium was far beyond my abilities. However, Ronnie said “Think about it, and let me know next week what you decide”. The following week he asked me again. I had thought about it, and with considerable misgivings had decided that if one were asked by proper authorities to do something extra, then one should not say no. So I reluctantly assented. Just as well, for Ronnie then said that he had seen the cardinal during the week, and it had all been settled. So much for the need for my consent!

My successor as director of music at St Mary’s, the late David Russell, in his autobiography *Surplice to Requirements*, has suggested that my appointment to follow Ronnie Harden at St Mary’s owed something to my being the then archbishop’s nephew. Were that true, it could be construed as nepotism. Actually my mother was Cardinal Gilroy’s first cousin, but he had nothing to do with selecting me for the job ahead. It was entirely on Ron Harden’s initiative that I was asked to undertake musical studies. In being a musical mentor in my regard, Ron Harden was replicating somewhat what had happened in his own life. He himself had been encouraged to pursue his musical interests during his student days at Manly by Father Len Henry. As well, he was very conscious of the influence of the Spanish priest-musician, Father Joseph Muset who spent the war years at Manly while unable to return to his native Spain. During his first curacy at Roseberry parish in 1952, Ron was seconded by Dr Percy Jones, the Melbourne priest-musician who was placed in charge of musical preparations for the National Eucharistic Congress to be held in Sydney in 1953. Ron conducted rehearsals in schools
and elsewhere round Sydney to familiarise people with the repertoire for the Congress. Percy Jones could only come to Sydney when his commitments at Melbourne University and St Patrick’s Cathedral permitted him to do this. In involving me in the liturgical musical life of the Sydney cathedral and seminary, Ron Harden was obviously influenced by what had happened in his own life in the previous decade, and, perhaps, symbolically passing on the baton.

Having agreed to Ron’s request in 1965, I was immediately sent to Mary Egan, a Catholic music teacher who lived and taught piano in a flat owned by St Canice’s parish in Potts Point. But Mary and I did not get on, so Ronnie arranged for me to take lessons in piano and theory the following year (my ordination year) with Joanne Callinan who rented a small studio in Oxford Street East Sydney, a site which decades later was to become the epicentre of gay Sydney. But it was much more sedate then in the mid 1960s. My weekly lesson took place every Thursday, the one day each week when, following the Roman custom, there were no lectures in college. My routine was to walk from Manly’s Eastern Hill to the ferry wharf, travel to Circular Quay, walk up to the cathedral where Ronnie would give me the keys to his tiny green Austin car which I would drive to Oxford Street, and afterwards continue on to Coogee where I would have lunch with my mother, followed by a swim at Maroubra beach, returning to Manly in time for the evening meal. Those familiar with the rules that obtained in seminaries at that time would immediately realise that aspects of my weekly jaunt were clearly in contravention of what was allowed, and all the more so because in that final seminary year I was also the college head prefect, and so responsible for maintaining good order amongst the student body. However I was never challenged, and thought to myself that if it was god enough for Ronnie, then it was good enough for me.

The following year, with Ronnie’s connivance, I was appointed to my first curacy at St Peter’s parish in Devonshire Street, Surry Hills, in order to be close to both the cathedral and the conservatorium. Under Joanne’s tutelage I had successfully earned honours in seventh grade piano and fifth grade theory of music. More to the point, I had been accepted into the conservatorium’s diploma class as a student of Alexander Sverjensky, then one of Australia’s most highly regarded teachers of piano. Once again, it was certainly not a mark of any special talent on my part, but rather an indication of the high regard that Sver (as we all called him – but not to his face) had for Joanne. At the audition for entry, the head of the auditioning panel, Keith Field, remarked that it was good for discipline to have some of
my kind around the place! The Director of the conservatorium at that time was Joseph Mozart Post, like me a Coogee boy who had been involved with music at St Brigid’s church in his younger days. The Posts lived round the corner from us; Joe’s brother Noel Beethoven Post was a mate of my uncle John who lived with us before his marriage, and Mrs Post was not slow to tell me of her sons’ musical achievements when I was a little altar boy at St Brigid’s. Obviously it was a much more closely knit community that we operated within in those days. The Registrar of the conservatorium was a St Vincent de Paul Society man, well known to Ronnie, who smoothed a path for me through the Con in those early years. The conservatorium’s resident caretaker, too, was a cathedral parishioner. Once again this was useful to me since he would let me in to practice on the Con’s pipe organ for some hours before the official opening time as I prepared for my final organ recitals. But I am getting ahead of myself somewhat.

During my first years at the conservatorium, and long before I was appointed to replace him late in 1970, Ronnie got me to help him at the cathedral in various ways. I was given the task of training the probationer choristers, and required to take small groups of choristers to sing at weddings round Sydney of a Saturday (this was one of Ronnie’s revenue raising activities for the choir – he used give me $5 for doing this). I was also sometimes asked to conduct the choir when Ronnie was away, and to take the senior Catholic Scripture class at the Conservatorium High School each week – an activity that I continued for almost a decade. On top of all this, Ronnie had me take over his liturgy lectures at the Xavier Institute of Sisters’ Formation, and his weekly spiritual direction commitment to the women’s St Vincent de Paul conference at their Young Street headquarters. To cap it all off, I was asked to replace Ronnie as director of music at St Patrick’s College, Manly, an activity that required travelling from Strathfield (where I had been sent as chaplain to the Christian Brothers’ training college while enrolled as a full-time student at the conservatorium) three times each week. Once again I was given $5 each week for petrol money, which was more than welcome (but never quite enough) since a curate’s stipend in those days was only $40 per month, and I had no car allowance. With all this experience, I was well prepared to step into Ronnie’s shoes in 1971 when Cardinal Gilroy asked me to ‘do something with the music’ at the cathedral.

My experience as director of music at the cathedral is another story to be told at another time. For the moment I am content to put on record some of the ways in which Ronnie Harden was my mentor over many years.
in a formative period of my life. I feel quite certain that I would never have pursued musical studies were it not for Ronnie’s influence. Those who attended Ronnie’s funeral at Hurstville recently will have heard the present archbishop, Anthony Fisher, speak well of one who was ordained to the priesthood before the archbishop was born. I am glad to count myself amongst the many who have been touched by Ronnie in his more than sixty years of service to the Church here in Sydney. We are not likely to see his equal again in our lifetime.
Introduction

No one knew quite what to expect when Pope John XXIII first announced his intention on 25 January 1959 to convoke a council, and it quickly became a major point of attention and international controversy. It would be only the twenty-first such council in the nearly two thousand years history of the Catholic Church and it would have as its aims the spiritual renewal of Christians, reconciliation of the Catholic Church to the modern world, and service to the unity of Christians.¹

In the end, the document known as Nostra Aetate (“In Our Time”), from the first words of the Latin text, was the shortest of all sixteen documents promulgated by Vatican II. It went through five major drafts and a series of amendments before it was promulgated in October 1965, each change being accompanied by intense controversy and political manoeuvring both inside and outside the Council.

In the words of Cardinal Franz König, Nostra Aetate “almost did not happen” and it was “almost a miracle that it was ever passed.”² Cardinal Kasper has described it accurately as “the beginning of a new beginning” of a coherent Catholic theology of Judaism, and indeed of other faiths generally.³ Rarely can so short a text have had such far-reaching effects.

Historical developments

The main points of contention throughout the debates surrounding Nostra Aetate were the common Christian labelling of Jews as “Christ-killers” (the charge of “deicide”), and Christian mission when it was directed towards conversion of the Jews. Both were related also to “supersessionism” or “replacement” theology in which the Christian community is depicted as having superseded or replaced the Jews as God’s chosen people.

The transformation represented by Nostra Aetate can be vividly shown by contrasting it with some quotations from the church’s patristic and

* Patricia Madigan op is a member of the leadership team of the Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia and the Solomon Islands, and executive director of the Dominican Centre for Interfaith, Ministry, Education and Research (www.cimer.org.au). Her PhD thesis, completed in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Sydney, is published as “Women and Fundamentalism in Islam and Catholicism: Negotiating Modernity in a Globalized World” (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011).
medieval periods,\(^4\) which are illustrative of the univocal perspective of church leaders over many centuries:

| “Jews are slayers of the Lord, murderers of the prophets, enemies of God, haters of God, adversaries of grace, enemies of their father’s faith.” – Gregory of Nyssa, Homilies on the Resurrection, 5. (ca. 350) | “The apostle Paul maintains that the Jews remain very dear to God...since God does not take back the gifts he bestowed or the choice he made (cf. Rom. 11: 28-29).” – *Nostra Aetate*, 4. |
| “For the Jews committed the most impious crime of all, when they conspired against the Saviour of mankind....Therefore that city where Jesus suffered these indignities had to be utterly destroyed. The Jewish nation had to be overthrown, and God’s invitation to blessedness transferred to others, I mean to the Christians.” – Origen, *Contra Celsum* IV, 22 (ca. 220) | “Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy scripture. Consequently all must take care, lest in catechizing or in preaching the word of God, they teach anything which is not in accord with the truth of the Gospel message or the spirit of Christ.” – *Nostra Aetate*, 4. |

However, looking back it can be seen that relations with the Jewish community had been somewhat on the agenda of the Catholic Church for some time, largely in response to persistent engagement from leaders within the Jewish community.

As far back as 1870 there had been at least one unsuccessful previous attempt to address anti-Semitism in the Catholic Church. The Lémann brothers – Jews who had become Catholics and priests – presented a draft declaration on relations between Church and Jews at the First Vatican Council stating that Jews “are always very dear to God because of their fathers and because Christ has issued from them according to the flesh.” This was an initiative without precedent. The petition was signed by 508 of 1,087 bishops in attendance; however the petition was withdrawn to prevent greater support of this than the draft on papal infallibility, which had reached 510 signatures.\(^5\)

A small groundswell of a change in relationships became evident in the first half of the twentieth century. In 1926 the Catholic organization “Amici Israel” (“friends of Israel”), formed by two Dutch priests and the Dutch convert Maria Francesca Van Leer, formally asked the Vatican to
remove anti-Semitic elements from the Good Friday prayer in the Catholic liturgy. The proposal was rejected and the organization was suppressed by the Congregation of the Holy Office of the Vatican in 1928, the reason given being that the group had “adopted a manner of acting and thinking that is contrary to the sense and spirit of the Church.”

By 1927 Catholics were already instrumental in the development of the National Conference of Christians and Jews in the United States. Immediately after World War II ended, with a growing sense of responsibility for the part played by Christian teachings in the Nazi genocide, Catholics took part in a series of conferences which occurred across Europe, e.g. the 1947 Seelisberg International Conference of Christians and Jews, bringing Christians and Jews together for reconciliation. “Material cooperation” became a fact of life on the ground as church agencies such as Catholic Relief Services cooperated with other Christian and non-Christian groups during and after WWII as part of worldwide relief and refugee programs.

Two Jewish representatives who would play significant roles in the bringing to birth of *Nostra Aetate* were Jules Isaac (1877-1963), French Jewish historian and intellectual, a Holocaust survivor, and Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972), a Polish-born American Jew described by a former editor of the Tablet, John Wilkins, as “perhaps the archetypal Hassidic rabbi.”

Jules Isaac was co-founder and an active member of “Amitié judéo-chrétienne” in France in 1948. In 1949 Isaac was instrumental in having Pope Pius XII modify the language of the Catholic Church’s Good Friday prayer for the Jews and helped to start the road that led to Vatican II. On becoming pope, John XXIII decreed in March 1959 that the term “perfidious Jews” be deleted from the solemn intercessions of the Good Friday liturgy, turning it into a “prayer for the Jews,” though it was not until after the Council that it ceased to be a prayer for their conversion. Now 83 years old in 1960, Isaac proposed to Pope John that he form a commission so that the upcoming council would address the Christian teaching of contempt towards Jews and anti-Semitism.

A Christian scholar and leader thinking along the same lines was the rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute (Biblicum) in Rome, Ernst Vogt, who sent a petition earlier in 1960 to the Central Preparatory Commission, signed by himself and eighteen members of the faculty, asking that the council address anti-Semitism.

Abraham Joshua Heschel is perhaps less well known since his efforts largely took place behind the scenes under the aegis of the American Jewish
Committee (AJC). He was particularly concerned that the Council should not promulgate any injunction to convert Jews.

During the preparatory stage of the Council, Heschel acted as consultant to the American Jewish Committee and other Jewish agencies which had been asked by Cardinal Bea’s Secretariat for Christian Unity to prepare background documentation for whatever statement on the Jews would be presented to the Council. With Heschel’s help three memoranda dealing with various problem areas in Catholic teaching and liturgy were submitted to Cardinal Bea in 1961.11

Other Jewish officials whose letters appear in Vatican files of the time include Joseph Lichten, for many years director of the intercultural affairs department, Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith and a pioneer in interfaith relations, Marc Tanenbaum (American Jewish Committee), Rabbi Arthur Gilbert (Director of Interreligious Affairs for B’nai B’rith), Zachariah Shuster (Director of the European office of the American Jewish Committee) and Rabbi Philip Hiat, as well as Rabbi Jacob Petuchowski of Hebrew Union College.12

Apart from Jews themselves, Jewish converts to Catholicism, many of them Catholic clergy, were a second layer who had a somewhat hidden but very profound influence on the Second Vatican Council. A notable example was Johannes Oesterreicher (1904-1993), an Austrian Jew who converted to Catholicism and was ordained a Catholic priest in 1927. He was particularly important as a member of Bea’s Secretariat during the Council. Although he began with a missionary aim of converting Jews, by entering the caldron of the Vatican Council’s theological debate he experienced increasingly intimate exchanges with Jewish scholars and moved from being a proponent of mission to the Jews to an advocate on their behalf.13 The final draft of De Iudeis of 1964 was prepared by three priest converts of Jewish origin: John Oesterreicher, Gregory Baum, peritus for the Secretariat for Christian Unity, and Bruno Hussar OP.14

In the face of accusations by Christian anti-Semites that a “Jewish lobby” had influenced the text of Nostra Aetate, there was a later tendency among some experts like Baum and Oesterreicher to play down the extent to which the Council agenda and processes were influenced by Jewish identities such as Jules Isaac and Abraham Heschel, and Jewish converts among the Catholic clergy and periti. However, there is no doubt that the interventions of key Jewish figures along with a number of Jewish converts to Catholicism who participated in the Council as experts (periti) and clergy were crucial in shaping the document Nostra Aetate.15 When Pope John
XXIII welcomed a visiting delegation of an American Jewish charitable organization in October 1960 with the words “I am Joseph your brother,” it was an image which charmed the Jewish world and was to mark the beginning of a new relationship between Catholics and their older siblings.

The Passage of *Nostra Aetate*

On 5 June 1960 John XXIII with his *motu proprio*, *Superno Dei Nutu* created ten commissions and three secretariats (including the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity - SPCU) for the preparation of schemas to be submitted to the Council. He appointed Cardinal Augustin Bea as the first head of that secretariat. On 14-15 November 1960 the solemn opening of the preparatory works took place at which the pope explained to the members of secretariats and commissions the orientations he wished to give to the Council. At the first plenary meeting of the SPCU the secretariat’s members were surprised to receive a second mandate, an inter-religious one dealing with Catholic-Jewish relations, as the topic had not been among those submitted by bishops and others before the council opened. The Second Vatican Council as it came to be known first convened on 11 October 1962 at which time it met for about eight weeks, and it would meet again in similar sessions in 1963, 1964, and 1965.

The year 1961 was almost entirely occupied with the work of commissions and secretariats. The Secretariat for Christian Unity prepared a brief biblical and theological presentation with the title “On the Jews” (*De Iudaeis*) at its fourth plenary meeting in August 1961. This first draft was completed in November 1961 by experts assisting Bea, one of whom was Abraham Heschel. However, internal resistance came from the president and secretary of the Theological Commission, Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani and Sebastian Tromp SJ, who refused even to receive the SPCU papers, claiming they were not theological but “purely pastoral.”

Meanwhile, outside the Council, the pro-and-con debate about the possibility of addressing Jewish-Christian relations continued and became public. The proposed schema became a political flashpoint with sharp reactions from the Arab world. Thomas Stransky, a staff member of the Secretariat, recalled that in their naivety,

> We did not grasp the fact that in the Middle East religious politics and political religion are the norm. We soon experienced a shock. When the Arab governments learned of the bare fact that the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity had a portfolio on ‘the Jewish question,’ their diplomats rushed alarmist inquiries to the
Vatican Secretariat of State. ...An umbrella thesis would function for the next six years: any favourable religious treatment of the Jews constitutes a political act.\(^{18}\)

There occurred a series of blessings and setbacks. In March 1962 the World Conference of Jewish Organizations (WCJO), despite some strong misgivings in the Jewish world (about the Catholic Church’s ability to make a 180-degree turnabout in its negative teaching and whether this was another attempt at proselytizing), when approached by Cardinal Bea, took the risk and confirmed the direction of the *De Iudaeis* mandate, pledging their “cooperation in opposing all forms of racial prejudice and religious intolerance.”\(^{19}\) With the pope’s nod to Cardinal Bea, the SPCU shifted its method. It proceeded to draft its own theological-pastoral schemata for the 110 members of the Coordinating Commission which scheduled a presentation by the SPCU (on ecumenism, on religious freedom and on the Jews) for mid-June 1962.

However, a week before this meeting took place a second setback occurred. As Yves Congar described it in his diary:

> On 12 June 1962, the World Jewish Congress had caught the Vatican on the hop and provoked hostile reactions in Arab countries by appointing Chaim Wardi, counsellor for Christian affairs in the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as the representative of the Jewish world at the Council”- an appointment endorsed by Foreign Minister Golda Meir. There was fear that the ultimate goal of this initiative was actually the recognition of the State of Israel by the Catholic Church. The Secretary of State, Cardinal Amleto Cicogani, then decided to withdraw the *Decretum de Judaeis* [Decree on the Jews] from the agenda of the first session, a decision that Catholic officials found that they could do little else than support.\(^{20}\)

The First Session of Vatican II took place from 11 October to 8 December 1962. Despite the setbacks, on 19 October 1962 Pope John decreed that the SPCU could prepare drafts to submit to the bishops – (eventually, it prepared three of the final sixteen documents of Vatican II and was partly responsible for a fourth) – and on 22 October Pope John raised the Secretariat for Christian Unity to the status of commission.\(^{21}\)

Congar’s diary entry of 12 December 1962, four days after the first session ended, notes that “The distribution of work among the seven cardinals of the Co-ordinating Commission is listed, with no mention of non-Christian faiths.”\(^{22}\) Cardinal Bea sent the pope a reasoned plea to place
De Iudaeis on the agenda of the next session, saying the withdrawal had been solely due to “some infelicitous political circumstances” and adding that the schema “in no way will acknowledge the recognition of the State of Israel by the Holy See.” Pope John answered simply that the mandate he had given in 1960 was still in effect.23

In February 1962 three of Abraham Heschel’s books had been sent to Cardinal Bea, and in March 1963 Cardinal Bea visited the United States. On 31 March Bea attended a meeting with a group of prominent Jews at the American Jewish Committee building in New York chaired by Abraham Heschel. Topics centred around the deicide charge, the urgent need to combat anti-Jewish teaching, and the desirability of interreligious cooperation. The Jewish hope was that Bea’s responses would form the basic content of the Vatican Declaration. The next evening Heschel addressed an interfaith dinner in Bea’s honour in New York attended by UN officials and political and religious leaders, at which he spoke of the great spiritual renewal inspired by Pope John XXIII which “has already opened many hearts and unlocked many precious insights.”

John XXIII died 3 June 1963, and Pope Paul VI was elected 21 June 1963. Paul VI, supportive of interreligious relations from the start, renewed the mandate of the SPCU and guided the bishops at Vatican II to base their deliberations in council on the church’s understanding of itself and in relation to all peoples.25

Concerned that a draft finally be submitted to the Council, Cardinal Bea recast the first draft as a supplementary fourth chapter to the projected Decree on Ecumenism. However, despite the support of the pope, opposition mounted as the second session of the Council opened on 29 September 1963. The text of the new version, entitled “On the Attitude of Catholics Toward Non-Christians and Especially Toward Jews” written by the SPCU, was distributed for the first time on 8 November 1963, towards the end of the Council’s second session. It reached the floor of the Council only for general comments and formal debate was postponed until the Third Session.

On 23 November 1963 Abraham Heschel wrote to Cardinal Bea expressing his deep concern that the theme of conversion of the Jews had been introduced into the new text. A few days later at the AJC’s request, Heschel went to Rome to meet with Mgr Johannes Willebrands, who promised to bring his views to Cardinal Bea.26 In the light of informal discussions, at the end of 1963 Cardinal Bea and his drafting committee produced a further revised draft which was presented to the SPCU in March
1964 and thence to the Council’s Coordinating Commission. Discussion continued about where to place the text on the Jews – in the schema “on ecumenism,” or “on the church” (De populo Dei). Most contentious was the issue of whether the word “deicide” should be retained in the text.

Those who wanted to keep the word “deicide” in the text included the Arabs of the Near East who were very much disturbed by the propaganda put out by Israel Radio which kept chanting the refrain “The Council has declared the Jews innocent.” Many Eastern bishops, most notably Melkite Patriarch Maximos IV Saïgh, were afraid that if the Church taught that the Jews did not commit deicide, it could signal a readiness to move towards recognition of the State of Israel. They feared reprisals from their people, 94 percent of whom were Muslim, and from Arab governments at war with Israel. Another fear was that omission of term “deicide” could be taken as a denial of the divinity of Christ, for if Mary was honoured as Mother of God, killing her son can rightly be called deicide. The bishops of the SPCU had taken a special vote on “deicide”, and had decided, unanimously, except for one vote, to retain this word.

Cardinal Willebrands found himself caught between the Secretariat for Unity which had voted to retain the word and the Secretary of State (Cardinal Cicognani) who for reasons of political sensitivity wanted it omitted. In the end it was Bea who piloted through the council a text containing compromise wording that avoided explicit mention of the deicide charge, thus apparently allowing Saïgh to agree to the statement. The compromise statement read:

True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today (NA, 4).

By November 1963 there was a growing discussion about widening the scope of the text to include adherents of other religions, and differing opinions on whether the text should be detached from the schema on ecumenism.

On Pentecost Sunday (17 May) 1964 Pope Paul VI instituted a special department of the Roman Curia for relations with peoples of other religions, known first as the Secretariat for non-Christians. The new secretariat would have the task of coming to a loyal and respectful dialogue with all those “who believe in God and worship him.”

Paul VI prepared his programmatic first encyclical, Ecclesiam Suam (6 August 1964), and employed the term “dialogue” over 70 times for various relationships, including interreligious relations. This is the first magisterial
document of the Catholic Church to use the term “dialogue” for defining the relationship of Catholics with other believers in a positive way.  

The struggle continued. Shortly before the third session was to open a leaked version of the fourth draft (Declaratio de Hebraeis et de gentibus non christianis – Declaration on the Jews and Non-Christian Peoples) written by the Council’s Coordinating Commission appeared in the news media, in which the original text was watered down, and again the hope was expressed for the Jew’s eventual conversion.

The situation was so critical that, despite the great personal inconvenience for Heschel, the AJC arranged an audience for him with Pope Paul VI for 14 September 1964, the eve of Yom Kippur. The audience lasted 35 minutes. Heschel famously told the pope: “A message that regards the Jews as candidates for conversion and proclaims that the destiny of Judaism is to disappear will be abhorred by Jews all over the world and is bound to foster reciprocal distrust as well as bitterness and resentment….I am ready to go to Auschwitz at any time if faced with the alternative of conversion or death.”

The third session of the Council opened on 14 September 1964 and what became known as “The Great Debate‘ took place on 28-29 September. Cardinal Bea, introducing the revised version, made it clear that his secretariat was not responsible for this fourth “leaked” draft and encouraged the Council Fathers to strengthen it.

An entry in Congar’s diary for 28 September 1964 reads: “At 10.45 am discussion on the Jews resumed…..The bishops have each received, in a sealed envelope, a statement claiming that Cardinal Bea is of Jewish descent….Anti-semitism is not dead!”

The large majority of supporters of the text were opposed by a minority coalition of three different groups which each, for its own reasons, objected to the text. The first group were the patriarchs and bishops of the Eastern Catholic Churches in the Middle East who vigorously opposed the text as favouring the State of Israel. A second group were some traditionalist bishops from Latin American, Italian and Spanish bishops (the Coetus Internationalis Patrum) who argued that Nostra Aetate tenets were against the ordinary teaching and tradition of the church as expressed in the Scriptures and teaching of church fathers, councils and popes, in particular because it failed to affirm that God’s old covenant with the Jews has been superseded by the New Covenant. A third group of bishops from Asia and Africa wanted the schema to be inclusive of people of other faiths besides Christianity and Judaism.
The struggle around the Declaration continued amid much political manoeuvring.

On 9 October 1964, ten days after “The Great Debate,” the SPCU was startled by a new proposal for dealing with its controversial schema. In the interests of reducing the amount of material and to avoid political misinterpretations, there was strong pressure to reduce the text to a few lines and to merge its contents into the chapter on the People of God in the document on the church.39

On 13 October Congar records in his diary that he was invited by Cardinal Ottaviani from the Congregation of the Holy Office to join a small sub-committee Ottaviani was convening to rewrite the section on the Jews. Congar and others responded by saying they could not agree to join a group that had not been appointed by the Theological Commission.40

At one point, in November 1964 during the Council’s third session, the battle was so fierce that the draft of Nostra Aetate was withdrawn. According to Thomas Stransky, it would have been no surprise if Nostra Aetate had at this time joined a few other schemata in a quiet burial.41

In a brave response, the SPCU decided to go for a new enlarged schema which would include other world religions. Enlisting extra expertise, by mid-November the SPCU produced a fifth draft - a remarkable polished declaration of five chapters, now titled “The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions.” This text, revised by Cardinal Bea in the light of the Council’s deliberations on September 28-29, was now envisaged as a free-standing document. In its final form it said nothing about converting Jews.42 It was distributed to Council members near the end of the third session on 18 November 1964. This precise, clear and brief Nostra Aetate impressed the coordinating authorities and the pope, and Cardinal Bea’s presentation was scheduled for October during the fourth and final session of the Council.

At the fourth session of the Council, 14 September – 8 December 1965, the co-ordinating authorities saw no need for further debate on the Declaration, so they scheduled only Cardinal Bea’s presentation and the voting on specific questions which took place on 14-15 October 1965.43 The no votes on eight questions were far fewer than expected. The four statements on the Jews received the most no votes, but never more than 285 (objecting to the statement’s rejection of the word “deicide”).

On 28 October 1965, the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra Aetate) was promulgated during a public sitting and a concelebrated mass with Paul VI who gave an address. The
The tiny mustard seed of Jules Isaac’s half-hour conversation with Pope John XXIII in 1960 had grown into a large tree that warmly hosts in its branches so many people of other faiths. It was this inclusive concept, according to Thomas Stransky, that saved De Iudaeis intact. We continue to live in a time of challenge and change. As Cardinal Kasper has accurately described it, the work of Vatican II was “the beginning of a new beginning” of a new history in the Catholic Church’s relations with people of other faiths and, as Cardinal Cassidy has acknowledged, there is still much more to be done to consolidate and to further develop these new understandings and relationships in the years to come.

Endnotes


4 Cunningham, 26-27.


18 Stransky, 9.

19 Stransky, 10.


26 Fleischner, ‘Heschel’s Significance for Jewish-Christian Relations’, 156.

27 See CCJR.


Nostra Aetate and fifty years of interfaith dialogue

32 Congar, My Journal of the Council, 427-449.
33 In 1988 it was renamed by Pope John Paul II as the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID).
36 Fleischner, ‘Heschel’s Significance for Jewish-Christian Relations’, 154, 156.
37 Congar, My Journal of the Council, 599.
40 Congar, 620-621.
CATHOLICISM AND JUDAISM: A FEW PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Michael Costigan*

Lacking credentials to speak with authority about Catholic and Jewish relations, I am nevertheless honoured by the invitation to contribute some reflections to this publication celebrating the 50th anniversary of the proclamation of the Nostra Aetate declaration, one of the Second Vatican Council’s most significant and epoch-changing documents. I will confine myself to a few memories about times in my life when there was some personal connection with the Jewish world.

Growing up in a Melbourne Catholic family with Irish and Scottish backgrounds, I had little occasion to meet or know many Jews. My father, a part-time tax accountant, did include among his clients a successful Jewish manufacturer of chocolates who often generously shared some of the fruits of his industry with us delighted children. I also recall our and his families socialising a few times on Mentone beach during summer holidays. But there was no religious element in this fondly remembered association.

During my seminary course in Rome in the 1950s I studied the Hebrew language in preparation for biblical studies, but our courses in theology, church history and sacred scripture, without being notably hostile to Judaism, did not prepare us for the Vatican Council challenging the acceptability of certain past Catholic attitudes and actions. At the same time, living in Rome during Pius XII’s pontificate gave us the chance to learn something of the still recent Holocaust and to visit sites like the Ardeatine Caves, where local Jews were numbered among the victims of a Nazi massacre in 1944.

In 1959 I did have the precious experience of spending a week in the young State of Israel. I was with a group of Rome-based priests on a study tour of the Holy Land, which had already taken us through Lebanon, Syria and Jordan to the still divided city of Jerusalem. Led by the American scripture scholar Father Robert North SJ, the group included another Jesuit bible expert, Father David Stanley, the yet-to-be widely published Chicago-born author Father John Powell SJ and the Australian priest and educator Father Frank Mecham.

* Michael Costigan was the associate editor of The Advocate [Melbourne]; Director, Literature Board of the Australia Council; and Director and Executive Secretary, Australian Bishops’ Committee for Justice, Development and Peace.
It was a fascinating time to be in Israel, with the legendary David Ben-Gurion as Prime Minister and one of his most famous successors, Golda Meir, prominent as Foreign Minister. She had won applause from Catholics world-wide in the previous year when, at the time of Pius XII’s death, she had been reported as praising him for what he did to protect Italian Jews during the Second World War. Our reception from hospitable Israeli people during our tour was warm and friendly. Only in a later period did questions about the alleged silence of the Holy See during the Holocaust intensify, while authorities in Israel were to become more critical of the position taken by popes and other Church officials on the question of a Palestinian State.

If I have a claim to say anything on the occasion of this anniversary it could derive from the fact that, in 1963, while reporting in Rome on Vatican II for the Catholic press as an accredited priest-journalist, I happened to be a witness to the early stages of Nostra Aetate’s gestation. Hearing Cardinal Bea tell the Council that Pope John XXIII, recently deceased at the time of his speech, had asked him to ensure that the Council would review the Church’s attitude to the Jewish faith, I, like others, became much more aware than before of the reasons why our Church needed to examine and if necessary reform its approach to the association between the two religions. And I gradually became more conscious of the desirability of a repudiation by the Council of certain centuries-old Catholic attitudes, policies and actions.

What was heard in the Council hall that autumn was reinforced by information supplied in outside conversations, lectures and media conferences by expert conciliar participants or advisers. Among them were some working with Cardinal Bea in his Unity Secretariat. They included two priests who had been converted from Judaism – the outstanding Father (later Monsignor) Johannes Marin Oesterreicher and Father (later Professor, after leaving the priesthood) Gregory Baum. I learned much as well from listening to a friend, the American Paulist Father Tom Stransky who, when I last heard of him two years ago, was, in his eighties and using a wheelchair, writing what would be a very well-informed book on Nostra Aetate and the Council.

The eventual issuing of the Declaration on 28th October 1965, after a further two years of sometimes heated debate in the Council, which I followed closely from my editorial chair at the Melbourne Catholic Advocate, was in every way a historic event. What at one stage had been envisaged as a document focussing exclusively on Catholic-Jewish relations
included as well reflections on other major non-Christian religions. In retrospect, given the way world history has developed over the past half-century, this was a wise decision, facilitating dialogue and more positive Catholic attitudes towards such faiths as Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism.

Throughout the post-conciliar years my interest in the Council and its documents, including Nostra Aetate, has survived, although other preoccupations have limited my chances to be closely involved in that outstanding Declaration’s practical implementation. I did welcome the chance, while working for the Australian Bishops in the social justice area, to play a role in the successful visit to Australia in August 2001 of Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, a convert from Judaism who became Archbishop of Paris. His meetings and discussions with Jewish leaders in Melbourne were inspiring occasions. He was received with edifying warmth and hospitality by members of the Jewish community, including Richard and Jeanne Pratt, who hosted a memorable lunch for the eminent visitor and many of Melbourne’s religious and community leaders in their home, Raheen, which had once been the residence of Archbishop Daniel Mannix and three of his successors.

Another precious memory of mine was being present in the Sydney Synagogue in 2005 for the celebration of Nostra Aetate’s 40th anniversary and the launch of Cardinal Cassidy’s book, Rediscovering Vatican II: Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue. It was a chance to pay tribute to the great work done by the Australian Cardinal as a Catholic Church leader in the areas of ecumenism and in a special way the Catholic-Jewish relationship.

In conclusion, I wish to pay tribute to a few dear Jewish friends who played major supportive roles in moments of considerable difficulty or crisis in my life during the past fifty years. Following my departure from the priestly ministry with papal approval in 1969 I was befriended in a time of acute loneliness and struggle by the Australian Jewish novelist Judah Waten and his wife Hyrell. Although a Communist and atheist, Judah, whose parents had sent him to a Christian Brothers’ school in Perth because they esteemed its educational standards, treated me with a level of charity and kindness which was matched by few if any of my Catholic acquaintances. Later, when my wife and I with our two infant children had to move from Melbourne to Sydney because of my employment with the Australia Council’s Literature Board, we were welcomed and given generous and lasting assistance by the poet Nancy Keesing, who was chairing the Board, and her husband Dr Mark Hertzberg. It was a friendship which lasted for the
rest of the lives of this devoted Jewish couple – and only ended with Mark’s death this year, long years after Nancy’s. And since my wife and our two older daughters suffered the unspeakable agony of the tragic death in 2007 of our youngest, Sydney-born daughter, Mairead, at the age of thirty, we have been comforted and consoled by our frequent loving communications with Mairead’s best friend during and following schooldays, Stephanie Lenn, a gifted young Jewish woman whose deep sorrow over her friend’s early death was followed by the enormous grief arising from the sudden death of her husband, the father of her twin babies.

The kind of personal experiences I have noted in this article give me confidence that the future of relations between Jews and Catholics will prosper and that, in spite of the kind of problems mentioned here in passing, Nostra Aetate will continue to bear rich fruits.
ABORIGINAL CATHOLIC MINISTRY: THE URBAN APOSTOLATE
Presented to Australian Catholic Historical Society March 15, 2015.

Eugene Stockton*

My big hope in giving this paper is that an historian among you may be drawn to research and publish this story in a comprehensive, professional way. I am not a historian and I was too involved to be able to give an objective account. But it is an important story in the history of the Australian Church, one that should not be forgotten. In the time available I can give only a sketch, one very much from a personal point of view, glossing over the work of individuals and the content of the many reports. For these I would refer the researcher to the select bibliography. Let us pick up the sense of movement through time.

The Aboriginal Catholic Ministry (ACM) appeared at a time of profound change in Aboriginal Affairs. Remember the Referendum of 1967 and the wave of goodwill it engendered. There was the drawn out struggle for Land Rights. Many Aborigines related to the Church as passive clients on missions. Catholic missions were generally set up when a religious order, without being invited, imposed itself on a local community providing a range of religious and community services. One might now look back critically at missions as being then agents of colonisation, managing peoples’ lives in a paternalistic way. The history of the ACM was the story of Aborigines looking for another way, progressively claiming the right of self-determination in church affairs.

This was also the time when Aborigines were leaving country towns and flocking to the city. By now most Aboriginal people are city dwellers. In the mid-sixties, while chaplain at Sydney University I heard

* Father Eugene Stockton has served as parish priest and Priest Assistant to the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry (Parramatta Diocese). He has gained doctorates in theology and philosophy (Sydney) and a licentiate in sacred scripture (Rome), lecturing for many years in the Catholic seminaries at Springwood and Manly. Besides interests in theology, scripture, anthropology and social issues, archaeological pursuit has led to excavations and surveys in many parts of the Middle East and Australia.
from anthropologists their first realisation that some 15,000 Koori were then living in Sydney. I took this information as a pastoral concern to Cardinal Gilroy and he appointed me their chaplain on the spot, despite my pleading that I already had too many jobs. Luckily for me I found several lay organisations were already collaborating in the field – St. Vincent de Paul, Paulians and the Legion of Mary – and they were employing a full-time social worker, Pam O’Grady, and a part-time Aboriginal youth worker, Kaye Mundine. Our main task then was drawing up a report requested by the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council. This was especially useful for my own self-education. An Aboriginal social worker, Eileen Lester, took me under her wing, monitoring my first steps. I remember vividly my first day of pastoral activity. One Sunday afternoon Kaye and I sat in Alexandria Park and started playing with some Koori kids. They invited us into their home and so we made our first (and long-lasting) contacts. Hence, instead of starting in a blaze of activity, with all the inevitable mistakes that would occasion, I was able quietly and shyly to ease into the work. The White Fathers at Erskineville welcomed our use of their church for Mass and the sacraments, which served as a focal point of our ministry.

Meanwhile, interstate, Fr. Mick Hayes of Rockhampton was mailing out a roneoed newsletter to link up with isolated workers and communities in the eastern states. Running to seven issues, the newsletter eventually had an address list of 232 names. The immediate aim was to get as many Aborigines as possible to Kew, for the International Eucharistic Congress to be held in 1973. The 300 Aboriginal participants and their co-workers, who had already got to know each other through Mick Hayes’ networking and regional meetings, came together as the National Aboriginal Conference at Werribee. From being passive clients of missionary endeavour they began to claim the right of self-determination, setting up the Aboriginal and Islander Catholic Council (AICC) as their official body to relate to the Australian Church, making known their wishes for the pastoral activity of the church. This was consolidated by further regional conferences.

Back in Sydney ill-health forced my retirement, to be replaced by Fr. Alan Mithen as full-time chaplain in 1974. So began the most flourishing stage of the Sydney apostolate, with a considerable band of volunteers, including Shirley Smith, Val Bryant, Angela Breen, Sr. Ignatius, Sr. Oliver, Gloria Matthews. Parallel to their efforts was the ministry and witness of Fr. Ted Kennedy in the Redfern parish. These activities were detailed by Fr. (later Bishop) Hilton Deakin in his 1975 report to the Australian Bishops. In 1978 the Australian Bishops issued their Social Justice Statement on the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry: the urban apostolate.
subject “Aborigines: A Statement of Concern”. In 1979 Alan Mithen was elected Pallottine Provincial and the chaplaincy lapsed.

In the following decade Bishop John Heaps sought to revive the urban Aboriginal apostolate, commissioning a report by Nurse Jennifer Bush. The Bush Report, submitted in 1985, called for the formation of local church communities, under Aboriginal control and leadership, served by an Aboriginal church team, to which might be co-opted a (white) priest or religious. The philosophy of the emergent Aboriginal Catholic Ministry (ACM) was explicitly “ministry by Aborigines for Aborigines”. A priest co-opted to the church team was no longer designated “Aboriginal chaplain”, but “Priest Assistant to the ACM”. Pastoral care of Aborigines was thereby seen as the direct responsibility of the church team, who could use the services of a priest or religious at their discretion.

I took on the new role of Priest Assistant, initially for the three divisions of the former Sydney Archdiocese, but found it realistic to concentrate on the Parramatta Diocese, which by then had the largest Aboriginal population in the nation. Sr. Naomi Smith was also co-opted to the Parramatta ACM. Fr. Frank Fletcher was our counterpart for the Sydney ACM, centred at Erskineville. A number of country dioceses developed their own ACMs along the same lines, while similar developments occurred in Perth, Adelaide and Melbourne (while the AICC continued to flourish only in Queensland).

The first task of the Parramatta ACM was to raise money for travel and accommodation of local people to Alice Springs where Pope John Paul II was to meet Aboriginal people. Similar groups all over Australia were caught up in planning the details of the meeting and the logistics of getting so many delegates from all parts of Australia together. It must be remembered that most of the people were poor and had to make considerable sacrifices to be there to greet the Pope. The networking between the groups and the spirit of the occasion gave rise to a sense of national identity and the eventual formation of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC, the successor to the AICC).

The meeting itself in Blatherskite Park, on the 29th November, 1986, was a most memorable and historic occasion, cementing the Catholic Church, at all levels, to her maturing Aboriginal flock. The Pope’s address stressed the Church’s esteem for Aboriginal culture, her invitation to them to live their Christian faith in an Aboriginal way, support for land rights, and the vision for the future. I have heard the Pope’s words repeated in Aboriginal gatherings in many parts of Australia, even to this day. His declaration was
a foundation charter for the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, in whatever form it was to take in different parts of Australia.

“I want to tell you right away how much the Church esteems and loves you, and how much she wishes to assist you in your spiritual and material needs . . . For thousands of years you have lived in this land and fashioned a culture that endures to this day. And during that time the Spirit of God has been with you. Your ‘Dreaming’ . . . is your own way of touching the mystery of God’s Spirit in you and creation . . . For thousands of years . . . through your closeness to the land you touched the sacredness of man’s relationship with God, for the land was the proof of a power greater than yourselves . . . The silence of the bush taught you a quietness of soul that put you in touch with another world, the world of God’s Spirit.

You have learned how to survive, whether on your own lands, or scattered among the towns and cities . . . You have kept your sense of brotherhood. If you stay closely united, you are like a tree standing in the middle of a bushfire sweeping through the timber. The leaves are scorched and the tough bark is scared and burnt; but inside the tree the sap is still flowing, and under the ground the roots are still strong. Like that tree you have endured the flames, and you still have the power to be reborn. The time for this rebirth is now.

The Gospel now invites you to become, through and through, Aboriginal Christians . . . You do not have to be people divided into two parts, as though an Aboriginal had to borrow the faith and life of Christianity, like a hat or a pair of shoes, from someone else who owns them. Jesus calls you to accept his words and values into your own culture . . . to express the living word of Jesus in ways that speak to your Aboriginal minds and hearts . . .

And the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others”.

Back home in Parramatta, Fr. Phil Medlin replaced me as Priest Assistant to the ACM in 1993. In 2010, despite strong pleading with Bishop Anthony Fisher by myself and other ACM workers, the Parramatta ACM, as also that of Sydney, was subsumed under the respective Catholic Social Services.
**KEY DATES**


1968  Fr. E. Stockton as part-time chaplain.


1971  Report to Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (ACR 1979, pp.143-5).

Fr. M. Hayes networking with east-coast workers and communities.


Regional Conferences. Deakin’s report to Australian Bishops (submitted 1975).

1974-9  Fr. A. Mithen as full-time chaplain with large pastoral team.

Developing commitment of Redfern parish (Fr. E. Kennedy), Wunanbiri pre-school. Dundarra, Lapse of chaplaincy.


1986  Fr. E. Stockton, priest-assistant to ACM. Implementation of Bush report.


Principle of self-determination in local church and national organisation (NATSIC).

1986  ACM functioning in Parramatta and Sydney Dioceses.

Fr. F. Fletcher at Erskineville, NSW network of local Diocesan ACMs.


1993  Fr. P. Medlin replaces Fr. E. Stockton (Parramatta).

2010  ACM in Parramatta and Sydney subsumed under respective Catholic Social Services.
Author’s Bibliography


In June 2012, the Pontifical Council for Social Communication, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Santa Clara University invited me to present a paper at a symposium on Theology and Communication. Thinking that I might know something about Bishops Conferences and having been the official media spokesman in Sydney for some 17 years I put together a paper entitled “The Episcopal Conference in the Communications Marketplace: Issues and Challenges for Catholic Identity and Ecclesiology”.

This sent me to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Archives and where I quickly became absorbed in reading the minutes of the Bishops’ Plenary Meetings and especially the reports of the Committee for Media. What I stumbled across in those papers is today’s story. Essentially it is a story about the problems the bishops faced in agreeing to set up a national media office, something which many people would have thought was self-evident.

Bishops Conferences have a role in national media but the Australian Bishops have never really faced the challenge or made the most of the opportunity.

Making local regulations for church involvement in radio and television is one of the few areas of competence that the Second Vatican Council and later the Code of Canon Law, gave to Bishops Conferences. Obviously the wide coverage of electronic media stretches beyond diocesan boundaries. It follows that the Bishops Conference should be the instrumentality to regulate participation by Church personnel in those media. This is easier said than done.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference declined to make any regulations at the time it prepared its Complementary Norms following the promulgation of the new Code of Canon Law in 1983. In 1995 it again considered the matter and adopted the recommendation of Bishops Committee for the Media:

…not to establish a set of norms for clerics and religious to take

* Fr Brian Lucas was General Secretary of the Australian Bishops Conference for thirteen years up to the end of 2015, when he was appointed National Director of Catholic Mission. The views in the paper are his own and do not reflect the views of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference or any of the bishops individually.
part in radio and television programmes which concern Catholic doctrine or morals as such norms would be impossible to implement and would be interpreted by some as an unacceptable form of censorship.

As a consequence, the presentation of the Catholic position on some issue, in the traditional electronic media, and more recently with the new forms of social media, is generally unregulated and largely out of the control of bishops who are ultimately responsible for safeguarding the faith. This assumes, of course, that there is some settled Catholic position.

There are, as you would expect, different views about this. Some like things to be neat and tidy and they are solidly behind episcopal control. They want bishops to say something about everything. Others, of course, are quite content with allowing anyone to say anything.

In reality the issue of who does speak for the Church and who should speak for the Church is quite complex. The media will always make their own choices about who will “represent” the Church. In matters of significant public controversy the media will look for commentators to present divergent opinions. Conflict is at the heart of what is usually newsworthy. Media may want something “official” and for them that usually means the bishops, or at least a cleric. They will set that against other dissenting views, usually of other high profile clergy, or, preferably for some, former clergy, or other religious or lay commentators. Some might recall former Treasurer Peter Costello’s comment about “the Church of the Bishops and the Church of the Jesuits”.

As well as the tension between the respective roles of the hierarchy and lay experts and other commentators, another problem that must be faced is the divergent views that may exist within the hierarchy itself. How do we manage to present a clear Catholic identity even when those who are most visibly associated with the Church, the bishops, are themselves not of one mind on a particular matter? Some may recall Cardinal Pell’s dissenting comment during the original GST controversy that “there is no single Catholic position on tax”.

Resolving that broader problem is a task for another day but it is reasonable to expect that at least one element of the Church’s engagement with the world through the media would involve a co-ordinated national strategy. As I have said it seems self-evident that this would involve a national media office but such an idea took a long while to come and there was substantial resistance.

The story is one of uncertainty, turf wars, delay and anxiety about
expense. The process exemplifies the constant tension between the respective roles of national and local Church structures. Again this is a problem for another time.

The more limited task for this afternoon is to trace the development of the national media office.

The idea that the Church needs some form of national co-ordination in dealing with the media did not begin with Vatican II.

Faced with concerns about the expansion and popularity of cinema, Pope Pius XI published an encyclical *Vigilanti Cura* in 1936.

*Vigilanti Cura* was concerned, among other things, with the corrupting opportunities presented by films. It proposed that each country establish an office to rate films and protect morals and there is specific reference to a national office and a single centre of responsibility:

> Therefore, it will be necessary that in each country the Bishops set up a permanent national reviewing office in order to be able to promote good motion pictures, classify the others, and bring this judgment to the knowledge of priests and faithful. It will be very proper to entrust this agency to the central organisation of Catholic Action which is dependent on the Bishops. At all events, it must be clearly laid down that this service of information, *in order to function organically and with efficiency, must be on a national basis and that it must be carried on by a single centre of responsibility* (emphasis added).

Faced with the rapid expansion of radio, and the new technology of television, Pope Pius XII continued and extended the teaching of *Vigilanti Cura* in his lengthy and detailed 1957 encyclical letter, *On Motion Pictures, Radio and Television*, (*Miranda Prorsus*).

There was the same concern for propriety:

> Just as very great advantages can arise from the wonderful advances which have been made in our day, in technical knowledge concerning Motion Pictures, Radio and Television, so too can very great dangers.

For these new possessions and new instruments which are within almost everyone’s grasp, introduce a most powerful influence into men’s minds, both because they can flood them with light, raise them to nobility, adorn them with beauty, and because they can disfigure them by dimming their lustre, dishonour them by a process of corruption, and make them subject to uncontrolled passions, according as the subjects presented to the senses
in these shows are praiseworthy or reprehensible.  

_Miranda Prorsus_ repeated the requirement of _Vigilanti Cura_ for a national office but expanded beyond cinema to include all media.

The Second Vatican Council Decree on the Media of Social Communications _Inter Mirifica_ reiterated this same requirement:  

Since an effective apostolate on a national scale calls for unity of planning and resources, this sacred Synod decrees and orders that national offices for affairs of the press, films, radio and television be established everywhere and given every aid. . . . In each country the direction of such offices should be entrusted to a special committee of Bishops, or to a single Bishop. Moreover, laymen who are experts in Catholic teaching and in these arts or techniques should have a role in these offices.

Prior to _Vigilanti Cura_ the question of how to manage the growing phenomenon of not only cinema but radio broadcasting, as well as the press, had already attracted the attention of the national meetings of bishops.

By way of a parenthesis, the Minutes of the meeting of what was then known as the Committee of the Hierarchy on 9 and 10 October 1924 had an item about an alleged Catholic Film Company.

A letter from the Bishop of Dunedin asked for information as to the genuineness or otherwise, of a Company which was being canvassed to promote the introduction of what was called “Catholic Film Pictures”. It seems that the venture was fraudulent but had induced people to become shareholders, “innocently believing that they were helping to set up an antidote to the very undesirable film productions that are doing so much harm to youth.”

In 1930 the Minutes of the Meeting of the Hierarchy record that In regard to Cinema films that offend against propriety and morality, the Secretary was instructed to write to the Honourable Mr. Forde, Assistant Minister for Customs, on the matter. Mr. Forde gave the assurance that the Federal Government is taking every precaution to prevent abuse in this matter.

At a meeting of the Hierarchy on 8 May 1935 the bishops considered a report from the Committee which had met with respect to Catholic Action. It recommended the establishment of what was called the Bishops’ Catholic Welfare Conference with five standing sub-committees. One of these was for Literature and Broadcasting to deal with the “(a) The Press, (b) Distribution of Literature, (c) Broadcasting, (d) Catholic Evidence Guild etc.” The sub-committee comprised Archbishops Duhig and Sheehan and
Another sub-committee on public morals was deal with such subjects as a) Cinema, stage, dances b) Birth prevention: advertising and sale of contraceptives c) Sterilization d) Abortion e) Temperance Movement.

A further reference to some centralised authority is evident in a decision of the Meeting of the Hierarchy in 1936:10

**PRESS SERVICE**

His Lordship Bishop Hayes proposed, His Grace Archbishop Sheehan seconded, that:

“The Board of Directors of each of the Australian Catholic Newspapers be informed that it is the desire of their Lordships, the Archbishops and Bishops of Australia, that our Catholic newspapers arrange to have a complete Catholic cable news service.”

Carried unanimously.

At this time the Hierarchy were meeting usually each two or three years with the occasional special meeting for a particular purpose. From 1939 – 1951 there is no mention of anything to do with cinema or broadcasting or the Catholic Press.

In 1951 the Meeting, then described as a meeting of the Hierarchy of Australia and New Zealand, revised the committees.11 The new committees say a lot about the concerns of the time. They were: Catholic Action Committee; Education Committee; Episcopal Committee for Pontifical Mission works; Committee to Control Industrial Movement: - H.E. Cardinal Gilroy, Archbishop Mannix and Bishop Collins; Immigration Committee; Catholic Hospitals’ Committee; and, somewhat curiously, the Committee for Maintenance of Apostolic Delegation Property.

In 1953 the Hierarchy dealt with two items that are relevant to our story. Firstly they rejected the idea of a central bureau for broadcasting proposed in a report by Rev C. H. Miller (Melbourne) which has been presented by the Committee for Education.12 Secondly, television was on the horizon.

Bishop Lyons, reported on his involvement in researching television in the previous two years. He informed the bishops that the Royal Commission on television had been told that the Catholic authorities in Sydney wished to give evidence, but that the matter of the evidence and the best form in which it might be presented to the Commission would be decided at the present
Bishops’ meeting. The Minutes report:\textsuperscript{13}

It was resolved unanimously that the Hierarchy would give evidence only as a body and as coming officially from the Catholic Church in Australia and that Bishop Lyons would prepare and present this evidence to the Commission.

Intuitively the bishops saw the need to act with one voice. By now they were meeting once a year for two days.

The bishops at a meeting in April 1954\textsuperscript{14} set the National Catholic Committee for Radio and Television. A national committee is to be distinguished from an episcopal committee, ie as committee of bishops only. This was eventually set up in 1961. In 1955 Bishop Lyons convened a Committee of Clergy consisting of priests skilled in radio broadcasting named by the Metropolitans to prepare for the coming of television and to build up a reservoir of suitable and ample programmes for telecasting.\textsuperscript{15}

There is no further reference to media until we come to 1960.

In passing we might note that in 1958 there is an item proposing a pastoral letter condemning beauty contests and indecent literature.\textsuperscript{16}

By 1960 there is a reference to the National Catholic Committee for Radio and Television which had been established, as I mentioned, in 1955:\textsuperscript{17}

Conference agreed that Bishop Gleeson be appointed to preside over this national committee especially with a view to mutual aid in composing programmes for telecasting.

The Australian Episcopal Conference in January 1961 resolved to form an Episcopal Committee for Radio, Television and Films. It specifically included films due to a recommendation from the National Catholic Rural Movement.\textsuperscript{18} It was to oversee the National Catholic Committee for Radio and Television.

In January 1962 the bishops resolved to empower the Episcopal Committee for Radio, Television and Films to establish a National Catholic Radio and Television Centre.\textsuperscript{19} This was established on land acquired from the Daughters of St Paul at Homebush, now the site of Good Shepherd Seminary. The land purchase and building construction was financed by a bequest if $30,000 from the Estate of Miss Eileen Arland that Bishop Thomas Muldoon generously made available. Its task was production of electronic media content.

By way of a slight digression, Bishop Muldoon, was a great supporter of media but to some extent a lone voice. A Sydney Morning Herald profile 2 August 1981 said, “Above all he is a communicator – a master of the media”.\textsuperscript{20}
In 1981 Bishop Muldoon wrote in an edition of *Communication* the newsletter of the Catholic Communications Centre Sydney:\textsuperscript{21}

The Church must enter boldly and courageously into the public forum by using intelligently the giants of public opinion formation: press, television, radio and films.

I have already referred to Vatican II’s *Inter Mirifica* 21 (quoted above). Published at the end of 1963, it reinforced the need for a national office for media. One might have thought it logical that the National Catholic Radio and Television Centre would fulfil that need but this was not the case. In April 1965 the bishops explicitly rejected a proposal by the Catholic Press Association that, “a National Catholic Press Office be established as soon as possible to implement in Australia the provision of section 21 of the Vatican Council Decree of (sic) Mass Media.” Selective episcopal obedience to Vatican directions is not something new.

The Minutes record that “Conference gave sympathetic consideration to the proposal but regretted that it was unable to undertake such a financial burden.”\textsuperscript{22} Lack of finance is usually code for different priorities.

The National Centre under the direction of John Dwyer and later with the assistance of Mgr John Harper from Wagga, did become a de facto national office to some extent.

Bishop Muldoon’s report to the meeting of 1966\textsuperscript{23} led to a resolution, inter alia:

f) That the Centre be authorised by the Bishops to pursue on a national basis the following aims:

(i) to bring more influence to bear on the “profane” mass-media by personal contact and public relations;

(ii) to implement the vast programme of education decreed by the Council;

(iii) to hold “workshops” to train priests and laymen; and

(iv) to build up continually our T.V. film and radio libraries at great cost.

The former Episcopal Committee for Radio, Television and Films had been absorbed into a Committee for the Works of the Apostolate but in 1967 the Conference resolved to set up a special committee for the mass media consisting of Bishops Muldoon and Freeman.\textsuperscript{24} There was no report from this committee in 1968 although Bishop Freeman reported how the Catholic Newspapers were concerned about censorship. There was also

208
reference to setting up a national film office and funds were to be reserved for this purpose. The focus at this time was clearly directed to making programmes. The idea of a person who could liaise with media and coordinate participation by church personnel in the day to day activity of media was not at all developed.

Even back in 1969 the Bishops were aware of their image problem. The Minutes record that because “a poor image of the Church” was presented in the secular media a proposal that there be a press conference and interviews after the plenary meeting was handed over for attention by the Special Committee for Mass Media. We do not know what attention that committee gave to the suggestion.

However at this time Church interest in mass media was gaining traction and the 1970 Conference Minutes have a special section headed Mass Media.

The items are challenging.

Bishop Muldoon presented the report and submitted the following MOTIONS:

58. That a Diocesan Director for the Apostolate of Radio and Television should be appointed in each Diocese, with the following directives from the Bishop:
   a) to supervise all Catholic programs throughout the Diocese;
   b) to ensure that the Catholic Church take up all statutory radio and television time due to it on Stations within the Diocese;
   c) to establish personal contact with all Station Managers, and be the central point of contact in all matters relating to this Apostolate;
   d) to keep close personal contact with the Bishops’ National Radio and Television Centre. CARRIED

59. That, as a first step towards the establishment of a National Catholic Films Office, Very Rev. Dean F. Chamberlin, Melbourne, be appointed as National Films Officer; and that his duties and expenses be a matter of consultation with the Episcopal Committee for Mass Media. CARRIED

Three other motions related to finances, salaries and a collection on World Communication Day and the committee was upgraded.

66. That the present Committee, consisting of three Bishops only, be
erected into full Committee of Conference, as the importance of the Apostolate demands; and that Bishops really interested in this most difficult Apostolate be requested to volunteer their services before a ballot is taken. CARRIED

But of particular interest is the idea of a field officer to visit dioceses.

63. That the Episcopal Committee for Mass Media investigate from the financial angle the feasibility of employing a Field Officer to visit the Dioceses of Australia and assist the Diocesan Directors in their Apostolate. CARRIED

It took another three years for this to be eventually approved in August 1974 but little came of it.28

In January 1971 the apostolate of radio television and films was transferred from the Committee for the Works of the Apostolate to the Committee for Mass Media.29

On six further occasions the Conference considered a national office but did not proceed.

In August 1971, the bishops decreed that the detailed post conciliar instruction on the apostolate of social communications Communio et Progressio, be published and “widely distributed”. Remarkably, and probably without realising the inconsistency in their deliberations they refused to pass a motion “that the recommendation of the Catholic Press Association for the establishment of a National Catholic Press and Information Office be accepted by Conference”. It might have been a tight vote because there was a proviso that the decision to be reviewed in January 1972.30

Nothing further was decided in 1972, although, in what was a major step towards openness, at the end of the Plenary meeting that year a panel discussion was held for the press but it was limited to Radio 2SM and the Catholic Weekly. Facing the secular press was too much to expect.

Again on numerous occasions through the 1970s and early 1980s the proposal for a national media office was on the agenda but not considered “opportune”.31

Bishop Philip Kennedy, auxiliary bishop in Adelaide, was one who championed the cause. In May 1975 he had taken over from Bishop Muldoon as the Secretary of the Committee for Mass Media.

By 1976 the National Catholic Radio and Television Centre, which had always been financially stretched, was under threat due to the establishment of provincial and diocesan media centres.32 In 1975 the Catholic
Communications Centre was established in Sydney at Greenwich under the direction of Fr Kevin Burton. It largely duplicated what was happening at Homebush which was much more about production of programmes than liaison on a day to day basis with the media.

In 1975 funds were transferred by the Bishops Conference from the Catholic Enquiry Centre to offset the National Centre expenses on the premise that both organisation had a commonality of interest. Later when Sydney purchased the Centre the issue of some repayment to the CEC was raised.

In May 1977 the bishops co-opted the Sydney Press Officer, Alan McIlwaine to assist them with media during their plenary meeting. 33

At the August 1977 Meeting the Minutes record the address by the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio, Archbishop Gino Paro.

Only the following paragraph from his address was recorded in the Minutes:34

6. ADDRESS OF APOSTOLIC PRO-NUNCIO. At noon on Wednesday 24th August the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio, Most Rev. Gino Paro, briefly addressed the Bishops. In the course of his address he said: “It is a well known fact in the world of today that the mass-media has become a means of paramount importance in spreading ideas or conveying information or mis-information. Public opinion depends in large measure on the mass-media. Ideological theories on moral behaviour, as well as political, social and educational movements, all travel today by way of the mass media. In recent years, the Church has emphasised in various documents already well known to you, particularly since the Second Vatican Council, the usefulness of the mass media in spreading knowledge of the Gospel.”

Another intriguing decision was taken in May 1978 that the larger Archdioceses establish Communications Centres and that regional Communications Centres be “seen as a step towards setting up a national centre when that seems practical”.35 As at May 1981 no regional centres had been established.

The Nuncio’s address may have prompted some more concerted effort at dealing with the media apostolate because in May 1979 the bishops held a pastoral discussion on the subject.36 “Pastoral discussions” in bishop-speak are lengthy discussions that go beyond dealing with routine business. Fr Kevin Burton who was well trained and the leading figure in the Sydney Catholic Communications Office was one of the presenters, along with the
recently retired John Dwyer from what was then described as the Sydney National Radio and Television Centre.

What happened was that by August 1978 the Archdiocese of Sydney had mounted a take over the National Centre.

One of the points of confusion was a centre to manufacture media products (which was expanding into catechetical audio-visual resources) and a centre to be a focus for media inquiries and co-ordinated response.

In 1981 the CAVC was accountable to the Sydney Catholic Education office under the direction of John O’Donnell and it sought Council approval for commercial production.

Nothing happened for a few more years and then Bishop Philip Kennedy presented the report of the Mass Media Committee to the May 1981 Plenary meeting\(^37\) and the idea of National Media Directorate was back on the agenda prompted by a submission from Rev Father P. McLachlan. The Bishops passed the motion that the Episcopal Committee for the Mass Media pursue its consideration of the appointment of a National Director of the Mass Media Apostolate. Motions that suggest that someone pursue the investigation of something are usually easily passed. It is only when the idea crystallises and is costed that problems arise.

The following year in 1982 a motion was passed approving the establishment of a national communications office, “to promote and facilitate the development of the communications apostolate throughout Australia, to be a central point of reference in research, liaison, representation and education in matters pertaining to the media.”\(^38\)

It would only take another seven years for this to be implemented. So what happened in the meantime?

The May 1982 decision was effectively scuttled by the Central Commission. The Central Commission is like an executive of the Conference. The Central Commission asked that the Conference reconsider the decision. A major concern was expressed by the larger Archdioceses who did not want to “pay twice” for a national office which might be at the expense of their own diocesan communications works.

The Central Commission was dominated by the Archbishops. One might have thought that if there was a co-ordinated national body this might save some duplication of effort and hence reduce some of the expense they bore locally. Things would be done once instead of multiple times. However, true to the usual bureaucratic axiom that one must never downsize, the local communications offices were protecting their patch and did not want any of their budget given up to a national body.
It is revealing to note a comment in the minutes that there were “two prolonged discussions”. Again in bishop-speak this means that there was a strong conflict of views. The Minutes only record the financial issue as decisive. No doubt the alternative view might have been the utility of the venture and its cost-effectiveness but that argument obviously did not prevail. The decision was deferred suggesting a compromise but, in reality, having handed it over to the Central Commission, it was doomed.

Nothing happens for another two years until November 1985. The possibility of a national office is raised indirectly within the context of a broad ranging inquiry into the Church’s Communications apostolate. The bishops appointed Fr Paul Duffy sj to undertake a major review into the communications apostolate and to present a first draft policy statement and recommend action strategies to the Advisory Committee by October 31, 1986.

The Bishops asked that this process give close attention to coordination with other Church-related organizations, e.g. National Catholic Education Commission.

Fr Paul Duffy SJ approached his task with great vigour and ultimately his report gave the idea of a national office more impetus. This comprehensive study, running to 141 pages with a detailed bibliography, surveyed all aspects of the Church’s media apostolate.

In May 1986 the bishops agreed to allow the Central Commission to determine if it would set aside a full day at the May 1987 meeting to consider the report. As it happened, due to Fr Duffy’s availability, the discussion was deferred and was to be held in November 1987.

There is nothing in the Minutes of that meeting that the “full day discussion” was held. Perhaps events moved on because some important decisions were taken. The Bishops agreed to appoint an executive officer to assist with considering and implementing Fr Duffy’s recommendations.

This seems to be straightforward enough and apparently the Committee set about advertising for its executive officer whose job would be to assess and assist the implementation of the Duffy report. But resistance was still evident.

In April 1988 the Central Commission again threw the proverbial spanner in the works. The Central Commission expressed concern that, contrary to their mind, the impression may have been given by the advertisement for the executive secretary position that Conference had adopted the Duffy Report. The successful applicant was to be informed he/she will be answerable through the Bishops Committee for Social Communications in terms of the decisions of the Conference.
A progress report and job description were tabled in November 1988. There was acceptance of a proposal by the Knights of the Southern Cross to undertake a feasibility study about fundraising for the Communication Apostolate but that motion made it clear that agreement to this did not commit the bishops to the recommendations of the Duffy Report.43

Parallel to this was the issue of the future of what was now called the Catholic Audio-visual Centre. This was the same enterprise that Sydney had taken over from the Conference in 1978. Since 1986 it had been under the capable administration of Patrick Kirkwood and closely linked to the Sydney Catholic Education office. On 21 June 1989, Cardinal Clancy wrote to all bishops who had diocesan Catholic Education Offices44. He said that the future of the Centre was “at the crossroads”. He praised the excellent work which the Centre had done but made it clear that the subsidy from Sydney and Parramatta CEOs could not continue and that if the centre was to continue all the dioceses had to share the burden.

He saw the importance of the Centre:45

There is a large body of evidence about the mass media’s influence on the formation of our moral and spiritual values and attitudes. There is also a cry from our educators for a proper formation in media education. This was the thing most asked for by respondents in Father Duffy’s report.

Support was not forthcoming and the Centre closed in December 1989. In 1991 the Bishops Conference sold the property to the Sydney Archdiocese and eventually the buildings were demolished and the land become part of Good Shepherd Seminary.

By May 1989 the Social Communications Committee had employed its executive officer to work on the implementation of the Duffy Report. Ms Mary Newport was welcomed and a motion was passed that she attend the sessions of the Plenary meeting.

The Plenary Meeting passed a series of motions including that the Conference authorise the Bishops Committee for Social Communications to take the necessary steps to set up a national media office to perform the functions outlined in the Practical Plan.46

The National Media Officer would report to the Bishops Committee for Social Communications and will be accountable to the Secretariat of Conference for its day to day operations. For purposes of providing media coverage the social communications executive officer was invited to attend plenary sessions of the Conference meetings.
Eventually Mary Newport’s role as executive officer of the Committee morphed into becoming the first national media officer. She has been followed by Jackie Brady, Debra Vermeer, Beth Doherty and currently Aoife Connors. The Australian Bishops Conference have only ever had women direct their national media office.

Attached to the Minutes of the May 1989 meeting is an appendix setting out those parts of the Duffy Report that were considered not to be feasible, those that were feasible only with great expenditure and those that we considered feasible.

The issues Fr Duffy raised in 1987 are still largely unresolved and only a few of its 16 recommendations were ever taken up seriously.

Public advocacy remains a difficult issue for the Australian Bishops and periodically, and with various level of passion, there has been criticism of their effectiveness in proclaiming a clear message on many issues.

Whereas once the Catholic Church might have been the “go to” organisation for comment from the religious perspective on major issues of public social policy there are now more voices and lobbies.

A factor is the rising influence of the evangelical churches. An independent advocacy group, The Australian Christian Coalition (ACC) was founded in 1995 by John Gagliardi, with Pentecostal connections and it changed its name in 2001 to the Australian Christian Lobby.

Jim Wallace, its convenor, after the 2004 federal election, gave his perspective on the political influence of the Catholic Church. In an article in the main Melbourne daily broadsheet, The Age he said this: 47

The political influence of the Catholic Church seemed to have waned on all but ‘life’ issues, and the increasing liberalisation of parts of the Anglican and Uniting churches rendered them unwilling to oppose legislation that angered many in the pews. However, all this changed at this election. The evangelical side of the church saw the mantle had fallen to them, and picked it up.

Whatever the long term impact of evangelical churches on Australian politics, it is the view of some, at least, that, for now, they have filled an advocacy gap perceived as not being filled by other churches.

A major challenge for the Church in Australia is to educate media practitioners about the hierarchy of Catholic authority. It is commonplace for the media to regard any statement by anyone associated with the Church, especially a cleric, as “official”. Headlines such as, “the Church said ...” are often nothing more than a private opinion of someone which may or may not be the opinion of others.
This is made worse when here is little discipline among Church leaders to ensure that there is a consistent and coherent response to the issues of the day. The multiplicity of websites, blogs and electronic media, and the power of search engines, has meant there is little control on what might be picked up by secular media sources and regarded as “Catholic”.

Since Vatican II a number of media officers now work in the Church with most dioceses, agencies, education offices, hospitals having a media officer. It was quite a different picture even just 20 years ago. This indicates the Church in its many guises is taking media more seriously. What it does not mean, unfortunately, is that the Church speaks any more clearly or strategically.

Media are not limited by diocesan boundaries. Pius XI in 1935 saw the need for a national approach to cinema. The Directory for the Pastoral Ministry for Bishops acknowledges the competence of the Bishops Conference in the area of social communications. The rightful autonomy of the diocesan bishop is tempered by participation in the college of bishops. This is one area where bishops can work for the harmonisation of initiatives for “the good of the entire Christian community of the territory”.

Fr Duffy SJ expressed this still urgent but unresolved issue in these terms:

The greater effectiveness of its media work depends much on whether the Church decides on a national approach to co-ordinate and support the efforts of the local Church and to develop co-ordinated policy and action for a concentrated apostolic thrust; or whether it allows much of the value of local efforts to be lost to the wider Church and wider society because of a fragmented approach to the use of these efforts.

That, my friends, remains a challenge.

**Endnotes**


2 Can. 831 §2. It is for the conference of bishops to establish norms concerning the requirements for clerics and members of religious institutes to take part on radio or television in dealing with questions of Catholic doctrine or morals. Can. 772 §2. In giving a radio or television talk on Christian doctrine, the prescripts established by the conference of bishops are to be observed. Cf Congregation for Bishops *Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops (Apostolorum Successores)*, (Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2004) 152.
The Australian Bishops and National Media: Conflicts and Missed Opportunities

3 ACBC Archives Minutes Meeting Bishops Committee for Media, Kensington 28 April 1995.
6 Inter Mirifica 21.
7 ACBC Archives Committee of the Hierarchy Minutes: 9 and 10 October, 1924 item 3
8 ACBC Archives Minutes of Meeting of the Hierarchy 2 May 1930 13.
9 ACBC Archives Minutes Meetings of Hierarchy 1935 5.
10 ACBC Archives Minutes Meeting of Hierarchy 13 & 16 November 1936
11 ACBC Archives Minutes Meeting of Hierarchy of Australia and New Zealand 17 – 19 April 1951
12 ACBC Archives Minutes Meetings of Hierarchy 1953 item 15.
13 ACBC Archives Minutes Meetings of Hierarchy 1953 item 25.
14 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC 1954 item 9.
15 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC 1955 item 18.
16 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC 1958 item 23.
17 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC 1960 item 24.
18 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC 1961 item 26.
19 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC 1962 item 26.
20 Cited by Fr Kevin Burton in Communication vol 17 No. 1 January 1986 in his obituary for Bishop Muldoon who died 13 January 1986.
21 Cited by Fr Kevin Burton in Communication vol 17 No. 1 January 1986 in his obituary for Bishop Muldoon who died 13 January 1986.
22 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC 1965 item 27.
23 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC 1966 item 26.
24 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC 1967 item 51.
25 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC 1968 item 83.
26 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC April 1969 item 24
27 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC August 1970
28 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC September 1974 item 60.
29 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC January 1971 item 71.
30 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC August 1971 items 54 & 56.
31 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC September 1974 item 63.
63. PROPOSAL REGARDING A NATIONAL CATHOLIC PRESS OFFICE. In accordance with minute n.66 of the January 1974 meeting of Conference, the Episcopal Committee had studied the proposal of the Catholic Press Association regarding a national press office. The Committee recommended to Conference that the establishment of such an office was not opportune.
32 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC May 1976 item 92.
33 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC May 1977 item 8.
34 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC August 1977 item 6.
35 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC May 1978 item 112.
36 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC May 1979 item 100.
Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society

37 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC May 1981 item 71.
38 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC May 1982 item 86.
39 ACBC Archives Minutes AEC November 1985 item 57.
40 Fr Paul Duffy S.J. To Bring the Good News – Evangelisation and Communications, Recommendation 2
41 ACBC Archives Minutes ACBC November 1987 item 55.
42 ACBC Archives Minutes ACBC April 1988 item 109.
43 ACBC Archives Minutes ACBC November 1988 item 86.
44 ACBC Archives File Com 92/94
45 Ibid.
46 ACBC Archives Minutes ACBC May 1989 items 94 & 95.
47 “Christianity is the political force”, The Age, 13 Oct 2004, p15
49 Congregation for Bishops Directory 21.
50 Congregation for Bishops Directory 33.
51 Fr Paul Duffy S.J. To Bring the Good News – Evangelisation and Communications, paragraph 15.10 p 135.
GERALD RIDSDALE, PEDOPHILE PRIEST, IN HIS OWN WORDS

James Franklin*

One major difficulty in understanding the clerical abuse scandal in the Catholic Church has been that the abusers themselves have not told their story. There has been virtually no account of their crimes by themselves, no apologies, no repentance.

That changed with the appearance of Gerald Ridsdale before the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse on 27-28 May 2015. Ridsdale is believed to be Australia’s worst priest sexual abuser of children. He was convicted of offences against 53 children, including many rapes, but that is thought to be a small proportion of his victims. Sitting in Ballarat, the Commission heard two days of testimony from Ridsdale. He appeared by videolink from prison, where he has been since 1994. He gave the impression of being an honest and cooperative witness, though notably affectless. At age 81, his memory was very patchy, but the Commission was able to supplement it with some earlier material, especially a 1994 account he gave of his actions.¹ His oral evidence and the earlier document provide a unique opportunity to see into the mind of a pedophile priest.

Since the Commission’s brief was to investigate the responses of institutions rather than the abuse itself, questioning by Gail Furness SC focussed on who knew about his offending and what they did or did not do about it. In this article however we select that part of the evidence where Ridsdale talks about himself.

The testimony was streamed live. Graham Richardson wrote after watching

¹ Part of the 1994 document is in the Commission’s exhibits at http://www.childabuseroyalcgmission.gov.au/exhibits/86eabc6-e0fc-453a-b9d4-51a89852fede/case-study-28,-february-2016,-melbourne under the heading ‘Extracts of transcript of interview between Catholic Church Insurance Limited and Gerald Ridsdale’.

* James Franklin is editor of the Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society and Professor at the University of New South Wales.
his evidence, “I want there to be a hell and I want Gerald Ridsdale and his ilk and all those who covered up for them to burn in that dreadful place for all eternity.” Moral evaluation of that kind is certainly appropriate, but this article confines itself to the facts as they appear from his testimony and related documents.

**Ridsdale’s account of his abusing**

Gerald Ridsdale was born in 1934, the eldest of eight children, and studied at St Patrick’s College, Ballarat. He experienced some relatively mild sexual abuse from an uncle and from a Christian Brother (according to his 1994 statement). He left school at 14 and worked in an accountant’s office but about three years later was inspired by a priest friend to consider becoming a priest. The little he recalls about it is significant:

Q. You say you talked to your priest friend, Dan Boylen, about becoming a priest?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember now anything he told you about the life of a priest?

A. No. The only thing I can remember about any conversation with Dan Boylen with regard to the priesthood was, he was talking about spiritual books that I was reading, and I remember him saying, “Always remember, when you’re reading books like that, that that’s not necessarily how people like that lived, but that’s how they would like to have lived”, and I don’t know why that stuck in my mind, but that’s something that I’ve always remembered.

That was an unfortunate thing to take notice of, given that Ridsdale would go on to represent the extreme in the disjunction between priestly appearance and reality.

He is asked if he committed abuse while studying at Werribee Seminary:

Not in Werribee, I can’t remember anything. My biggest problem

---

2 G. Richardson, If there is a hell, let abusers burn for all eternity, *The Australian* 29/5/2015.

there was masturbation, and I remember going to my confessor and confessing it, and he said something like ‘You will have to stop that or otherwise you have got to leave the seminary’. That was the kind of attitude there towards masturbation, et cetera.

His offences began very soon thereafter. After some study in Genoa and Ireland he was ordained in 1961 and served as assistant priest in parishes of the Ballarat Diocese. In the mid-1960s, he served in Mildura under the supervision of Monsignor John Day, another of Australia’s worst pedophile priests, but there seems to be no evidence that they knew of each other’s crimes. From 1974 he was parish priest in various locations. Very little evidence comes to light of his priestly life apart from his offending. At one point he is asked about the only notable item on his CV other than parish work (and certain appointments made later to get him out of the way), his role as secretary of the Salary Review Board. He downplays the importance of the role:

Q. And, to be appointed as a secretary of that committee showed, did it, that you were held in esteem by those who appointed you?

A. Well, yes; I don’t know how I was appointed or how I got onto the committee, but very often becoming secretary is a matter of, no one else is willing to do it.

He is asked if he agrees with a psychiatrist’s description of his modus operandi in abusing:

Q. Professor Ball says, and I quote: It is very clear that his subsequent career in parish work indicated that in each of the parishes to which he was appointed there was a group of five or more children with whom he had close and ongoing relationship, plus a number of other casual contacts. His usual pattern was to become involved in one or two families, often with an absent father, develop close relationships with the children, which then merged into the sexual in the context of a variety of opportunities within the presbytery, on various outings and camps, et cetera. The targets were predominantly prepubertal or

---

early prepubertal boys. Do you accept that is an accurate description of your pattern?\(^5\)

A. Yes, I think so.

In his own description, he admits his manipulative behaviour. He is asked to read from the transcript of his earlier interview, concerning his offending at Inglewood in 1975:

*Yes, I was out of control, really out of control in those years.*

*These other ones, would they be from the school or altar boys or what?*

*Well, I had a pool table and it was just known that anyone who wanted to come was welcome to come and play pool. There is no sense in pretending, I suppose, because if there was any kind of good motive about it being a drop-in centre but it was the trap.*

*You can see that now?*

*Yes, I can see that now.*

(Presumably in the interests of retaining his cooperation as a witness, the questioning does not go into some of the more grotesque aspects of his actions that had come out in earlier court cases, such as telling a nine-year-old boy that the abuse was “the Lord’s work”; describing a four-year-old girl he was abusing as “God’s little angel”, and giving another victim a piece of communion bread as a reward for being abused.\(^6\))

Ridsdale is happy to admit that his actions were all wrong and criminal (at the same time, without appearing notably remorseful or overcome with any sort of emotion):

Q. Now, you knew what you were doing were committing crimes against children, didn’t you?

A. Yes, I did.

Q. You’d known from the very beginning in 1961 when Bishop O’Collins spoke to you that what you were doing was committing criminal acts?

---

\(^5\) Professor Ball’s 1993 report is included in the exhibits under the heading ‘Psychological reports prepared by Professor Ball’.


222
A. Yes.

Q. Did you see them, in addition to criminal acts, as moral failures on your part?

A. Yes, they were serious sins.

Q. You thought they were serious sins because of the teaching you had received in the seminary and beyond about what a sin was?

A. Yes.

Q. You would have known it was a crime; is that what you said?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you.

A. Well, should have anyway.

Q. Well, you did know it was a crime, because otherwise you wouldn’t have been concerned about the police, would you, Mr Ridsdale?

A. Exactly that, yes, exactly. I would have known it was a crime.

As to the effects of his offending on his victims, Ridsdale answers:

Q: Did you know, Mr Ridsdale, that the effect you had on children you offended against was that they wouldn’t let anyone touch them and they wouldn’t let their fathers touch them. Did you know that?

A. No, I didn’t know then. I didn’t know that then. I do now.

Q. You didn’t think about the effects on the children, did you?

A. No, I didn’t.

Q. You were only concerned about your own gratification?

A. That’s right.

It is arguable that there is some contradiction between his claiming not to knowing the effects of abuse and claiming to have been abused himself. However, the abuse he suffered appears to have been much less severe than that he inflicted.

The offending continued and Ridsdale was moved from place to place,
including to New South Wales. In the late 1970s, he was able to take children
to White Cliffs, the remote opal mining town in western New South Wales,
where he had an underground house. From this period there is a near-
contemporary description of the abuse as seen from both sides, thanks to
correspondence received by the Bishop of Ballarat and made available to
the Royal Commission. The solicitor for victim “BAF” writes:

BAF alleges that at the age of 16 at Whitecliffs he was under the care
of Father Ridsdale and because of an accommodation shortage, he was
forced to sleep with Father Ridsdale in the same double bed. We quote
his instructions: “That night he began touching me firstly on the arms and
legs and then my genitals. I asked him to stop but he would not. He made
me masturbate him and forced me to give him oral sex. I was crying and
emotionally upset and wanted him to stop. He apologised and he said he
would not do it again. The following night, similar events occurred.”

The solicitors were able to quote from letters and a card which Ridsdale
sent to BAF soon after. It is the most astonishing evidence in the whole
case, revealing an extraordinary level of self-deception on Ridsdale’s part:

We quote from a letter from Father Ridsdale dated May 2nd, 1979
addressed to BAF:

“I depend on you more than anything or any-one else for support - that
weekly phone call and a card in the mail gives me the energy to keep
going ‘straight’. I hope I don’t lean too heavily on you - sing out if I do. I
don’t know how much you know about me or how much you’ve guessed,
but you’re the first person I’ve ever wanted to open up to (although
I seem to do it in a round about way - You’re the first kid I have been
honest with and warned off (a bit late unfortunately, but I suppose all
experiences bring some good out in us).”

In a card sent, the following statement by Father Ridsdale appears:

---

7 Paul Cronin, solicitor for BAF of Shepparton, to Bishop Ronald Mulkearns, 19/2/1988,
6f3a-4351-8715-7c5d8ddea608&type=exhibit&filename=CCI.0001.00632.0179_R&f
ileextension=pdf, downloaded 30/5/2015; the severe effects on the victim are detailed
in a letter from the victim’s mother to Fr Brian Lucas of 24/10/1989 http://www.
childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/downloadfile.ashx?guid=6ba5db98-1aad-4ee4-
9a68-594d1e66f0a8&type=exhibit&filename=VPOL.0014.001.0088_E_R&fileextension=pdf

224
“I am far from strong and hope you’re strong enough - I don’t want to run any risk of losing you as a friend.”

In a letter posted 3rd May, 1979 from Edenhope Father Ridsdale stated:

“The words on the front seemed to say a fair bit about Sunday night. Thanks. Even though it was December 1978 at W-Cliffs, I still sometimes wish! No harm in hoping. Good to have a weak mate, isn’t it? Not much help - and, when I come to think of it, I’m pretty weak with you. I think your mum hasn’t much trust in me. I suppose I really don’t want to be a priest with you - a friend, or what? When I pray for you, God comes first - when I’m with you, you are first.”

Who knew of Ridsdale’s offending?

The evidence before the Royal Commission on knowledge of the fact and extent of Ridsdale’s offending was complex. Certainly the successive bishops of Ballarat, James O’Collins and Ronald Mulkearns, received plenty of information about it. Various people in parishes came to learn about it, but it did not exactly become common knowledge and it was possible for other priests to remain unaware of it. Here we consider what Ridsdale himself says. He certainly feared exposure and made efforts to conceal his crimes, including from his confessors.

Q. When you left the seminary, did you continue to go to confession?
A. I did for a while, but not regularly.

Q. When you say “for a while”, for how long did you continue to go to confession?
A. Maybe three, four, five years. But I can’t really remember, but that’s just the impression that I sort of have now.

Q. And were you honest in what you confessed to your confessor?
A. No.

Q. What did you not confess to your confessor which you should have?
A. I didn’t confess the sexual offending against children.

Q. What did you do, as an assistant priest and as a parish priest when you are offending, to keep it a secret?
A. Well, I would have made sure that I was in a situation where there was no one else around, and I would have told the children to keep quiet about it.

Q. Did you threaten the children as to what might happen if they didn’t keep quiet?

A. I don’t know whether I did or not; I may have.

Q. You hurt those children, didn’t you, Mr Ridsdale?

A. Yes, I did. I know that.

What he feared from exposure was the loss of priesthood:

A. It’s the sort of thing I wouldn’t tell anyone.

Q. Why is that?

A. Looking back on it, I think that the overriding fear would have been losing priesthood.

Q. And you thought that, if you told anyone, you’d lose the priesthood?

A. Yes.

Q. Because what you were doing was a crime, wasn’t it?

A. That’s right.

He was caught, and caught again, but did not lose the priesthood until the time of his court cases in the 1990s. His 1994 document says, speaking of 1963:

While I was there [Ballarat East] I remember going into his room and fondling him while he was showing me something in the cupboard, toys or whatever, and putting my hand down his trousers and touching his penis. It would have been a fairly brief kind of thing. Then later the Bishop called me in, Bishop O’Collins, and said there had been a complaint and he said, ‘If this thing happens again, then you are off to the missions’ and he sent me to Mildura.

In Ballarat East Ridsdale lived in the same presbytery as Fr George Pell. Ridsdale says he does not remember that. He says there were no general rumours about his offending at that time. This has been the subject of intense
interest because in a much-reproduced video, Pell is seen accompanying Ridsdale to his first court appearance in 1993. Pell has expressed regret for doing so. There has been controversy as to whether Pell knew earlier of Ridsdale’s offending. Ridsdale’s own evidence gives no reason to think so.

But at Inglewood in 1975 things became more difficult:

What happened there was a lady came to me one morning after a morning mass and she said that ‘there is talk around the town that you’ve been interfering with the boys’, and she said ‘the police have been around making enquiries’. So I panicked, packed up a few things and then probably about midnight I called in to stay with a priest friend at Maryborough and slept the rest of the night there and went straight down to the Bishop.

Police involvement seems to have been off the agenda. The bishop and his advisers seem not to have considered reporting the matter to the police. Even the police did not report it to the police:

Q. Bishop Mulkearns is recorded as saying that the first complaint he ever had was when you were at Inglewood in 1975, and he describes the complaint as being that a policeman came to see him to say that he was worried about an incident with his son, that is, the policeman’s son, and that in addition you came to see Bishop Mulkearns too, and that Bishop Mulkearns said to the policeman that he would “pull you straight out of the parish and have him seek counselling” …

Q. But that police officer from Bendigo was a police officer who happened to be a father of a boy that you had offended against?

A. I didn’t know that, or I don’t remember that now.

Q. You see a bit further down on that page, it was put to you that, knowing the size of Inglewood, that the interviewer thought it would be imprudent to molest the policeman’s son, and you then say: [in 1994] …

A. Well, one of them was with the policeman’s son, and when you say imprudent, it’s like taking an alcoholic and saying, ‘Call into that hotel and get a bottle of lemonade’, there’s no logic to it.

(In fact the police produced a report and notified Bishop Mulkearns of Ridsdale’s offending. A police investigation of 1995 into whether Mulkearns
had concealed a felony found that he may have known only of lower-scale offences.8)

Psychological treatment

During the long course of his offending, Fr Ridsdale had considerable interaction with psychologists and psychiatrists. What he tells the Commission casts light on the role of those professions in the sexual abuse crisis. He had some awareness of needing professional help. He says (in the 1994 document) of his time in Warrnambool in 1970-2:

Well sometimes it would go on for a while, maybe with one lad over a period of some months just on and off and then you had a time when I was free of the problem. Warrnambool was probably the first place that I tried to get some help or realise that I needed help and I was out at the mental institution near Brierley and part of my job was to go out to Brierley and take communion out and probably had mass out there and I remember one day there was a psychiatrist or psychologist that I had met a couple of times, and I remember saying to him once ‘Could I ask you a question, I want to talk about a problem?’ and I said something to the effect that ‘I think I might be homosexual’ and I can clearly remember his question, ‘Do you dream about having sex with men?’ and I said ‘No’ and he said ‘Well you have got no problems, you are okay’ and rather than follow it up then with, ‘Well, what about kids?, I just let it go. But the first time I can remember having the guts to say anything.

When his offending became known to the Church authorities, a series of therapies were tried:

Q. You describe that, and I quote: [1994 document] One of his strongest things [his, being Father (Augustine) Watson] was to stay close to the Lord and respect your priesthood and more spiritual kind of stuff. Do you see that?

A. Yes, I can see that now, yes.

Q. Can you recall now what benefit you received from the therapy with Father Watson?

A. No, I can’t, but I did follow up that logotherapy with Viktor Frankl,

and I studied that, and I think the basic reasoning behind that was, in whatever difficult circumstances a person is in, if they have some reason for living, a good reason for living and going on with life, then that was helpful.

The 1994 document, speaking of 1980, contains some self-diagnosis:

I took a year off and one of the reasons I took a year off was I knew my life was all screwed up and I appreciated or I thought that I had worked out for myself that part of my problem was that I couldn’t mix comfortably and relate comfortably with adults. So I thought if I could go to some kind of a program or course and spend a year, a live-in year with adults, I might be able to sort of help myself that way, but it was only partially successful.

I know, looking back from where I am now, that there was probably a lot of fear in mixing with adults because of the secret that I held, the secret of offending, and perhaps frightened of being questioned by them or - I don’t know really, and it was also concerned with control I think, control and power, and I was a control freak and I couldn’t control adults.

Well, I think the whole purpose of the year was to just try to turn my life around, away from offending with children, to becoming more comfortable with adults and, if I could do that, then I thought it might eliminate the offending. But I had no idea then, as I do now, that logic and threats, they’re no help to a paedophile. The only way out of it is proper treatment.

Ridsdale was eventually sent to the centre for “hard-core” problem priests run by the Congregation of the Servants of the Paraclete at Jemez Springs, New Mexico. The facility was closed down in the 1990s because of its failures in treating abusive priests, but Ridsdale takes a more positive view:

Q. It’s plain that, although you went through this treatment, it didn’t work, isn’t it?

A. In New Mexico?

Q. Yes.

A. I didn’t offend at all after I came back from America.
Q. You didn’t?
A. No.

Q. So you say the treatment worked?
A. Yes, I think it did.

A final exchange between the Royal Commissioner and Ridsdale is hard to disagree with:

THE CHAIR (Peter McClellan QC):

Q. Mr Ridsdale, do you accept that someone with your issues should never have been a priest?
A. Yes, I accept that now. I’m sorry that there was nothing –

Q. What should have been in place with the church to stop you becoming a priest?
A. There should have been a better screening process that was much more thorough, a psychological process that was much more thorough than anything that was conducted then.

Q. If, when you first discussed your offending behaviour with the Bishop, he’d gone to the police, that would have brought it to an end, wouldn’t it, as far as your role in the church was concerned?
A. It would have, and I am now sorry that it didn’t; that it didn’t happen.

Q. You might be sorry, but the offending –
A. It would have saved so many others.

Bernard Doherty*

Introduction: The Age of Mary

On November 1, 1950, Pope Pius XII became the first pope to institute an infallible doctrine through his *ex Cathedra* apostolic constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*. The Pope’s promulgation of the Marian dogma of the Assumption, while sometimes viewed as a political exercise of papal power, was also an outgrowth of the Pope’s well-known personal devotion to the Virgin Mary, especially the apparition at Fatima in 1917.1 This decree coincided with an intensification of Marian devotion across the globe with the Pope remarking: “piety toward the Virgin Mother of God is flourishing and daily growing more fervent.”2 It also coincided with the early years of the Cold War which witnessed a resurgence of interest in Marian apparitions and apocalyptic thinking arguably unseen since the high point of Marian devotion in the troubled atmosphere of nineteenth century France, where appearances of the Virgin Mary frequently occurred – at Paris (1830), La Salette (1846), Lourdes (1858), and Pontmain (1871) – in a society and Church still coming to terms with the legacy of the Revolution of 1789 and its aftermath.3


* Dr Bernard Doherty is an adjunct lecturer in Church History and New Religions at St Mark’s National Theological Centre (Charles Sturt University). He has published in a number of academic journals including the *Journal of Religious History, Nova Religio, the International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, the *Alternative Spirituality and Religions Review, Phronema*, and the *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*.

---

In Italy, to give one example, the years following the Second World War witnessed an explosion of Marian apparitions, especially in the months leading up to the sharply contested election of April 18, 1948. Here a series of mass Marian pilgrimages – a ubiquitous aspect of Italian popular piety – coincided with the Pope’s suggestion that the election represented a choice between Christ, represented by the Christian Democrats, or against Christ in the form of the Popular Front, a left-wing coalition of revolutionary socialists and communists. While Italy was the most popular venue for these apparitions, the period from 1947-1954 also witnessed an increase in apparitions across both Eastern and Western Europe amid social tensions created by the early Cold War and post-war reconstruction. Predictably – given the history of ambivalence with which the hierarchy of the Church has viewed such miraculous phenomena – these apparitions were not welcomed in all quarters, especially when some visionaries began to show a marked reluctance to submit to episcopal authority. The infamous head of the Holy Office Alfredo Cardinal Ottaviani, in an often quoted piece in L’Osservatore Romano published on February 4, 1951, warned the faithful against paying too great a significance to supernatural phenomenon, or confusing miraculous occurrences with sanctity.

The years that followed saw some decrease in the number of reported apparitions, a change usually attributed to Ottaviani’s warning. Despite this, the 1950s still came to be known in some quarters as the ‘Age of Mary’ or as the final decade of the ‘Marian Century’, and the Virgin Mary, most notably in her guise as Our Lady of Fatima, assumed an almost unprecedented

---


6 Alfredo Cardinal Ottaviani, «Siate, cristiani, a muoveri più gravi»! L’Osservatore Romano 4/2/1951

place in Roman Catholic devotional life. Mary was seen by many Catholics as increasingly important both in a theological sense as a near-divine participant in the economy of salvation (so-called ‘Marian Maximalism’⁸), but perhaps more importantly, in a political sense, as her intercession and earthly appearances came to be seen as a witness and bulwark against the ever-threatening spectres of communism and secularization.

In countries like Australia and the United States devotion to the nineteenth century French apparition at Lourdes – and in some quarters the more controversial and apocalyptic apparition at La Salette – had been popular in the years prior to WWII.⁹ However, from WWII onwards, the appearances by the Virgin to three peasant children in Fatima, Portugal, between May and October 1917, surged in popularity. Fatima’s apocalyptic imagery, its call for the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and the practice of First Saturday devotions for the reparation of sin, became widespread in the atmosphere of Cold War hysteria and growing anti-communist sentiment among large swaths of the Church.¹⁰ Moreover, as masses of displaced people from the historical heartlands of Marian devotion in Southern and Eastern Europe began to migrate to Australia and the United States, they brought with them a rich spiritual repertoire of traditional devotional practices and popular beliefs, coupled with the traumatic lived experience of the near-apocalyptic reality of total war between the twin-evils of Stalinism and Nazism, which had only recently laid much of the European continent to waste.

It was into this specific epoch in the history of Roman Catholic devotion, which witnessed a melding of two intensely apocalyptic strands of Marian devotion – the reactionary piety of nineteenth century counter-revolutionary France best exemplified by La Salette and mid-twentieth century anti-communist piety closely identified with Fatima – that William Kamm was born in Cologne, Germany, on May 16, 1950, a city still reeling from the devastation wrought by

---

allied bombing raids.\textsuperscript{11} The son of Catholic parents, a German mother and a decommissioned Italian soldier father, Kamm’s family (minus his biological father) would migrate to Australia when he was just four years old.

Under the shadow of the Cold War and widespread changes in the Church wrought by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), over the next thirty-five years, Kamm, better known by his moniker ‘The Little Pebble’, would grow into an intensely religious alleged visionary preoccupied with an admixture of Marian Maximalist devotion, apocalyptic prophecy, and European-style popular Catholicism. In 1985, Kamm would found a self-styled religious order known as the Order of Saint Charbel (the Charbelites) based at a property in Bangalee near Cambewarra west of Nowra on the N.S.W. South Coast. Despite numerous failed attempts to acquire official Church recognition, both in Australia and at Rome, the activities of the Charbelites, particularly their resistance to episcopal oversight and censure and their traditional devotional practices, would become the source of ongoing controversy with successive diocesan bishops of Wollongong over the course of the next three decades. This eventually culminated in an official diocesan investigation announced in 1998 and – with the express support of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith – an order for the Charbelites to disband and “to cease all activities that are contrary to the teachings, authority and discipline of the Catholic Church” in a Decree of Bishop Peter Ingham on June 16, 2002. Kamm and his remaining followers were excommunicated (\textit{latae sententiae}) on June 10, 2003, following the schismatic consecration as bishop of his associate Fr. Malcolm Broussard.\textsuperscript{12} This was soon followed by Kamm’s arrest, conviction, and subsequent imprisonment for a series of sexual offences against

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{12} Bishop Peter Ingham, \textit{Fr Malcolm Broussard}, June 10, 2003. \\
\end{flushright}
young female followers. Kamm was released on parole in late 2014 and still claims to receive what are known in the large subculture devoted to Marian apparitions as “messages from heaven.”

Moving Beyond the ‘Cult’ Stereotype

Rather than focusing on the often discussed sensationalist aspects of Kamm’s activities, this article seeks to examine the historical origins of the Charbelites and their intense form of devotion to the Virgin Mary from the period of Kamm’s youth, through the group’s genesis in a series of prayer groups known as the Marian Work of Atonement (MWOA) established in the early 1970s, to their initial censure by Bishop William E. Murray of Wollongong in his pastoral letter On True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary issued on December 2, 1984. In what follows I seek to contextualise this prehistory of the Charbelites against the backdrop of local developments within the Roman Catholic Church in Australia and wider developments in the Church abroad over the tumultuous period between 1950 and the early 1980s. However, before progressing to examine this complex historical matrix a number of preliminary points need to be made, not least regarding this group’s controversial reputation.

To most outsiders, and indeed to the hierarchy of Australian bishops, Kamm’s prophetic and visionary messages have been considered both bizarre and disturbing, leading to decades of media and Church scrutiny.

---


His Order has usually been dismissed offhand as a ‘cult’, and his followers marginalized from the mainstream Church. Regardless of the group’s clear canonically schismatic status – most recently reiterated by the Bishop of the Maronite Eparchy of Australia Antoine-Charbel Tarabay in a pastoral letter November 14, 2014 – its historical development offers an intriguing window through which to view many of the challenges and changes which the Roman Catholic Church has undergone in the post-World War II era, especially, though not exclusively, in an Australian context. Despite its marginal and sectarian position with regard to the mainstream Church, I suggest here that it is impossible to understand this group without particular reference to the distinctly Roman Catholic religious ecology from which it emerged, accompanied by some historical account of particular strands of Marian devotional and apocalyptic thought which have persisted within the Church since at least the nineteenth century and in certain regards much earlier.

During the post-war period, the Australian Church has successively faced at least four challenges which I suggest are particularly important for understanding the development of the Charbelites. First, the mass migration and settlement of scores of Southern and Eastern European Roman Catholics fleeing communist persecution and an uncertain


future in an unstable post-war Europe. Second, the implementation of the pastoral, liturgical, and ecclesiological reforms of Vatican II, and attempts to address the reluctance of small sectors of the Church to embrace the Council’s vision for aggiornamento and renewal.

Third, and arguably related to the second, the marked decline of many Catholic devotional practices, ranging from frequent confession to traditional forms of devotion such as the praying of the Rosary, not to mention a marked decline in religious vocations. And, finally, how the Church has grappled with the widespread secularization of Australian society, and with this, the emergence of more permissive attitudes in education and personal morality considered scandalous by more traditionally oriented Catholics; a development which has become increasingly acute from the period of the late 1960s onward.

Each of these factors contributed to a trend among some conservative Catholics which led to the formation of what Patrick O’Farrell described as a “significant movement…toward re-emphasis of traditional doctrines and older pious practices,” most notably those linked with the Virgin Mary, a trend particularly apparent


amongst older Roman Catholics who yearned for the devotional and theological certainties of their younger days and in certain ethnic quarters where such devotional practices constituted the primary locus of their religious and cultural identity.23 It was amongst this group of self-described “disaffected Catholics” that Kamm drew the majority of his followers, individuals who believed, as one former elderly female follower reflected: “that the church was moving away from the traditions she held dear.”24

Bearing in mind these complex socio-historical factors – rather than dismissing the Charbelites pejoratively as a ‘cult’ and sensationalising their more controversial theological beliefs and practices – this article contends that from a historical perspective what became the Order of Saint Charbel can be partially explained as the product of this complex historical and social matrix. It is the purpose of this article to better contextualise the circumstances and factors which have influenced the development of this group. However, before progressing to do this it is incumbent on me to mention three caveats.

First, in this article, I adopt the position that it is not the province of the historian to make judgements about the authenticity or otherwise of Kamm’s visions and supernatural claims. Assessing the probability or otherwise of such claims is properly the role of qualified spiritual theologians and the Church hierarchy. The Church hierarchy has historically followed a complex and lengthy set of investigative processes in such cases.25 In this particular case the Church’s position – in the form of official pronouncements by diocesan bishops with jurisdiction over regions or communities in which the Charbelites

can be found, as well as by various Vatican dicasteries – advised by competent theologians, has maintained a generally negative position regarding these matters since 1984. This said, the Charbelites have consistently challenged the validity of the Church’s judgement on such matters and the findings of the diocesan commission conducted under Bishop Philip Wilson and refuse to disband their communities as requested. Since 2002, a large number of Charbelites have departed from the group and subsequently either reconciled with the mainstream Church, or become involved with other canonically suppressed groups like the Society of St. Pius X or elsewhere in the Marian apparition subculture. At their height the Charbelites likely only comprised at most a few hundred members living in community in Australia and overseas, however they had a much wider network of committed prayer groups scattered across the world.

Second, is it not my intention here to discuss Kamm’s criminal convictions or the doctrinal and organizational developments within the Charbelites over their later history, especially during the early 1990s, which may have some bearing on these matters. These are matters best left for a future time and another forum. While the apocalyptic tendencies of this group were evident even during its early days, data I have examined suggest that the Charbelites’ arguably more heterodox and antinomian theological developments – in particular their understanding of a New Holy Era and the Royal House of David


post-date the period covered by this paper. It suffices to say here that these arguably heterodox beliefs and practices are by no means as unprecedented – especially amongst visionary and prophecy-inspired movements which have periodically emerged in earlier epochs of Church history – as has often been suggested.

Third, due to the relatively recent nature of many of the developments discussed in this article, and its utilisation of information gauged from current and former members of the group and other sources, some of the documentation and interview data utilized will be quoted anonymously in order to protect the privacy of those individuals cited. Documentation on the public record, or dealing with deceased persons, will be cited as usual. However, more contemporaneous matters from the late 1970s onwards will be treated with some circumspection.

**William Kamm: The Early Years**

The Kamm family migrated to Australia under the Department of Immigration’s assisted passage scheme in 1954, like many other German migrants choosing Renmark in South Australia, a region with a history of German settlement. Kamm’s childhood was not marked by an intensely Catholic environment: he attended state schools due to the costs associated with attending parochial schools and his family were in his estimation not overly devout. However, in his three-volume autobiography Kamm does note the important early influence of Italian neighbours, who he describes as “staunch Catholics who loved their faith.” These neighbours

---

29 For a discussion of the criminal matters see Yeomans, “The Little Pebble” Cult Leader and Child Sex Offender’, Webber, A Wolf Among the Sheep, and Wickham and Hartney, “Rockchopping with the Little Pebble”.


31 In the circumstance that persons anonymously quoted or discussed should wish to contact or correct the author I welcome this opportunity and undertake to maintain their anonymity.

frequently took Kamm to Mass and at age eight Kamm received his First Holy Communion. According to Kamm, his home life was unsettled, the family were poor and his stepfather an alcoholic prone to violence. The family briefly returned to Germany in 1960, though soon travelled back to Australia, sans Kamm’s stepfather, and eventually relocated to the outer Melbourne suburb of Sunshine where Kamm began high school.

Sunshine, like other outer suburbs of major Australian cities in the 1950s, had become a popular location for many European migrants, often unable to afford the high costs of housing in inner-city areas. In Sunshine devout Italian and Maltese communities soon began to make their presence felt, especially their public devotion to the Virgin Mary.33 It is unsurprising then, amidst the turmoil of his parent’s separation and some teasing at school resulting from residual anti-German sentiment in the wider community, that Kamm’s devotional life took on a great importance and he began to form what was to become a life-long interest in Marian apparitions. Of this period he writes:

I would often visit the Church and I developed a great interest in the lives of the Saints. These I would read often and found their lives very inspiring and edifying. My love for Our Lady was increasing and I loved to read of Her Apparitions – of the recent ones – especially of Our Lady of Fatima. This great Apparition of our century was what inspired me the most and I read everything I could about it.34

Kamm’s interest in Fatima and Marian devotion was not unusual during the early 1960s.35 Books like the Dominican Thomas McGlynn’s *Vision of Fatima*,36 first published in Australia in 1951, had become popular devotional reading of the kind alluded to by Kamm.37 In 1951 Archbishop of Melbourne Daniel Mannix had established the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima, founded by New Jersey priest Fr. Harold Colgan in 1946, at the parish of Our Lady of Victory in Camberwell and it had grown in size


over the subsequent decade (Kamm was later to join this group as a young adult). Moreover, perhaps most importantly of all, the Family Rosary Crusades, led by visiting American priest Fr. Patrick Peyton, had drawn record numbers in 1951 and 1953 attracting thousands of Catholics to public rallies at locations like the Melbourne Cricket Ground, and popularising the daily family Rosary with the slogan “the family the prays together, stays together.”

For Archbishop Mannix, intensely committed to the anti-communist crusade through his patronage of the Catholic Social Studies Movement (‘The Movement’), Peyton’s message was timely and amply captured the spirit of the period. As he told his flock in 1951:

At this time of international confusion and unrest, of internal strife and religious persecution, the world seeks vainly for a return to peace. True peace can come from God alone; it will be given to those who ask for it prayerfully and confidently. The world will be led back to Christ through prayer, especially the prayer of the Rosary, for history has repeatedly proved the irresistible power of the Rosary against the enemies of God.

Mannix’s words, like those of Peyton and others, captured the cultural timbre of Cold War Catholicism, an apocalyptically tinged message which was to mark sectors of the Catholic community well into the 1960s and in some cases beyond. Moreover, as the auspicious year of 1960 approached, those Catholics who had become aware of the messages of Fatima popularised in devotional literature like McGlynn’s book during the 1940s and 1950s became increasingly excited as the date of 1960 approached, eagerly awaiting the release of the famed “Third Message” slated for release at that date. This message would not be released until 2000, leading to belief among some conservative Catholics of a cover-up accompanied by complex

---

conspiracy theories pertaining to its content which persist into the present. Kamm would later actively promote many of these theories, especially those propagated by the controversial traditionalist priest Fr. Nicholas Gruner.

Mannix and other Catholic cold warriors were certainly aware that Peyton’s crusade, while ostensibly devotional, was not lacking in a political dimension. Indeed, subsequent studies have demonstrated the extent to which Peyton was in the pay of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) through this period. As such, Peyton’s sentiments found an appreciative audience in an atmosphere where politically engaged anti-communist sentiment amongst Roman Catholics had reach fever pitch, not least in Melbourne, over the course of the 1950s, encouraged by the often apocalyptic rhetoric of News Weekly, the widespread activities of B.A. Santamaria’s Movement, and events like the Petrov defections.

Fatima became the devotional wing of wider Roman Catholic anti-communism. This heady atmosphere of anti-communist hysteria combined with enthusiasm for Marian apparitions and the importance of the Rosary as a weapon against communism left a lasting impression on Kamm and his followers in the early 1980s, even though Kamm himself was far too young to have become involved with its more active political dimension. The Fatima devotions of the 1950s – including calls for the consecration of Russia to Mary’s Immaculate Heart, First Saturday devotions in reparation for the world’s sins, and speculation about the content of the ‘Third Message’

42 See Zimdars-Swartz, Encountering Mary, 206-219. For the complex conspiracy theories which emerged following this see the biography of their chief promoter, Fr. Nicholas Gruner, F Alban, Fatima Priest: Priest, Prophecy and Peril...The Vatican Key to Peace or Terror, Pound Ridge, Good Counsel Publications, 1997 and the discussion in M Cuneo, The Smoke of Satan: Conservative and Traditionalist Dissent in Contemporary American Catholicism, New York, Oxford University Press, 1997, 134-152.


45 This thesis is most strongly stated in N Perry and L Echeverría, Under the Heel of Mary, London, Routledge, 1988, 231-257.

46 Some of Kamm’s many older followers were, however, involved with aspects of this anti-communist activity.
– were all to feature prominently in Kamm’s locutions during later years.\textsuperscript{47} Pilgrims to the shrine established by Kamm and his followers claimed to have witnessed the miracle of the sun (first witnessed by pilgrims at Fatima on October 13, 1917) and the famous motto the Family Rosary Crusade cited above was to feature as one of the key aims of the MWOA.\textsuperscript{48}

The often-striking parallels between the apocalyptic mindset of Kamm’s followers in the early 1980s and that held by the clandestine cells of the Movement in the 1950s do not end there. Certain aspects of Kamm and his followers’ plans in the 1980s to established self-sufficient farming communities in Nowra and Gilgandra in Western N.S.W. were not without a 1950s predecessor in the short-lived farming cooperatives and aims of the National Catholic Rural Movement (NCRM).\textsuperscript{49} Indeed, even the unsettling revelations about the construction of catacombs and weapons training by some of Kamm’s followers out of fear of a communist invasion during the heightened atmosphere stoked by U.S. President Ronald Reagan in the early 1980s were not without a 1950s precedent. According to Paul Ormond, in the 1950s some Movement associates formed “local militia, with regular training, to resist the communist takeover,”\textsuperscript{50} and earlier sectarian rumours occasionally re-emerged at the time that Archbishop Mannix still had a substantial armoury and tunnels hidden under Raheen!\textsuperscript{51} Strange as such notions might appear today, belief in an impending communist invasion was as real in the 1950s and early 1960s for many Catholics, as it was for Kamm and his associates in the early 1980s, and it is worth remembering that an apocalyptic rhetoric of an impending communist threat persisted in issues of \textit{News Weekly} well into the 1960s.\textsuperscript{52}


\textsuperscript{50} P Ormonde, \textit{The Movement}, Sydney, Nelson, 1972, 19.

\textsuperscript{51} On these earlier rumors see J Franklin, G O Nolan, and M Gilchrist, \textit{The Real Archbishop Mannix from the Sources}, Ballarat, Connor Court, 2015, 207.

\textsuperscript{52} See e.g. Ormond, \textit{The Movement}, 160f.
Returning to Kamm’s biography. The family’s sojourn in Sunshine was relatively short-lived, and amid some dramatic events involving Kamm’s stepfather and an attempted kidnapping, the family again relocated in 1965, this time to the growing industrial city of Wollongong. In Wollongong, Kamm’s devotion to the Virgin Mary and his exposure to the distinct forms of religiosity which were to inform the founding of the MWOA continued to develop, influenced by the distinct religious ecology of the diocese.

By age sixteen Kamm had left school, become an altar boy, and begun to attend Mass more frequently. By seventeen he was attending daily Mass, and he became acquainted with a number of the priests serving at the local cathedral of St. Francis Xavier. It soon became clear to these priests that Kamm had what the late Fr. Leo Stevens later described as “a strong interest in apparitions approved by the Church and numerous alleged apparitions,” though at the time the nature of Kamm’s devotional piety still remained within the bounds of acceptable practice. Still Father Stevens later claimed that: “I advised him to give less emphasis to apparitions in his religious life.”53 In Wollongong, Kamm also became exposed to the diversity of ethnic devotional practices which waves of migrants had brought with them from Southern and Eastern Europe – the very regions where the post-War Marian revival discussed above had been most intensely felt. Indeed, it was around this time that Kamm first became aware of his Italian paternity, having hitherto believed his German stepfather was his biological father.

Kamm continued to regularly attend Mass over the period of his adolescence at the Wollongong cathedral. However, by the early 1970s he had become a parishioner at Unanderra, a parish known for its Marian devotion and active Italian migrant population. The Immaculate Conception Parish had come under the authority of the Scalabrinian Fathers – an order explicitly charged with the care of Italian migrants abroad – in 1952 and they continued to exercise pastoral responsibility in the parish until 1977 when Fr. Stevens became the first diocesan parish priest. Despite passing from the hands of the Scalabrinians, even in 1988, when an official history of the Church in the Illawarra was written for its 150th anniversary, the parish was still known for its strong Marian culture and the remained the parish of choice for many of the migrants employed at the nearby Port

53 Fr. Leo Stevens, Statement re Wilhelm Kamm, n.d. – author’s collection
By the mid-1970s some regions of the Diocese of Wollongong had a population of nearly 80% migrants and when Kamm’s family arrived in the mid-1960s the diocese already had more than twelve resident or visiting ethnic or migrant chaplains serving a diverse range of groups. Unsurprisingly with the influx of successive waves of migrants from Italy, Croatia, the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, and later Lebanon, coupled with the diocese’s dedication to the Immaculate Heart of Mary by Pope John XXIII in 1959, Kamm continued to encounter an old-world brand of Marian devotion like that he had already experienced among Italian migrants in Sunshine and Renmark, with communal displays of piety in the form of Rosary processions, the communal festa, and pilgrimages to Marian shrines like the grotto built to Our Lady of Lourdes in Earlwood (Sydney). These public expressions of migrant devotion, which continue today, were to provide a model for the program of monthly Atonement days of prayer held by the MWOA on the thirteenth day of each month beginning in December 1984.

While these ethnic groups brought a plethora of local devotions and pious practices from their home countries, the high concentration of displaced persons, later known as “New Australians,” did not come without its difficulties; not least for the episcopal hierarchy whose assimilationist approach often ran counter to Vatican policies and caused tensions with migrant communities. For many migrants a perception certainly existed – among both laity and priests – that a still predominantly Irish hierarchy was not always sympathetic or accommodating to the pastoral needs of Southern and Eastern European parishioners, or of their distinctive local devotional customs, which were occasionally dismissed as superstitious or

56 Indeed, it is worth noting that even today the Marian Shrine located on the margins of the Diocese of Wollongong at Penrose Park (near Berrima) remains a hub of traditional Marian devotion. Monthly ‘Fatima Days’ continue to attract pilgrims in their hundreds, if not thousands. See E Skurjat, *Shrine of Our Lady of Mercy of Jasna Gora Berrima-Penrose Park*, [Berrima-Penrose Park N.S.W.], The Pauline Fathers Monastery, n.d.
This policy of assimilation, which existed from the top-down well into the 1980s, often exacerbated ethnic differences and led to a distrust of local clergy by some migrant Catholics. While a ghetto situation like that which existed amongst some European migrants in the United States never completely emerged, many ethnic communities did retreat inwards and opt for their compatriots as priests and fellow parishioners. When this was not possible, the reminiscences of migrants from places like Italy and Poland frequently attest the challenges occasioned by differences in attitudes and customs amongst Australian Catholics and those familiar to migrants in their homelands. Moreover, the lax behaviour of many laypeople and priests in Australian parishes often scandalized these migrants.58

The reception of communion in the hand – a practice that was to figure prominently in early conflicts between Kamm’s followers and the mainly Irish priests in Nowra – was a case in point. Reception of the Eucharist in the hand was permitted in Australia in late September 1975 after the bishops petitioned Rome for an indult allowing this practice; though it is important to note that this did not take place without a degree of protest from more conservative bishops like Bishop Bernard Stewart of the Diocese of Sandhurst.59 The practice of reception of the Eucharist in the hand was considered especially problematic for European (and other) migrants who had been reared in an atmosphere of Eucharistic devotion and among whom the doctrine of the Real Presence was still held in significantly greater awe than among their arguably more secularized Australian coreligionists. Indeed, some migrants were even scandalized by the frequency with which Australians received the sacrament (and the implication that this had not been preceded by confession), with one telling sociologist Adrian Pittarello “here people go to communion as if it were a sport.”60

Similarly, while modest dress in churches was the norm in the intensely Catholic countries of Italy, Poland, and Croatia, in Australia migrants were

58 Turner, Catholics in Australia, vol. 2, 192-204.
often shocked by the loose dress standards they encountered in church, as one migrant lamented in an interview with Naomi Turner “some even wear thongs to Mass.”61 As with the reception of communion (and the requirement that this be accompanied by frequent confession), the need for modest dress in church became a frequent topic in Kamm’s early locutions and demonstrates what emerged as a major difference in religious practice between the migrant and devotionally inclined associates of Kamm and the wider Church.62 Religious gatherings held by the MWOA featured strict dress codes, according to a locution received by Kamm from the Virgin Mary on September 4, 1984: “no woman is to be allowed on the Sacred Grounds without headgear. No see-through clothes, short skirts, slacks, short sleeves and the sort.”63

While it is important to acknowledge that a significant portion of Kamm’s followers, particularly in the historically mainly Irish parish of Nowra, were of Irish-Australian extraction, it is suggestive that some of the initial conflicts between Kamm’s followers occurred with the predominantly Irish clergy serving St. Michael’s Parish.64 Early conflict, in particular, emerged with the indomitable Mgr. John Purcell (affectionately known as “the Mons”), an Irish priest in the traditional mould described by a contemporary as “a ‘fierce’ man: not in the sense of being ferocious, or at least not too often, but in a sense of being determined, serious, dedicated.”65 Mgr. Purcell was not averse to publicly criticising Kamm. As early as 1985 he publicly labelled Kamm an “imposter,” who the Monsignor believed “might be suffering from an overdose of imagination or from delusions.”66 Moreover, the Monsignor was not above criticising the MWOA in the media for disobedience, refusing members communion and private confession, and on occasion ridiculing what he believed were fanatical and unhealthy displays of piety which focused too heavily on the supernatural and outward

62 See e.g. Highlights from the Messages from Heaven given to the Little Pebble, vol. 1, 17f.
63 Our Lady Comes to Australia flyer advertising the Shrine of Our Lady of Ark, Mary Our Mother Help of Christians, n.d. – author’s collection.
65 Flaherty and O’Keefe, The Church in the Illawarra, 258.
displays of devotion.67

In addition to the more conservative values and standards of reverence often exhibited by migrant communities with whom Kamm associated, Italian migrants had also brought with them largely peasant traditions of local Madonnas, devotion to particular local saints or holy people, and a distinct preference for what might best be called a dolorous spirituality; all popular forms of spirituality largely organized by and for the laity and often outside the direct supervision of the institutional Church.68 Among other distinct aspects, Southern Italian devotional piety had a long tradition of focusing on the importance of spiritual (often accompanied by physical) suffering for the reparation of sins, especially as exhibited by a holy person – such as either a stigmatic or a victim soul – as well as the veneration of the Virgin as Our Lady of Sorrows and intense spiritual meditations on the Passions of Christ.69

Kamm was strongly influenced by these kinds of devotional traditions, especially the growth in popularity of devotion to figures like the Franciscan stigmatic Padre Pio and the German stigmatic and visionary Therese Neumann during the 1960s.70 As Kamm wrote of his teenage years:

I was fascinated by the life of a Holy stigmatic Priest of Pietralcina (sic.), called Padre Pio, of Italy. This holy man was known throughout the world as a Prophet and Seer. He had the gifts of reading souls and was famous as a Confessor. People travelled all over the world to confess to him and to ask his advice, and many applied to be his spiritual children. I was completely overawed by


such a man who carried the wounds of Our Lord. It was to me like seeing a manifestation of Heaven on Earth.\textsuperscript{71}

While Padre Pio, canonized in 2002, was the most popular of the kinds of holy men and women esteemed in Southern Italian devotions, he was by no means atypical except in the extent of his devotional cult.\textsuperscript{72} The kinds of supernatural experiences described in popular works on Padre Pio – bilocation, his co-salvific suffering, his reception of the stigmata, his visions, his conflicts with demonic forces, and his intense prayer life – were common to early European traditions surrounding holy people and saints.\textsuperscript{73} In the eyes of his devotees, what set Padre Pio apart from earlier exemplars was that he had been granted a much wider range of these spiritual graces than earlier exemplars.

The image of the suffering holy man exemplified by Padre Pio – a Christ-like figure capable of extraordinary spiritual feats and supernatural abilities – was to feature heavily in Kamm’s own interpretation of his spiritual mission. Kamm would later claim to have received the graces of bilocation, the stigmata, and even to have received heavenly visions of Padre Pio.\textsuperscript{74} Moreover, the locutions given to him for his closest followers (the ‘Inner Circle’) would include a frequent emphasis on the importance of suffering for the reparation of sin, especially as victim souls, a model of reparatory piety that became less popular in the post-conciliar era.\textsuperscript{75}

However, the importance of devotion to Padre Pio, and these traditional modes of reparatory piety, held among Kamm and his later associates during the 1970s, was not limited to a traditional model of sanctity. Such ideas also linked them with a wider spiritual milieu – a devotionally oriented conservative manifestation of Catholicism suspicious of aspects of the

\textsuperscript{71} Kamm, \textit{The Testament and Mystical Life of William Kamm}, vol. 1, 6.
\textsuperscript{74} See e.g. \textit{Highlights from the Messages from Heaven given to the Little Pebble}, Vol. 2, 22-23. Kamm, \textit{The Testament of the Mystical Life of William Kamm}, vol. 1, 182f.
Vatican II reforms and perhaps best referred to as “selective traditionalism.” This subculture was, in the words of Swiss historian Jean-François Mayer, characterised by “opposition to some aspects of the reforms brought about by the Second Vatican Council but no rejection of the council itself.” 76

**Kamm and Selective Traditionalism**

Aside from the appeal which the model of sanctity illustrated by Padre Pio had amongst Kamm and his later followers, equally important in the present context is that the developing cult of Padre Pio also became a focal point of wider conservative tendencies emerging during the period of Vatican II and after and heavily promoted by messages from a number of the unapproved Marian apparitions which occurred during the 1960s; notably those of Conchita González at Garabandal, Spain (1961 to 1965), and of Rosa Quattrini (“Mama Rosa”) at San Damiano, Italy (1962). While sometimes referred to as “selective traditionalism,” the Dutch anthropologist Peter Jan Margry instead labels these links between various conservative sectors of the Church “the ‘Protest’ camp” and describes Padre Pio’s role in it thus:

> It was precisely the condemnations by the Vatican and the way that the Padre and his devotees went ahead ‘against the judgement of their betters’ that made Padre Pio a standard bearer. Everywhere he was appropriated by groups which themselves were developing a critical stance to the Catholic Church and/or the renewal within it, and through them he was brought into the context of ‘deviant’ devotions. Here, incorporation into fundamentalist religious movements in and around the Church was possible, a movement which contributed to the faster and broader dissemination of the Pio cult77

Much of the later material distributed by Kamm and his associates during the 1970s, coupled with their establishment of the MWOA prayer groups, mirrors the same diffuse set of spiritual practices which informed the

---


77 Margry, ‘Merchandising and sanctity’, 96.
emerging Padre Pio prayer groups discussed by Margry. By the late 1960s the figure of Padre Pio had become the centre of a loose network of prayer groups in parishes around the world, many of which also shared an interest in Marian apparitions and other supernatural phenomena coupled with varying degrees of disquiet surrounding the implementation of reforms following Vatican II and their impact on traditional forms of devotion.78

While like many other private para-church prayer groups most were quite orthodox in their beliefs and practices, others became seedbeds for the growth of all manner of fringe devotional practices surrounding weeping statues, bleeding crucifixes, demonic possession, and a resistance to change within the Church. This can be partially attributed to the rising number of publicly distributed private revelations which condemned practices like communion in the hand. Moreover, such groups drew heavily on what Margry calls the “instrumental” and “traditional” modes of piety so important to Southern Italians, where prayer took on an almost magical role in providing healing and protection, where displays of thaumaturgy became synonymous with personal sanctity.79

Kamm, like numerous others in this developing spiritual milieu, became fascinated with the controversial apparitions at San Damiano, with its harsh condemnation of communion in the hand, and with the apparitions at Garabandal, with their apocalyptic emphasis on an impending “Great Warning” a supernatural event where the entire world would experience “an interior realization of one’s sins.”80 Reflecting on this period in the early 1970s Kamm wrote:

I began to follow the Messages of well known Marian Seers, e.g. Mamma (sic.) Rosa of San Damiano, in Italy, a most famous Apparition of recent times. She was a friend of Padre Pio, the renowned stigmatist. I myself wrote to Padre Pio about my sick mother, and he responded by sending me part of a mitten he had used on his wounded hand, and my mother was cured of gall stones.81


80 On these apparitions see Zimdars-Swartz, Encountering Mary, 92-162 and 233.

By this stage, Kamm had already experienced his first vision in 1968, and was moving toward the establishment of the MWOA prayer groups. This period immediately following Vatican II witnessed the first signs of decline in traditional devotional practices and many conservative Roman Catholics were beginning to speak of a crisis in the Church following on from the conciliar reforms, as Kamm reflected on this period:

While reading many of the private revelations through the current Seers of the world at that time, I began to realise we were living at the ‘End of Time’ and that there were many abuses in the Catholic Church, especially since the Second Vatican Council. When I saw these abuses practised by Bishops, Priests and other Religious I would begin a campaign of correcting it by trying to talk to Parish Priests, or the Bishop of that Diocese. This of course caused me to have many altercations with the Diocese Hierarchy.\(^{82}\)

The Marian Work of Atonement

By his late adolescence Kamm was displaying an intense religiosity heavily indebted to these strands of traditional Catholicism. On Easter Sunday, 1968, the seventeen-year-old Kamm experienced his first locution following Mass at the Cathedral. Kamm heard a voice claiming to be God the Father and noting:

William, My son: be not afraid for this is your God speaking to you. You have nothing to fear for I am with you always. I am giving you knowledge of what you are going to do for Me. I have chosen you to be a leader of men; many men will follow you as you will bring them into the Father’s House. You will suffer much and become a great and Holy Saint. You will be married and have children, and you will set an example of how a Holy Family should be like – the example of the Holy Family. Through your influence many will be saved. Be strong and never lose faith.\(^{83}\)

The vision, according to another source, also noted that Kamm “would do battle with the anti-Christ and that [he] would be heavily persecuted.”\(^{84}\) Kamm did not notify anyone of this experience until almost a year later,


when he consulted a priest who suggested that: “it probably meant that he [Kamm] was close to God and left it at that.”85 He later claimed to have also approached Norman Cardinal Gilroy in 1970, who gave a similarly non-committal response but did encourage Kamm to seek out a priest for spiritual direction. In response to this intense religious experience, Kamm became involved in para-church organizations in Wollongong and Sydney, noting in his biography that he joined the Blue Army of Our Lady, the Our Lady of Lourdes organization, and became a Franciscan Tertiary. Kamm even considered a priestly vocation with the Franciscans, but was considered unsuitable for being, in his own words, “too religious.”86

Following a brief but intensive involvement with the recently established Charismatic Renewal Movement (CCR) – itself another major platform for the dissemination of locutions and literature on supernatural phenomena, especially the immensely popular apparitions at Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina which began in 1981 87– Kamm established the MWOA prayer groups in 1972 in an attempt to make reparation for the sins of society and the Church. These groups, at their peak numbering around fourteen, existed on the margins of parish life and usually took place in the homes of members. The aims of the MWOA, according to an internal document, were fivefold and involved the formation of prayer groups “to make reparation for the sins of the world”; to form family prayer groups noting that “the family that prays together, stays together”; to “spread and promote the current and previous Apparitions of Our Lord and Our Lady”; to “unite all Marian workers” and finally “to love and support the Pope, Bishops and Priests.”88

Each group was dedicated to a figure like Padre Pio or in some cases an unapproved apparition like Garabandal, and drew their membership from across the dioceses of Wollongong, Sydney, and Canberra. The MWOA continued to build up a following over the course of the 1970s among devotionally inclined Catholics seeking an outlet for forms of devotion they felt were being neglected by the mainstream Church. When the groups came to the attention of Bishop Murray a priest at the Cathedral in Wollongong was asked to attend. He later informed the Bishop that “he saw no harm

being done – the meeting consisted merely in the recitation of traditional prayers.”\textsuperscript{89} However, this peaceful situation was not to last and the rapid pace of change engulfing the Church was about to send the MWOA on a collision course with the Diocese of Wollongong.

**Private Revelation and the ‘Crisis in the Church’**

As the 1970s progressed the Church in Australia and internationally changed rapidly, many Catholics disturbed by both the pace and content of the changes began to believe that Pope Paul VI had spoken prophetically when he famously remarked: “the Smoke of Satan has entered the temple of God.”\textsuperscript{90} These changes provoked among Kamm and those around him a more critical stance toward the Church and an increasing focus on contemporary locutions from a succession of seers that displayed an increasingly bleak assessment of the state of the Church, often leavened with various anti-communist conspiracy theories regarding the Vatican and its developing approach to Ostpolitik.\textsuperscript{91} For migrant Catholics who had escaped communism, and those like Kamm who felt the marked decline in traditional devotion acutely, such changes and accommodations were unconscionable and they sought succour in various locutions which condemned such developments or explained them through a conspiratorial lens.

This period has been described by sociologist and priest Fr. Andrew Greeley as a “secondary revolution” whereby lay and clerical reformers sought to go beyond the Vatican II degrees – invoking the “Spirit of Vatican II” – to implement often iconoclastic changes in church life.\textsuperscript{92} Greeley neatly summarises some of the more visible manifestations of this reforming zeal which alienated man devotionally inclined Catholics:

\textsuperscript{89} Anon., *Report on Mr William Kamm Otherwise Known as ‘The Little Pebble’*, n.d. 1.

\textsuperscript{90} ‘Be Strong in the Faith’, *L’Osservatore Romano*, Weekly (English) ed., 13/7/1972.


\textsuperscript{92} On this topic see E Campion, ‘Vatican II: fifty years on’. *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* vol. 33, 2012, 105-114.
The leaders of this secondary revolution banned statues, stained glass windows, votive candles, crucifixes, and representational art from new or remodelled churches. They rejected popular devotions like May crowning, processions, First Communions, incense, classical polyphony, and Gregorian chant. They dismissed the rosary, angels, saints, the souls in purgatory, and Mary the mother of Jesus. They considered these old customs and devotions liturgically or ecumenically or politically incorrect. 93

As Greeley notes, many of these actions went far beyond what was called for in the conciliar documents themselves and left many older or more conservative Catholics bereft. As one later follower of Kamm succinctly described the situation later “we were led to Kamm’s brand of Catholicism because we were mourning the death of our faith.”94

One, however, unintended consequence of this period of modernization was the increasing scope permitted to lay initiatives in the life of the Church, as envisioned in the conciliar decree Apostolicam Actuositatem. This led to interesting results, especially when coupled with a decision by Pope Paul VI in late December, 1966 to rescind Canon 1399 of the 1917 Code of Canon Law which forbade publications “which described new apparitions, revelations, prophecies and miracles and the launching of new devotions even where these were alleged to be of a private nature,”95 and also Canon 2318 removing the possibility of being sanctioned for frequenting an unapproved apparition site.96 While this was ostensibly a pastoral decision to bring the situation in line with the Council’s emphasis on increased lay participation, it ultimately had unintended consequences. Among other things it led to the wider distribution of private revelations than had hitherto been the case and the emergence of a new generation of Marian visionaries like Kamm who were uncomfortable with the changes wrought by the Council and its implementation and who were largely unimpeded by the threat of Church sanction or censure against their claims. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had, in practice if not on paper, lost its teeth and its ability to censor publications or impose sanctions on controversial visionaries. All manner of documents began to circulate citing this decision

94 Webber, A Wolf Among Sheep, 28.
95 Laurentin, Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary Today, 5.
as a justification for publishing critical material. The result was that the floodgate was opened to a tsunami of private revelations critical of the post-conciliar changes and calling for a return to traditional forms of devotion.

Like those who became involved in groups like the developing Society of St. Pius X or more radical sedevacantist and schismatic groups like the Palmarian Catholic Church of the Holy Face, during the 1970s Kamm and his associates became immersed in what the Canadian sociologist Michael Cuneo has called the “netherworld of American Catholicism.” This milieu is best described as less of an organized movement than a devotional subculture which embraced a number of loosely related interests ranging from miraculous phenomena like the stigmata, apparitions, and the private revelations of various seers, to end-time prophecies and an obsession with an impending and cataclysmic coming chastisement. Linked together by a shared communication structure of prayer groups, devotional periodicals, and photocopied locutions distributed worldwide through faxes and post, this subculture burgeoned in the 1970s among disaffected Catholics and created a reactionary backlash against conciliar renewal which often perplexed Church authorities.

From the early 1970s Kamm had read extensively in this area, and like many in this subculture became fascinated by popular works on prophecy emerging out of this situation of newfound liberty for visionaries amid the post-conciliar reforms. Perhaps the most influential work here was the widely read book *Catholic Prophecy* by French émigré to Australia Yves Dupont, which collated centuries of private revelations regarding the end-times and the circumstances that would accompany them, and which

97 On this curious visionary sect see M Lundberg, ‘Fighting the Modern with the Virgin Mary: The Palmarian Church’. *Nova Religio* vol. 17, no. 2, 2013, 40-60. Kamm had initially supported the locutions of their leader but later rejected the group, see Kamm, *The Testament and Mystical Life of William Kamm*, vol. 1, 17.


100 Kamm’s reading habits were reported by a former housemate from the 1970s in Borham and Maiolo, ‘Prophet and Loss’. 
became something of a classic among reactionary Catholics. Dupont’s popular volume, together with his short-lived but influential periodical *World Trends*, brought together what has been described by one scholar as the “underground tradition of Catholic millennialism,” comprised of a series of popular prophecies dating back to late antiquity, with a new set of apparitions from the twentieth century, including visions attributed to figures like Padre Pio and more importantly the series of apparitions given under the title Our Lady of the Roses at Bayside, New York, beginning in 1970. While Dupont died in 1976, his magazine and booklets continued to circulate among those involved in this growing Marian subculture, including in the Diocese of Wollongong.

**Kamm and Bayside**

Already deeply immersed in this network of groups promoting unapproved apparitions like San Damiano, Garabandal, and the Cold War apparition at Necedah in Wisconsin, in the late 1970s Kamm and his associates in the MWOA became actively involved in the circulation and promotion of a variety of controversial and anti-conciliar literature. Soon Kamm became particularly devoted to a series of the highly contested apparitions and locutions then taking place in the suburb of Bayside in the borough of Queens, New York, an association which was to prove controversial both for Kamm and for the growing number of supporters at the Bayside shrine of Our Lady of the Roses.

At Bayside, the housewife turned visionary Veronica Lueken began to experience private revelations in 1968 and in 1970 she began to receive locutions allegedly from the Virgin Mary. As time progressed these messages became increasingly apocalyptic and conspiracy driven, detailing, in the words of American folklorist Daniel Wojcik: “a wide range of various satanic influences in American society, including discussions of things like rock music, drugs, immodest dress, sex education, television,

---


the Illuminate, UFOs, and test tube babies." Unsurprisingly, given this apocalyptic and conspiratorial content, the group soon attracted negative attention from the Diocese of Brooklyn, who undertook a preliminary investigation into the group in 1973.

The results of the investigation were not made public, but it resulted in a negative assessment (a case of constat de non supernaturalitate), but in 1974 the Bayside devotees were forced by the Church, and frustrated local residents upset by traffic congestion and litter, to move their premises from the grounds of St Robert Bellarmine’s Church to nearby Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. Eventually on November 4, 1986, Bishop Francis Mugavero of Brooklyn issued a decree against the group encouraging parishioners to avoid participating in the activities of the group or reading their literature. Despite these setbacks, however, the group had already developed an extensive international following, and to this day the self-described ‘Baysiders’ remain a divided but active presence in the American Church.

In Australia, the content of the Bayside messages became a matter of concern to the Australian Episcopal Conference (AEC) in late 1975 after then secretary Fr. (later Bishop) Patrick Dougherty began to receive copies of the Quebecois pro-Bayside broadsheet Michael from various diocesan priests who noted the increased regularity with which it was appearing in a number of rural parishes. This material was disturbing parishioners as it contained details of the most sensational of Veronica Lueken’s locutions in which she claimed that Pope Paul VI had been replaced by an actor who had

106 A copy of Bishop Mugavero’s decree can be found in J J LeBar, Cults, Sects, and the New Age, Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, 1989, 209-211.
undergone plastic surgery to look like the Pope, and that a malevolent and powerful clique of cardinals were directing this imposter. Fr. Dougherty subsequently initiated inquiries with the Diocese of Brooklyn to trace the origins of this material and was notified by Mgr. James P. King, Chancellor of the Diocese of Brooklyn who replied: “It is the considered opinion of the authorities of this Diocese of Brooklyn that nothing miraculous is happening there [i.e. at Bayside] and we discourage people from going.”

Fr. Dougherty also made inquiries with the Diocese of Saint-Hyacinthe in Quebec and was informed that the group distributing the material, identified as the Pilgrims of St Michael (usually known as the “White Berets”\textsuperscript{110}), had sought no permission to distribute this material. The chancellor of Saint-Hyacinthe, Fr. André Boucher, described the group as: «Ce sont intégristes, très attachés au passé. Ces catholiques ont une grande dévotion envers la Vierge Marie et mettent beaucoup d’insistance sur des apparitions de la Vierge non reconnues officiellement par l’autorité ecclésiastique compétente.» Fr. Boucher went on to note that the distributors of the newspaper: «Ils sont en lien très étroit avec Mgr Lefebvre.»\textsuperscript{111} As a result of this the AEC agreed on a policy to discourage the promotion of these materials.\textsuperscript{112}

In this context, Kamm made two trips to Bayside, in late 1979 and again in 1980. He was expelled from volunteering at the shrine during his second visit under dubious circumstances.\textsuperscript{113} Upon his return to Wollongong Kamm

\textsuperscript{108} For the curious historical origins of this conspiracy theory see Cuneo, The Smoke of Satan, 159-161.


\textsuperscript{111} Fr. André Boucher, Letter to Fr. Patrick Dougherty, January 19, 1976 – author’s collection.

\textsuperscript{112} Details of the AEC response can be found in the file Apparitions: Bayside: 1973-1986, Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference Secretariat File Non. D[octrine] + M[orals] 92/425 Part 1. My thanks are due to Leonie Kennedy, Archivist at the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) and Fr. Brian Lucas, former secretary of the ACBC, for allowing me to examine this file. This file contains no mention of the activities of Kamm and his followers.

\textsuperscript{113} See Borham and Maiolo, ‘Prophet and Loss’. 260
and his followers began to actively distribute the *Roses* broadsheet, one of the official publications of the Our Lady of the Roses Shrine, as well similar material to the letterboxes of parishioners in the Diocese of Wollongong and wider afield. Kamm also began to give talks in private homes and even in some cases at the invitation of parish priests. It was at this point that the MWOA first encountered a kickback from the Diocese of Wollongong.

During the same period Kamm, like others involved in the Marian subculture, set himself up as a self-appointed watchdog for orthodoxy. Like those associated with the John XXIII Fellowship Cooperative who began to publish the magazine *Fidelity* in 1977 and other conservative groups,\(^{114}\) Kamm made note of instances of what he considered liturgical abuses or heresy among local priests and subsequently reported these to Bishop Murray, signing at least one of his letters “a very concerned Catholic.”\(^{115}\) While on occasion Bishop Murray conceded that Kamm’s complaints had some substance, he also cautioned Kamm regarding the gravity and potentially serious consequences of denouncing “a priest to his bishop as being a heretic or as being guilty of preaching heresy.”\(^{116}\) Unsurprisingly, Kamm’s letters did not endear him or his associates to the local clergy, and through his letter writing campaign, Kamm’s conservative attitudes became known to Bishop Murray, setting off a series of exchanges which were to influence future relations between the MWOA and their local bishop.

This is most clear in one of Bishop Murray’s replies to Kamm in January 1982. Kamm had complained about alleged Christological heresies preached by one of the priests at the Diocesan Cathedral, the refusal of communion kneeling and on the tongue to several of his associates in Campbelltown, and about “certain Priests in the Wollongong Diocese” who had referred to “those who follow these Apparitions [i.e. Bayside]…as crackpots.”\(^{117}\) Bishop Murray replied promptly and tactfully. In the first instance he tried to inform Kamm about the complexity of the *communicatio idiomatum* whilst assuring Kamm he would speak with the priest in question. In the second instance Bishop Murray agreed with Kamm that the priest in question should have allowed reception of the Sacrament kneeling and on the tongue.

---


However, with regard to Bayside, Bishop Murray was firm noting that: “With regard to the alleged apparitions at Bayside the Australian bishops have been advised by the Chancery Office of the Diocese of Brooklyn N.Y. as follows…” before quoting Mgr. King’s letter quoted above. Bishop Murray went on to write that:

Following this advice I discourage any promotion in this diocese of devotion relating to the alleged apparitions at Bayside, and I warn against the danger of dissemination of any literature concerning a devotion that does not have the official endorsement of the Catholic Church.118

Kamm did not heed Bishop Murray’s pastoral advice and continued to distribute and promote the Bayside material. Though by this time a number of Kamm’s MWOA associates were expressing doubts about his honesty and links to the wider Bayside movement.119

The Seer of Australia

According to Canadian traditionalist journalist Anne Cillis, who had been instrumental in Kamm’s expulsion from Bayside in 1980, Kamm had remarked on his departure that: “Well, I guess it’s time Australia got its own seer.”120 The accuracy or otherwise of this statement is unclear, and may simply represent the frequent backbiting and hyper-critical attitude exhibited among many involved in this conservative Catholic subculture, though several former members and even Kamm himself have confirmed aspects of Cillis’ story.121 Regardless, beginning on March 7, 1982, Kamm began to experience locutions from the Virgin Mary, who over the next year began to appear to Kamm more frequently. For example, on July 16, 1982 Kamm was informed that the property of his followers Bill and Joan Price in Bangalee was to become hallowed ground.122 Kamm first revealed these locutions to a meeting with the leaders of the fourteen MWOA prayer groups in December 1982. During this period he also revealed them to Fr. Stevens, who later described his response:

It was after he [Kamm] travelled to the United States and attended

119 Webber, A Wolf Among the Sheep, 32f.
120 Borham and Maiolo, ‘Prophet and Loss’.
121 Webber, A Wolf Among the Sheep, 32f.
122 Anon., The Story of Our Lady of the Ark Mission and the Little Pebble, 8.
the alleged apparitions at Bayside, New York, that he began to announce that he himself was also receiving apparitions and messages. I noted, and pointed out to him, the similarity between the format and phraseology of the Baysider events and those of Mr. Kamm.\textsuperscript{123}

In response to Kamm’s claims that he was a seer, a number of MWOA members left, but others remained, and on February 20, 1983, Kamm gathered between twenty and thirty of his followers at the home of the Price family at Bangalee in order to relay personal messages from the Virgin Mary for various MWOA members. This meeting marked the beginning of Kamm’s “Inner Circle” a group of privileged members of the wider prayer group network whose chief loyalty was to the unfolding mission and who during the predicted “great tribulation,” were expected “to ensure the survival of the hidden Church until the return of Jesus Christ.”\textsuperscript{124}

This event and the subsequent locutions received by Kamm for members of the “Inner Circle,” including instructions that some members should sell their homes or cease paid employment, were not welcomed by all members of the MWOA and over the ensuing eighteen months even more families and individuals hitherto supportive of Kamm left the movement.\textsuperscript{125} Worried about the direction the prayer groups were taking, or in some cases for their personal safety, a number of MWOA members wrote to Bishop Murray or other clergy about their concerns regarding Kamm’s new role as the “Seer of Australia,” his apparent lack of ongoing spiritual direction, and the instructions contained in the messages.

The reasons for some members’ misgivings become clear from one such the letter written by one MWOA member to Bishop Murray in October 1984 which reads in part:

\begin{quote}
From February onwards there was usually a meeting with William on the property [Bangalee] every two months. During these meetings the supposed plan from Heaven was gradually unfolded and soon we believed that 1) there was to be built at Nowra an underground shelter (catacombs) for the last days; 2) there were going to be 120 of us in the end – we were especially chosen ones from the whole world for all time which Our Lady had chosen for her own to
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{123} Fr. Stevens, \textit{Statement re Wilhelm Kamm}.
\textsuperscript{124} ‘Information for Members’, n.p.
\textsuperscript{125} On these defections and the early history of the MWOA see Webber, \textit{A Wolf Among Sheep}, 29-50.
“greet” her Son when He returned; 3) only four clerics were going to survive in Australia when a war and chastisement destroyed the land – this 4 included one Bishop (not yourself unfortunately!); 4) Atonement days of prayer were to be held each month on the 13th; 5) a Lourdes was to be established on the Price property where many would be cured and converted (there happens to be a spring on the property).126

Kamm’s autobiography does not deny these events or the concern which many of his associates had regarding the more dramatic content of his locutions. He notes that: “it was during this time that I began to have locutions and God revealed a Plan about having to build catacombs for the ‘Latter Days’.”127 Over the ensuing months Kamm claimed to receive around forty private messages for members of the “Inner Circle,” slowly unfolding the group’s mission to unite all the seers then receiving messages across the globe and “to lead the Church during its darkest hour.”128 These messages, later included as an appendix to a document penned by a disaffected Polish priest, Fr. Miroslaw Gebicki, who left the group in the early 1990s, included instructions to followers for building the catacombs, to continue promoting the messages from the Bayside apparition, and the maintenance of traditional devotional practices such as the prayer of a ninety-day Communion novena, the Nine First Saturday and the Nine First Friday devotions. In addition to this they also contained instructions for the four priests then tangentially involved with the MWOA.129

Meanwhile the group continued to set about the construction – which included dynamite blasting, much to the chagrin of a neighbouring family130 – of catacombs at the Bangalee property and another sizable property owned by member Albert Cooke in Gilgandra in the Diocese of Bathurst. Some members of the group also began to engage in military style exercises at the Gilgandra property in preparation for predicted attacks by enemies of the mission, a development which was later to lead to police scrutiny of the movement’s activities and concerns about a concealed cache of weapons
somewhere on one of the group’s properties.131

Our Lady Comes to Australia

Beginning on November 1, 1983, Kamm began to receive messages from the Virgin Mary for public distribution, and beginning on November 11, the group began to widely distribute these messages across Australia and abroad. Thematically and structurally similar to the locutions of earlier Marian seers at La Salette, Bayside, San Damiano, and Garabandal, Kamm’s first public message seethed with apocalyptic warnings against the kinds of lax religious and moral behaviour which had affronted Kamm and his associates over the course of the 1970s. Addressed “especially to the Roman Catholic Hierarchy and Priests” the message chastised the religious in no uncertain terms:

My sons, why have you left the road of love and sacrifice – the narrow road of My Divine Son, Jesus – which leads to life? Can you not see that you are on the road to perdition, and taking many souls with you? Are you so blind that you cannot read the Signs of the Times? My sons, turn back, while there is time, for soon the Divine Justice will be wrought! Remove yourselves from your lethargy and complacency…My sons and children, you must pray and do penance and atone for your sins which cry out for a heavy punishment.

Moreover, the people of Australia are singled out for criticism for “all sorts of atrocities and abominations in the sight of their God” and warned that Australia would “soon be devastated by disasters of natural disturbances and an invasion by enemy forces.” Like other messages dating back to La Salette, Kamm’s locution called on Catholics to turn away from sin and beseech God’s mercy and make atonement. In addition to this, like the messages from more recent seers like Mama Rosa and Conchita González, the message instructed the Bishops of Australia to “stop the abominations and sacrilegious practices being committed in My Son’s House,” singling out communion in the hand for particular criticism. The Church was warned that it was “standing at a crevasse” and must heed the messages of Our Lady, noting:

Listen to my Words which I have spoken through many Apparitions around the world – like Fatima, Lourdes, La Salette, Garabandal, San Damiano, Portavoz of Mexico, San Stephano, Bayside, Montichiari,

131 Webber, A Wolf Among the Sheep, 43f.
and many more.\textsuperscript{132} Further public messages, totalling nearly thirty by the end of 1984, were widely distributed in a broadsheet entitled \textit{Our Lady Comes to Australia}. Not only presenting criticisms of changes in the Church, but also advocating a return to traditional practices such as praying the Rosary, frequent confession, Eucharistic devotion, and the wearing of the brown scapular, as well as promoting the apparition of Our Lady of the Ark, Mary Our Mother Help of Christians (the preferred title of the MWOA).\textsuperscript{133} The messages soon began to make their way around the world through the group’s pre-existing contacts in the wider Marian devotional network and were eventually translated into other languages by enthusiasts.

The messages’ criticisms of the clergy, however, coupled with Kamm’s earlier practice of notifying Bishop Murray of what he deemed liturgical abuses by priests, worked against the developing movement, as Kamm himself concedes regarding many local priests: “I became a thorn in their side as I would complain about them to the Bishop.”\textsuperscript{134} It was upon the reception of these messages, coupled with concerns about what many around him considered Kamm’s lack of sufficient spiritual direction, that the small clique of priests hitherto indulgent of Kamm’s interest in Marian apparitions and apocalyptic predictions began to turn against Kamm: most notably retired Bishop Thomas W. Muldoon.

\textbf{Kamm and ‘The Bull’ Muldoon}

The elderly Bishop Thomas Muldoon, a figure notoriously referred to as ‘The Bull’ for his forthright and at times abrasive manner and his outspoken conservative leanings, had met Kamm in Sydney in 1980 through the Duffy family, who knew Bishop Muldoon from his work as a parish priest in Mosman and who became some of Kamm’s most devoted followers.\textsuperscript{135} Initially Bishop Muldoon treated Kamm and his associates with a degree of indulgence, clearly sympathetic to their demonstrable devotion to the Virgin

\textsuperscript{132} \textit{Highlights from the Messages from Heaven given to the Little Pebble}, Vol. 1, 1f.
\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Highlights from the Messages from Heaven given to the Little Pebble}, Vol. 1.
\textsuperscript{134} Kamm, \textit{The Testament and Mystical Life of William Kamm}, vol. 1, 47.
Mary. If letters preserved in Kamm’s autobiography are authentic, Bishop Muldoon may have even encouraged certain of the MWOA’s devotional activities. However, by late 1984 Bishop Muldoon had well and truly changed his tune, noting in an angry missive to Kamm written on October 30, 1984, that:

When you first brought this matter of locutions, visions, “messages” to me, I agonized over it for a long time and sought divine guidance in much prayer. I treated you with great charity and patience, while saying very little for or against, lest I should indeed be dealing with a true supernatural phenomenon. But as the months passed I became more and more convinced that the so-called “messages” are not authentic and that they lack objective reality. I am now confirmed in that judgment. The evidence against it all is too overwhelming. There is much more I could write, but this must suffice.

Muldoon further advised Kamm that he “must see Bishop Murray, explain what you were doing, and obtain his approval or blessing on the venture.”

In his autobiography Kamm would later claim that the now deceased Bishop Muldoon (who died of cancer in 1986) had been his spiritual director prior to their break in late 1984; a claim which Bishop Muldoon denied elsewhere in his letter to Kamm noting that since Kamm claimed his spiritual director was under a vow of silence: “I am most certainly not the spiritual director to whom you refer so often.”

From at least early 1984, Bishop Muldoon had kept Bishop Murray and two priests in Sydney and Maitland informed about his developing concerns regarding the MWOA, especially after Kamm’s first locutions went public in late 1983 contrary to the advice of Bishop Muldoon. It is clear from letters written at the time, however, that Muldoon’s originally benign and solicitous attitude toward Kamm’s Marian devotion had subsided by early October 1984. Bishop Muldoon had arrived at a characteristically forthright conclusion expressed in a handwritten note to Bishop Murray:

William Kamm is not evil. Nor does he deliberately set out to deceive people. I think he is subjectively sincere, but that he is deluded.

---

136 Kamm, *The Testament and Mystical Life of William Kamm*, vol. 1, 56-60. Since these letters are typed copies, rather than scanned originals, I have been unable to verify their authenticity. The other material quoted below is either handwritten or signed material on Bishop Muldoon’s personal stationary.


think he is a megalomaniac (perhaps without knowing it) and that he is an hallucinationist (sic.). I am afraid many people have been hurt, and more will be more so if he is not stopped.\textsuperscript{139}

Bishop Muldoon’s opinion was shared, though in less blunt terms, by four other priests who had initially been named in Kamm’s locutions to the “Inner Circle” as sympathetic: Fr. Leo Stevens, Fr. Michael Dargan, the Vincentian Fr. John Wilkinson, and Fr. Clement Gailey, all of whom had been approached by current or former members with concerns about the unfolding activities of the MWOA and in various ways distanced themselves from the group’s activities.\textsuperscript{140} Indeed, Bishop Muldoon’s letters, coupled with the letter of the follower quoted above, were only some of the worried correspondence which Bishop Murray and other clergy received from people associated with the MWOA over the course of 1983-1984 and with Kamm’s messages going public in November 1983 they began attracting negative attention further afield.

On May 20, 1983, Fr. Bill O’Shea’s ‘Question Box’ column in the Catholic Leader answered an inquiry about Kamm’s messages. Fr. O’Shea cautiously advised his correspondent that the material she had enclosed was “of a very dubious nature,” before outlining some of the traditional criteria utilised by the Church for assessing private revelations. He concluded that: “Midst all this nonsense, in fairness, there are appeals to such Gospel values as the need for prayer, repentance, self-sacrifice. But these do not give to the alleged apparitions the ring of authenticity.”\textsuperscript{141} Around a month later, on June 15, 1984, a nine-page report was penned by a Catholic barrister based in Sydney entitled Report on Messages being Distributed and Attributed to the Blessed Virgin Mary under the Title of Our Lady of the Ark which outlined at length several inconsistencies in Kamm’s locutions as well as canonical concerns based on the recently promulgated revised Code of Canon Law (1983).\textsuperscript{142} Matters were becoming more serious and through

\textsuperscript{140} Webber, \textit{A Wolf Among the Sheep}, 46f.
\textsuperscript{142} [Name Suppressed], \textit{Report on Messages being Distributed and Attributed to the Blessed Virgin Mary under the Title of Our Lady of the Ark}, June 15, 1984. The circumstances surrounding this report, or whether it was sent to Bishop Murray at the time, are unclear. The author of this report is still alive, but I have been thus far unable to make contact to clarify the circumstances surrounding its authorship.
various correspondence Bishop Murray had become aware that Kamm had told followers in a locution on October 7, 1984, that the Bangalee property of the Price family would become the “Lourdes of Australia,” and would be the place of “where Heaven’s graces will descend and where Mankind will be cured.” Furthermore, Bishop Murray knew that the group planned to publicize the location of the “Sacred Grounds” as a place for mass pilgrimage beginning on December 8.

Amid the growing number of complaints from former associates, questions from confused parishioners about the status of the messages contained in *Our Lady Comes to Australia*, and the fast approaching official opening of the apparition site at Bangalee, Bishop Murray sent copies of the messages he had received from Kamm to Fr. John Thornhill, a leading Marist theologian in Sydney who in 1983 had advised an AEC committee on the CCR convened by Bishop Joseph Wallace of Rockhampton. Due to his experience studying the CCR, in both its positive and negative aspects, and no inquisitor by any stretch, Fr. Thornhill was initially reluctant to be involved in such an investigation. However, after reading the material in question, he wrote to Bishop Murray:

As far as the content of the “messages” is concerned, my reading of the many broadsheets you included leads to the conclusion that their tenor in no ways conveys any consistent message worthy of God or of the Blessed Virgin which would call for a supernatural intervention. Rather they seem to reflect the personal preferences and preoccupations of someone with a rather old-fashioned and unhealthy religiosity.

Fr. Thornhill went on to succinctly analyse the “many bizarre elements” contained in the messages, including predictions of disasters as well as their sympathetic statements about Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, and noted that the messages contained: “nothing of the great renewal themes of the Vatican Council.” He concluded that: “I can only conclude that William Kamm is deluded, in the claims he is making,” and advised Bishop Murray “that a firm, succinct statement be made warning Catholics against the whole movement.”

143 *Highlights from the Messages from Heaven given to the Little Pebble*, vol. 1, 61.
145 My thanks to Fr. Thornhill for speaking with me on this matter.


Bishop Murray’s Response

Armed with this theological assessment, Bishop Murray’s response was, unlike other bishops faced with similar situations, decisive. Bishop Murray organized a meeting with Kamm through Fr. Stevens in November 1984 and notified him that should he not cease to distribute his messages Bishop Murray would be forced to issue a public statement against him. Kamm later wrote: “I told the Bishop I would obey God rather than him,” a response which became his usual reply to criticism from subsequent diocesan bishops over the next two decades. In response to this, on December 2, 1984, Bishop Murray issued a short pastoral letter entitled On the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, which was read at all Masses held in the diocese on the first Sunday of Advent.

Bishop Murray’s letter began by acknowledging the Diocese’s strong history of Marian Devotion and quoting Lumen Gentium LXVII on his desire that approved devotion remain a part of diocesan life, before moving on to the matter at hand. The letter went on to cite the Code of Canon Law (CIC 823) on his solemn duty “to condemn writings which harm true faith or good morals.” To Bishop Murray, Kamm’s locutions had become “a cause of serious unrest and disturbance” to many people and that “to claim that Faith and Morals are not involved in these matters would indicate a refusal to face reality.” In outlining his justification, Murray noted that Kamm’s messages had caused divisions in families of which Bishop Murray had “received numerous reports,” that the content of the messages focused on the “sensational, the unusual and upon fearsome predictions,” that the practices of the MWOA had become “eccentric” and “a cause of disturbance to other members of Christ’s faithful,” and that that the messages advocated “devotional practices” within the local Nowra parish which had not been approved by the parish priest or other local clergy. Unsurprisingly, given the focus it had received in Kamm’s initial message, Bishop Murray also criticised how the messages had contained “condemnations of practices regarding the reception of Holy Communion that have been permitted by the Church founded by Christ of which Mary is the Mother.”

The ultimate thrust of Murray’s assessment was contained in the classically worded phrase “no supernatural significance can be attached to the messages issued by the person calling himself ‘the Little Pebble’.” However, while Bishop Murray was critical of the messages, his manner of speaking was by no means pastorally insensitive, as he wrote:

147 Kamm, The Testament and Mystical Life of William Kamm vol. 1, 56.
I realise that many people in perfectly good faith have participated in prayers and devotions promoted by “The Little Pebble”. I do not in any way wish to censure or criticise them for this. I am sure that because of their sincerity their prayers would have been acceptable to Our Lord and His Blessed Mother. But for the future I strongly advise them to participate only in those devotions officially approved by the Church.

Moreover, he did not personally impugn Kamm, but rather noted, in concert with Bishop Muldoon’s less guarded comments, that he was “prepared to accept the possibility that the author of the abovementioned “messages” may be an innocent victim of self deception and not one who sets out deliberately to mislead others.”

The response to Bishop Murray’s letter, which was also published in the Catholic Weekly was predictably sensational. On December 8, 1984, the media descended upon the Price’s property at Bangalee where around 200 pilgrims had gathered. Front page headlines soon followed: “Virgin Mary Talks to Them!” and “Catholic Row.” Kamm and his associates remained defiant, with one member telling a local newspaper that: “Dr Murray has his nose a bit out of joint over this.” Other members suggested that they were already in the process of seeking support from Pope John Paul II in an effort to begin a canonical investigation of Kamm’s alleged apparition (they would have to wait a number of years before this took place and the conclusion reaffirmed Bishop Murray’s letter). Kamm, meanwhile, wrote to Bishop Murray in January 1985 criticising his treatment of the group. Despite Bishop Murray’s censure, pilgrims continued to attend the shrine of Our Lady of the Ark, Mary Our Mother Help of Christians, over the course of the 1980s and Kamm continued to be a figure of interest to the local media. However, for the purposes of this article, this is an appropriate place to conclude this chapter in the history of the MWOA.

148 Bishop William E. Murray, True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.
Conclusion

The subsequent history of what was to develop into the Order of Saint Charbel and its conflicts with the Church hierarchy in Wollongong and further afield certainly does not end here. What this article demonstrates is that while certainly eccentric and at times disturbing, the activities of William Kamm and his Marian Work of Atonement group represent a particularly curious episode in the post-war history of the Australian Church. While as the intense atmosphere of the early Cold War rescinded most Catholics quietly sidelined the rabid anti-communism of the period, Kamm and his associates clung tenaciously to this apocalyptic worldview. When the period of the early 1980s—with President Ronald Reagan’s rhetoric of the “Evil Empire”—occasioned a brief resurgence of anti-communist hysteria, Kamm found a ready audience amongst the dormant anti-communist tendencies existing within the ethnic communities of the Diocese of Wollongong and those who had imbibed the sensational material of the Bayside apparition.

At the same time, while at a parish level the implementation of the renewal envisioned by Vatican II progressed with little outward resistance amongst most Catholics, over the 1970s and early 1980s a reaction developed in conservative quarters against the more extreme reforms, including within the Vatican itself. 153 As this article has demonstrated, Kamm and his associates’ represent one more devotionally and supernaturally oriented strand of this wider conservative resurgence. While never explicitly repudiating the Council, Kamm and his associates saw the demonstrable decline in traditional devotional practices as a form of iconoclasm, a veritable “stripping of the altars,” and along with other sectors of the Church sought to turn back the clock and restore the Church of an earlier period.

Finally, the halcyon days of 1970s Australia witnessed a widespread liberalisation in Australian society under the Whitlam and (to a lesser degree) Fraser federal governments after two decades of conservative federal government. 154 While aspects of this “reinvention of Australia,” especially an increased emphasis on social justice, were often embraced within the Church, it also witnessed a reaction by those like Kamm and his associates who saw such changes as signs of moral decay and a rise


in indifferentism. The moral outrage expressed in the early messages – on topics like pornography, public nudity on beaches, homosexuality, immoral and blasphemous films, and especially abortion – excoriated the lax standards many conservatives believed were a manifestation of an increasingly sinful country, was arguably part of the gestalt of a wider conservative reaction to an Australia come of age.155

The sentiments expressed by Kamm and his associates are not, given the societal conditions of the time, as inexplicable as might initially appear. While by mainstream standards they are certainly marginal and at times bizarre, Kamm and MWOA represent an intriguing example of how one group of devout Australian Catholics made sense of the wider social and religious change witnessed by Australian society in the second half of the twentieth century. The MWOA were a group, as one former member articulated, who were mourning what they saw of as the death of their faith. Whether that was actually the case, and the Church was entering a state of almost terminal decline, is a matter of subjective opinion – and most historians would dispute, or at least qualify, whether the the Church has actually declined – what is certain is that Kamm and his followers have left a richly documented example of post-WWII Australian Catholic history worth further scrutiny.

155 See e.g. *Highlights from the Messages from Heaven given to the Little Pebble*, vol.1, 3f., 16, 25. 40f.
Jesus warned his followers to expect persecution and he spoke from experience: “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you” (John 15:18). And he gave some advice on what to do about it: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44)

And today, Christians have enemies aplenty, especially in Asia.

But Asia, as a geographic region, is a European invention. For some it stretches from the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Ocean to off the east coast of the Philippines. Asia Minor was no less a European designation, referring to what is now called the Middle East. East of where? Europe!

Asia’s north/south reach extends from the Torres Strait (the expanse of water south of Indonesia’s eastern Province of Irian Jaya) to somewhere near Vladivostok.

In common usage, Asia refers to those countries bordered by Pakistan in the west and the Philippines in the east, by Indonesia in the south and Japan, China and the Korean Peninsula in the north.

Whatever definition you take, Asia takes in more people, cultures, languages, religions, political arrangements and economic performances than any other continent on earth. And with the rate of economic development in the region outstripping the rest of the world, the 21st Century is often described as being the Asian Century. And it will be so for Christianity.

But referring to the continent in a unified way, as if it were in any way coherent, is actually not much help in understanding what actually life in Asian societies is like. What do Sri Lankans and Koreans have in common apart from being called Asians? Only their humanity really. What do Nepalis and Timorese share? About as much as Chinese and Indians, which is not a lot.

The Asian region is the founding place of some of the world’s great religious traditions Buddhism, Hinduism and the various religious and ethical traditions of China – Daoism and Confucianism. And if the old definition of Asia that included the Middle East applied and we added

* Michael Kelly is a Jesuit priest who is currently based in Bangkok where he is Executive Director of www.ucannews.com the Catholic Church’s online news and information service for Asia. Before leaving Australia in 2008, he was founder of Jesuit Communications (1989), publishers of Eureka Street and Australian Catholics, and founder of Church Resources (1998). He entered the Jesuits in 1971, was ordained in 1984, has degrees in theology and social sciences and has lived in Asia at various times for over 10 years.
Judaism, Islam and Christianity, Asia is the home from which all the world’s great religions have sprung.

With its religious cultural, political and economic diversity, the contours and shapes that persecution takes on in Asia vary greatly - from outright and violent suppression, to systematic exclusion from opportunities in work and public life, to unstated prejudices that create negative personal judgments. All of these circumstances occur in one or other Asian country – sometimes several of them. Apart from the Philippines and Timor–Leste where Christians are in the majority, most Asian Christians are in minority groups with few resources to protect themselves when prejudice turns to persecution.

Persecution in Asian societies has a history tied to each particular nationality. Christianity’s first recorded arrival in Asia is still visible in China even today. Christians first appeared in Xian in 635. Their creed is recorded on still surviving tablets in that western Chinese city which was China’s capital in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD).

They were Nestorians who came to Asia when their leader Nestorius was condemned as heretic at the Council of Ephesus (431 AD). Nestorius (386 – 450 AD) was the Patriarch of Constantinople (Istanbul) and after his removal from that post, his followers fled further and further east till they arrived in China.

But, as happened three more times in Chinese history, that Christian period came to an end with persecution by the imperial authorities in the late 10th Century AD.

Christianity’s most expansive period in Asia began with the arrival of European merchants from the 15th Century onwards. Along with the traders came the missionaries – to India, China, Japan, Indonesia, Thailand and the Malay peninsula. Portuguese, Spanish, French, Dutch and English traders were among the earliest. And they all brought their chaplains. Their monarch, administrators, entrepreneurs and armies saw themselves to be not just developing commercial opportunities but also in bringing the saving message of Jesus Christ to those they feared would be banished from God’s sight without baptism.

Enabling the spread of the Gospel gained an impetus with the most vigorous era of European colonialist expansion in the 18th and 19th centuries. With the resources available to them at that stage of European expansion, colonial armies and administrators protected Christians, and persecution of Christians declined with the notable exceptions of Korea, Japan and Vietnam where martyrdom was the fate of many well into the 19th Century.
However, with the end of colonialism during the 20th century, Christian Churches have localized in Asian cultures and settings. With that development came significant consequences for local Churches to manage.

Persecution across Asia

The reality of Christian persecution across Asia – today and throughout history – provides an expansive panorama from insistent discrimination that excludes Christians from opportunity in work, education, health and human development to the systematic, ruthless and violent treatment that creates martyrs for the faith across denominations.

The panorama of experience is so large that only a few instances can be given within the limits of this presentation to offer some appreciation of the shape and contours of persecution in a continent that is rich in religious traditions but also in the abusive mistreatment of believers who do not conform to a local norm.

Let’s take two places that highlight some features of a varied context – China in East Asia and Pakistan in the Subcontinent.

China

Persecution comes in all shapes and sizes in China and has for a long time. It has ranged from full scale, murderous pogroms against Christians and other religious groups to the slow water torture perfected by the Chinese as a method of extracting information and forcing compliance. It still has its variants, even if today’s practitioners don’t use water and are very adept in cyberspace.

No publicly identified Christian or member of any religious association is allowed any space to act independently. Every word and action is closely watched. As Bishop Louis Jin, who died in 2013, was fond of saying: “Nothing can happen in China without two groups knowing – the Holy Trinity and the Communist Party.” For this reason he favored complete openness. Any attempt at secrecy would always be undone.

Today, China’s administrative bureaucracy overseeing the “orderly conduct of life” is double the size it was 20 years ago. Following the predictable but profoundly disturbing (to the Communist Party) calls for democracy in Tiananmen Square in 1989, the number of people supervising the Chinese public has risen from 20 million to 40 million.

And just before Easter 2014, China’s President Xi Jinping chaired the first meeting of a new committee with plenipotentiary powers to maintain
internal and external security, reporting not through government channels but directly to him and the small Cabinet in the Politburo.

This committee allows the president to exercise unprecedented, direct power over all aspects of the internal life and external relations of China. He has as much influence through this and other means as the creator of contemporary China, Deng Xiaoping. And he now appears to have the levers of power over people matched only by the founder of modern China, Mao Zedong.

These constraints feed into an already well-controlled environment. Even in a would-be cosmopolitan metropolis like Shanghai, Party controls range from the house arrest of the local bishop to ordinary local Catholics being prevented from attending international Catholic meetings because they have a “form” at the local Religious Affairs Bureau. Every move is noted and reported and passports are granted or withdrawn depending on acceptable behavior.

These efforts are a bit like the boy with his finger in the dyke trying to prevent the deluge: how long can the apparatus of surveillance, constraint and control be maintained?

Signs that the creaking system is straining to hold together abound. For instance, thousands of Christians in Eastern China rallied in early 2014 to protect their churches from invasion and destruction by government officials concerned that Christianity is growing too fast and in an “unsustainable” way in China. In one case, communities camped out overnight to protect their church, fearing that if they did not keep watch, the bulldozers would move in under cover of darkness.

Protestant communities in Beijing especially – both authorized and “underground” – are constant targets of scrutiny. The Chinese government routinely suppresses information about unregistered Protestant communities and in 2011 forced onto the streets the Shouwang Church, an influential underground church in Beijing.

The government of China has good reason to fear the unregulated Christian communities in Beijing. They are also associated with movements for the introduction of multiparty democracy. It has been claimed by many commentators that Christianity represents the largest social movement in the country today, even with suggestions that China will have the world’s largest population of Protestant Christians by 2030.

But the social movement is far from coherent in its strategies or approaches. In northern China, Protestant communities are almost all advocates of democratic reform. In southern China an alternative is
preferred – the creation of space for believers to gather, celebrate their faith and enlarge their membership through the creation and use of institutions in civil society that have no direct political purpose.

This restiveness among Christians reflects something broader in China. Throughout the country, popular dissatisfaction with how China is being run has escalated rapidly, to the point where even official figures reported by public security officials registered over 128,000 instances of mass unrest in 2012, up from a few thousand in the mid 1990s. An event of unrest qualifies for reporting when those involved exceed 30 people.

To address the recurrent complaints of its citizens, Beijing has instituted a form of petitioning where aggrieved citizens can make formal complaints. Yet that approach recently became problematic in Henan province, when local officials blocked the way to petitioners who sought entry to the hotel where those receiving the petitions were installed.

In reality, what has always applied in China still does – Beijing is a long way away from everywhere and what is promulgated in the capital may have no purchase when it comes down to a local official’s opportunity to ignore or countermand it.

The history of persecution of Christians has seen the disappearance of believers on two occasions – the violent suppression of the Nestorian Christians and the flight of any survivors in the 10th and 11th centuries AD, and the suppression and expulsion of missionaries by Imperial direction (along with the suppression of the Jesuits by the Portuguese and eventually the Pope) all during the 18th century.

Christian missionaries returned (along the new arrival of European traders) from the 1840s when the Chinese Emperor was forced to grant trading and occupation “concessions” in the notorious “unequal treaties” of that time.

This record once prompted Bishop Jin of Shanghai to explain his strategy of acceptance that the Communists ran the government of China, leading to others attacking him for cooperation with the Party.

The late bishop said he adopted his approach after 27 years of various forms of imprisonment (1955-1982) because “Christianity has had three starts in China. I don’t want it to have to have a fourth.”

But shortly before his death, Bishop Jin witnessed his chosen successor making a move that set back the new bishop’s and everyone else’s plan: Bishop Ma announced after his episcopal ordination that he would be resigning from his post in the government sponsored Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) to concentrate on his pastoral job as bishop.
That wouldn’t be if the Religious Affairs Bureau had anything to say about it. The new bishop was stripped of his authorization by the government and has been under house arrest ever since, accessible to only a few people and lodged in the Shanghai seminary building that was closed as punishment at the same time, with the seminarians sent to their home dioceses or other seminaries.

As an already divided group – between those who share in the life of the officially recognized and publicly operating diocese of Shanghai and those who believe the only good Catholic is the one who makes no concessions to the government – Shanghai Catholics have had to deal with a new conundrum: a Vatican and government approved bishop not allowed to operate by the government.

Shanghai has only one resident bishop, with a Vatican appointed “underground” bishop having died in early 2014. Over recent months, relations between the Vatican and Beijing seem to have softened, leading some to speculate that the government, as a gesture of goodwill, may rehabilitate Bishop Ma.

Ma is now actually an admired figure among most Catholics from both communities in Shanghai because of his decision to split from the CCPA, and the subsequent treatment he has endured in confinement.

The supreme irony is that the government’s heavy-handed treatment of Bishop Ma may be the catalyst that helps create the long-sought figure for unifying Catholics in Shanghai.

Pakistan

One way of appreciating what is happening to Christians in Pakistan, where they are a small, mostly uneducated and impoverished group is to examine the international fall-out created by their persecution and trace that back to its source.

Thailand’s capital, Bangkok, has reached a breaking point in its capacity to handle the rush of refugees and asylum seekers from Pakistan. There are approaching 8,000 asylum seekers in Bangkok, with a flow from late 2013 that is unlikely to decline as the swirl of violence increases in many parts of a country that a corrupt government is said to control no more than a third of the nation’s area.

A significant majority of the asylum seekers coming on tourist visas to Thailand and seeking asylum are Pakistani Christians, according to agency workers dealing with the arrivals. In recent months, asylum seekers from Syria have joined them.
The escapees from Pakistan report their being persecuted by Islamic militants licensed to do what they like to “infidels”.

Local Thai agencies – secular NGOs and Church based agencies are overwhelmed as they seek to provide help with food, accommodation, education for the children, medical care for the sick and jobs where they can be found.

Asylum seekers coming from Pakistan get a sympathetic hearing from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) because its officers know what Pakistani Christians and members of Muslim minorities are subject to in their homeland.

But the UNHCR’s resources are stretched to the limit. With excessive demand on the UN agency in meeting the challenge posed by the civil war in Syria, there is little left for meeting requirements in Thailand. Since October 2013, the waiting times for would-be refugees to have their cases for refugee status heard have blown out from 18 months from their date of arrival in Bangkok to now waiting three and a half to four years to get their story and status assessed.

Meanwhile, Pakistan continues to generate asylum seekers fearful that what happened during Holy Week, 2014 could be their lot. On the Wednesday of Holy Week (April 16), a 22 year old janitor, a Christian living in Lahore, was shot in the head by a Muslim security guard colleague when the Christian refused to convert to Islam.

Haroon, also known as Sunny, had recently been employed and his assailant, Umer Farooq, had been pressuring him to convert to Islam, which Haroon declined and as a result was shot dead.

Routine abuse, casual beatings in the work place or in social venues and regular murders are the lot of Christians in Pakistan, according to Simon, an asylum seeker from Karachi living in Bangkok.

“Christians are taunted with being told ‘you are Christians, you are not patriotic Pakistanis because in fact you belong to the Americans, the British or Gora people who kill our Muslim brothers and sisters’,” Simon said.

The heart of the problem for Pakistani Christians is the notorious blasphemy laws introduced in 1988 by the later assassinated President and military strong man, General Zia ul Haq. Under these blasphemy laws, an Muslim assailant can simply claim that someone has insulted the Prophet, presenting no supporting testimony or evidence other than the accusation and the individual is said to be entitled to execute the offending “infidel”. What is worse, the police and courts in Pakistan are prevented from charging anyone who claims their lethal violence was motivated by the Muslim faith.
and so cannot be brought to justice.

“Where can we Pakistani Christians have to go in to world?” Simon asks. “We are Christians for Muslims states and so not welcome there. We are Pakistanis for other countries and not welcome in them either. Where do we find a home?”

Patterns of persecution in Asia

The way Christians are treated is a function of forces and policies that apply more broadly than the Christians. They are a function of whatever minority policy prevails and the often historically founded approach to minorities that applies in specific countries.

That said, the panorama of Christian communities across Asia does not display a coherent picture to an outside observer. And the way in which persecution of Christians occurs in different countries varies and is difficult to generalize about, except within national boundaries.

Some countries in Asia are either diverse in their religious makeup (religiously pluralist such as Malaysia, Myanmar and even India which, remarkably, has more Muslims within its boundaries than its Muslim majority neighbor, Pakistan). Other countries have various divisions among the religion that predominates in a particular country (such as the divisions in Islam evident in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia or in China, for example, where Protestant Christianity is growing much faster than Catholicism and the strategies and dispositions of different Protestant communities present a far from coherent picture).

And the different contexts in each country have consequences for Christians and the persecution that many endure. Moreover, the treatment of Christians is usually affected by larger and broader economic, tribal, ethnic and political factors.

In some countries (China, Myanmar, Indonesia and Sri Lanka for example), governments manage religions under the rubric of “minority policies”. Each of those countries has significant, absolutely large (in China in the tens and millions of citizens) but actually relatively small Christian minorities (Indonesia’s Christian population, for example, accounts for about 5% of the national population).

The rights of Christians may be constitutionally supported as in Indonesia. But overall treatment of Christians by government agencies (police and security forces in the main) has Christians lumped together with other ethnic, religious or tribal groups. Often the persecution they may experience comes as a result of national government policies and
approaches that are not directed at Christians as such but because they belong to a particular tribal group. This happens, for example, in Myanmar where significant tribal groupings (Karen and Chin people in particular) have substantial Christian populations. Christians may be among those targeted by government but often only because of the ethnic origin which poses a threat to central government controls.

In Sri Lanka, Tamil Christians endure hardships because they are Tamils. Karen Christians in Myanmar get caught in conflicts with government police and military because of the independence they seek rather than the Christian faith many of them declare and practice. As well, in Myanmar, the target for militant Buddhists is more Muslims then Christians, though the latter can get swept up in the conflicts that target all perceived threats to the coherence of a “national Buddhist culture”

Christians in Pakistan are the victims of a failed state’s inability to govern two thirds of its territory, allowing militant and fanatical Muslims to kill Christians as a duty they claim to have because Christians are “infidels” and better dead if they won’t convert to Islam.

Regional factors within large countries have their part to play in explaining how Christians fare. In India, a growing Christian population receives varied treatment depending on how extreme local Hindus behave in different parts of the Subcontinent. India as it exists today is the invention of British Colonialism in the 19th Century.

Today’s country was previously a territory whose control was broken up in principalities led by Maharajas, Nawabs and other local aristocrats. The subcontinent became unified under British imperial rule only after the Indian Mutiny (1857) and remained that way for ninety years when independence was granted and Pakistan and India separated.

But the Indo/Pakistan break up was done to give minority Muslims a national stronghold in Pakistan. This development reflected only the most obvious divide on religions lines in India. Remarkable for its national unity despite the immense religious diversity, India can be a place where conflicts occur that come down to disputes in which one religious group is persecuting another.

Perhaps the best-resourced and most sustained intrusion into the lives of Christians occurs in China, Vietnam and North Korea. Asia is home to three of the four surviving Communist governments in the world (Cuba is the other) and the methods of State control originally developed by V I Lenin in the Soviet Union remain operative.

North Korea is the most ruthless: Christians are not allowed to exist
exception in “show” communities developed to make the few Western visitors feel at home. It is in Vietnam and China that Leninist principles, aided by the most highly developed cyber surveillance available anywhere in the world, are deployed to keep Christians contained and controlled.

As mentioned above, China monitors all believers but for very good historical reasons. A casual inspection of Chinese history shows that forces pressing for dynastic change have always first gathered in religious communities. With the vigorous contribution to the calls for democratization coming from Christians in the north of China, especially in and around Beijing, an outside observer could easily conclude that China’s leaders’ historically founded fears are well placed.

In China and Vietnam the pattern is the same – the creation of networks of informants and spies inside communities, the checking of email and phone conversations, and the constant review of the performance of religious office holders by government officials. And from time to time, individuals are charged and convicted of “crimes” that see them serving prison sentence, aimed as much at reforming the convicted “criminal” as to strike fear into the hearts of Christians. Belief is dangerous in China and Vietnam.

Conclusion

The one thing about Christians in Asia you can be sure about is that no one tells the truth about how many Christians there are in most countries. The exceptions are the Philippines and Timor Leste because, in those countries, Christians are the majority population and have nothing to fear from telling the true story, and South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong, where Western values prevail.

Part of the reason for the uncertain numbers of Christians is the completely unreliable nature of national censuses in most Asian countries. But more significant is that those who could give accurate figures – the Christian Churches, who have baptismal registers – won’t give accurate figures because of the trouble they will create for themselves and their communities with governments and with extreme groups concerned about the growth of Christianity in Asian societies.

So, for the last three decades, the number of Catholics in China has been given as “12 million”; the number of Catholics in India has been given as somewhere between 17 and 30 million; and even in apparently serene and peaceful Thailand, the figure is always 300,000. Ten years ago it was 300,000 and it will be the same in ten years’ time, according to the retired Cardinal Archbishop of Bangkok.
Why is there this fear of disclosure? The answer is very simple: where Christians are a minority, the constant fear among them is that their growth in Asian societies will produce a violent backlash from fanatics in the majority non–Christian population.

The spectre of persecution and the defensive behaviours that the fear of it produces are a given in Asian societies. That there are forces at work that make for the growth of Christianity in cultures of Asian societies (which many Christians would see as the work of the Holy Spirit) is undeniable. But just what is at work and what those forces produce in Asian societies is always ambiguous and uncertain.

For example, Christianity has grown exponentially in the last four decades in South Korea, contradicting the common view that modernization will do away with religious belief of all kinds. China is now predicted to have the largest protestant population in the world by 2030.

And there are other countries in Asia where numerical trends in the growth of Christian populations have the potential to eclipse Christianity as a European phenomenon. In India, the growth of Christians among tribal and Dalit (formerly “Outcasts”) communities is considerable.

But whatever unfolds the current context of Asian societies and the politics that operate in them will mean that the persecution of growing minorities of Christians who destabilize social and political arrangements will continue. And with that, so will persecution.
BOOK REVIEW

Martin Griver Unearthed: The life of a Spanish missionary priest who became a bishop in colonial Western Australia, 1814-1886

Author: Odhran O’Brien;
Publisher: St Paul’s Publications
ISBN: 1921963328
Binding: Paperback
Price: AU$35.95

Reviewed by Clement Mulcahy*

Commissioned by the Archdiocese of Perth, this is a significant work that places the story of the Spanish missionary within the context of the ecclesiastical tensions and colonial isolation experienced by the pioneer clergy and the laity of the Swan River colony. The study has an international setting too with the overview from Rome, the recruiting of men and women from Spain, Italy and Ireland, funding from Spain and the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, as well as concern from Sydney’s Archbishop Polding whose remit included the western outpost of the continent.

Published by St Paul’s Publication – Society of St Paul, Strathfield, NSW, and printed in China, the standards achieved in this 284 page, illustrated volume complete with a comprehensive bibliography, index, list of contents, appendices, tables and maps, reflects well upon both the author and the publisher. These sources are of particular relevance as the biography will attract international students of church history and missiology, as well as a national readership, while many Western Australians would not be familiar with the intense Spanish and European connections with the church locally.

* Clement Mulcahy is Past President, Royal Western Australian Historical Society.
The title of the book provides a link between the pioneer missionary labouring in the antipodes and a time of social and political change in Europe. At first glance the title might imply that the settlement experienced the benefit of an exceptionally long bishopric, 1814-1886, and the calm that could have been established. Instead Griver was caught up in the maelstrom of schism, canonical injunctions, a divided community and alienated monks and nuns. The arresting photograph of Martin Griver on the dust cover gives a sense of the man’s serenity which countered the stress and challenges outlined so well by his biographer, Odhran O’Brien. The title also provides a hint of the forensic spirit that seems to have driven much of the sophisticated research that marks this biography which opens, unusually, with the exhumation of the central figure.

Professor Rafferty’s foreword gives a strong sense of the main thrust of the research, analysis and interpretation provided by the author in this study of “a reluctant bishop who nevertheless left a significant imprint in the history of Australian Catholicism”. Odhran has brought his material together in a compelling narrative which enables the reader to meet both the man and the bishop, the women who were the nuns, the Spanish monks who laboured at Subiaco or New Norcia and those who had been appointed priests or bishops. This has been far preferable to offering the reader an analysis of the canonical disputes, the institutional diocese, convent, and parish, without the regard for the human frailties, strengths or social attitudes relevant to the times, that permeates the pages.

The authoritarianism unacceptable now, that permeated the Catholic hierarchy both in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is placed in context. The pressure for adaptation to better meet the needs of Australian conditions faced by local bishops is well examined by the author. The absorbing narrative noted by Professor Rafferty, loses none of its pace in meeting this test. Archival material is used very effectively and author research disinterred a number of documents pivotal to a more complete understanding of Martin Griver.
BOOK REVIEW

The Invincibles: New Norcia Aboriginal Cricketers 1879-1906

Author: Bob Reece
Publisher: Fremantle: Histrionics Publishing, 2014
ISBN: 9780646920375
Binding: Paperback
Price: AUS29.95
Pages: xii + 161.

Reviewed by Rosa MacGinley*

This specifically focussed study, set within wider contextual issues, has found its ideal author in Dr Bob Reece, Professor Emeritus in History of Murdoch University in Perth. He has produced over many years respected works in Australian colonial history, especially regarding Irish convict and Aboriginal experience, and has published a carefully researched biography of Daisy Bates, the noted Irish philanthropist among the Western Australian Aborigines. He has also contributed a number of articles to New Norcia Studies, leading to this present book. Added to this is his own enthusiast’s knowledge of cricket and its history. This book is extensively referenced, with many photographs worthy of perusal in themselves, and valuable appendices.

Among his many letters, diaries and reports to Rome, Bishop Rosendo Salvado, founder and first abbot of the New Norcia Benedictine monastery in Western Australia, in his long administration there (1847-1900), left a remarkable record of this high-performing cricket team, while revealing his motives for supporting it and personally attending its matches. The team was formed initially through the perhaps unusual friendship of Salvado and a young nearby pastoralist, Rugby-educated member of Perth’s British elite, Henry Lefroy. Like others of this elite, his English education instilled

* Sr Rosa MacGinley is the author of A Dynamic of Hope: Institutes of women religious in Australia.
a love of cricket, then quintessentially an English game. There had been a previous mission-based Aboriginal team, formed in Victoria, which in 1868 toured England but the motives appear to have been patronising and with a view to a civilising effect on the players. Salvado’s letters make clear the intelligence and ready mastery of skills of the Aborigines. It was Lefroy who first noticed the potential of the prospective young players and, with Salvado’s full support, formed them into a first-rate team, arranging fixtures for them in Perth and acting himself as their coach-captain. This team was soon ready to challenge Perth’s leading players, the Metropolitan Cricket Club, in which they played well, but their lack of experience in the first innings led to a MCC victory. The local papers, however, acknowledged their sporting promise, one paper adding they were ‘a fine-looking set of fellows’ (borne out by a glance at the photographs). In the match against Fremantle the next day, the New Norcia team, ‘playing with remarkable agility and smartness’ [paper quote], won spectacularly. Salvado wrote to Rome, ‘Cricket is not a game for the stupid, and the natives have demonstrated to the English that, not only are they not stupid, and less than beasts, but capable of civilisation and intellectual culture which have been denied them’. (p.36) The following year they defeated the MCC decisively.

By now the question was being raised in the press whether the Aborigines had ‘a peculiar aptitude for cricket’, especially in bowling and fielding where their instant calculations were extremely accurate – this being attributed to long-ingrained hunting skills – while their ready mastery of the style and finer points of play were put down to their ‘imitative’ ability. Their superior play continued to be demonstrated in subsequent matches, with accompanying praise in the press, though with this less generous note intruding: not native superiority, rather local poor play, now claimed as chief cause of these successes.

As Reece, in his subsequent analysis, points out: ‘Although the Aboriginal players were clearly far superior, it can be no surprise that they played no part in the future progress of the game.’ (p.72) The 1886 establishment of the Aboriginal Protection Board led to clearer social restriction, together with expanding white settlement and a hardening of the latent (though often erupting, even to unprovoked murder) racial discrimination. Aborigines could not feature in a public way in the game, initially of the privileged, then of the more clearly ‘good’ families. New Norcia’s ‘membership of the WACA would have been unthinkable.’ (p.72) Western Australia’s 1905 Aborigines Act further reduced Aboriginal rights across the board.
Other factors were also affecting New Norcia: Lefroy’s election to parliament and his 1901-4 posting as Agent-General in London; Salvado’s death in 1900, with the new Abbot Torres introducing, in an already changing environment, high-class secondary boarding-school education for the increasing number of white settlers; decreasing numbers of Aborigines, with loss of the strong village ethos which the cricket had helped to foster, in what had now become a close Perth hinterland. (Torres was to establish a Benedictine mission at the Drysdale River for the more numerous Aboriginal population in the far north.)

In the sporting field football began to replace cricket for Aboriginal players. It was more inclusive, less class-based and offered greater monetary returns for the skilled and ambitious, as well as gaining a widening Australian popularity.

**BOOK REVIEW**

*The Real Archbishop Mannix from the Sources*

Authors: James Franklin, Gerald O Nolan, Michael Gilchrist; Publisher: Ballarat: Connor Court, 2015
ISBN: 97811925138344
Paperback, 277 pages, $29.95

Reviewed by Bernard Doherty*

Few figures in Australian history have been more extolled by their admirers or more excoriated by their critics than the larger than life figure of Melbourne’s fiery son of Erin, Archbishop Daniel Mannix. With a career spanning the greater part of fifty years of Australia political, social, and religious history, Mannix’s life was lived amidst the hustle and bustle of rapid social change and any book treating this gaunt and wiry prelate – an undertaker-like visage who for half a century could be seen almost daily as he swept like a haunting spectre down the Melbourne streets en route from Raheen to St Patrick’s Cathedral – provides a unique window through

* Dr Bernard Doherty is an adjunct lecturer in Church History and New Religions at St Mark’s National Theological Centre (Charles Sturt University). He has published in a number of academic journals including the *Journal of Religious History*, *Nova Religio*, *the International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, the *Alternative Spirituality and Religions Review*, *Phronema*, and the *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*. 

---

*Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* 36 (2015), 289-295
which to view these turbulent years for both the Australian Church and wider Australian society.

Recent years have witnessed a series of new books about Mannix, each covering his career from a different perspectives, and all shedding further light on aspects of the controversial prelate’s life and involvement in the rough and tumble world of ecclesiastical and secular Australian and Irish politics. This book, however, brings something largely new and welcome to the almost unrivalled number of biographies penned on the controversial Archbishop, a meticulously documented anthology of primary source material. Co-authored by an eminently well-informed trio of scholars – one of whom had already penned two biographies of Mannix – this 14 chapter book is in part a biography that re-treads familiar historical territory, but in a more concise and accessible way than many earlier exemplars. To this end, the authors have utilized many explanatory footnotes giving biographical additional details about key figures who might otherwise be unknown to readers. Such details are particular helpful, especially in Chapter 3 where the authors give a multifaceted account of Mannix’s infamous mid-sea arrest aboard the Baltic for fear his landing in Ireland would lead to further political unrest, drawing not only on Mannix’s own accounts, but equally on the reflections of the sailors of HMS Wivern and British authorities.

More important, however, than this highly accessible biographical material, is the fact that this book provides unrivalled source documentation from both Mannix’s own writings and speeches, but also those of his many supporters and critics from across the globe – ranging from extracts of correspondence with admirers like the Irish Republican and later President Eamon de Valera to the thinly-veiled literary attack of the celebrated Australian communist writer Frank Hardy in his controversial novel Power Without Glory and the side-splitting dialogue between Mannix and the Pope from Barry Oakley’s play The Feet of Daniel Mannix. Moreover, unlike other recent works, which have focused on specific aspects of Mannix’s long career, this work brings together documentation from events spanning the entirety of Mannix’s life from his time as the disciplinarian rector of Maynooth Seminary, described by one former student as ‘the Westpoint of Ireland, the military academy in which were trained the officers for the army of Christ’ (p. 206), through the fiery anti-conscription campaign of the First World War in which he notoriously labelled the war ‘just an ordinary trade war’ (p. 13), right up until his death just shy of a hundred years in 1963 by which time Mannix
The Real Archbishop Mannix from the Sources

had outlived almost all of his historical rivals. However, rather than painting a portrait of a triumphant figure, this documentation further shows how over the course of his life Mannix had consistently risen above past differences, perhaps most notably in his reconciliation with an ageing Billy Hughes in 1937 following the tragic death of the latter’s daughter and in his ongoing relationship with Arthur Calwell even after they found themselves on different sides over the Movement controversies of the mid-1950s. Indeed, the figure who emerges from these pages, far from the aloof patrician bishop one would expect from photographs, is a very human one.

The chronology span of this work also allows for a glimpse into the mind of a bishop grappling with theological matters in a variety of different ecclesiastical contexts. In Chapter 7 the authors give examples of the Seminary Professor at Maynooth grappling with pedantic matters of Canon Law in the Irish Ecclesiastical Review, but equally of his more latitudinarian approach to the practicalities of episcopal discipline. While certainly no systematic theologian in the sense of some of his European contemporaries, the particularly interesting reply sent by Mannix to the Vatican ahead of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) in which Mannix voted against the pre-prepared document sent to bishops for comment is of particular note. Here Mannix’s opinions on religious liberty, in particular, bear a remarkable similarity to those later enshrined in the conciliar document Dignitatis humanae. Far from the old-fashioned, intolerant, high-handed, and authoritarian episcopal tyrant depicted by his opponents, this document among others shows Mannix to be in many ways part of the vanguard of reform minded bishops who would eventually advocate the almost entire re-drafting of the conciliar decrees during the dramatic opening sessions of the Council in 1962.

This more progressive Mannix is equally visible in Chapter 9, which deals with matters of social justice and political action, and illustrates the Archbishop’s views on matters ranging from Indigenous Australians and the education of women, to the plight of the European Jewish migrants and the Christian duty to display tolerance toward them. Here again far from the intolerant sectarian power-player depicted by his more vocal critics (especially The Argus), these source documents show a bishop often far ahead of his time. One notable example is in his attitude toward the Depression. While historically churchmen – especially the Protestant churchmen
of the Anglican ascendancy – were notable for their reluctance or reticence in challenging the vested interests of the economic status quo during the period of the Depression, Mannix stands out alongside Anglican Bishop Ernst Burgmann, for his willingness to critique the capitalist system. Predictably, Mannix draws on Leo XIII’s important encyclical Rerum Novarum and notes unequivocally that: ‘the first line of defence against Communism and Socialism was to acknowledge humbly and sorrowfully that the system under which they were living had been a complete failure’ (p 175). While, like his erstwhile ally B.A. Santamaria, Mannix was later to be at the forefront of the Catholic anti-communist crusade, it is important to recognise that he was by no means uncritical of capitalism and he had certainly inherited the unmistakable legacy of radical Irish democratic politics.

A vanguard figure he may have been, but this outspokenness certainly did not come without its problems. Indeed, Chapter 6 which details Mannix’s thwarted relationship with the Roman curia, including fascinating documentation of British diplomatic pressure in an effort to ensure that, in the words of the British Cabinet, the Church find ‘some employment for Archbishop Mannix outside the United Kingdom’ (p. 125), makes for especially interesting reading. Given the fate of other Australian bishops who have been labelled disobedient by Rome Mannix’s case is particularly noteworthy: unlike many of his ill-fated adopted countrymen, Mannix fought Rome, and actually won!

Certainly no hagiography, the authors have not recoiled from including often scathing assessments from Mannix’s many quite esteemed critics. Notable here is the inclusion of the rebuke of Irish statesman W. T. Cosgrove who lambasted Mannix for his ill-informed media commentary on the Irish Civil War referring to the Archbishop as one of ‘those of our far-flung race whose distance from their native land makes it impossible for them to receive correct impressions of the day to day happenings here’ (p. 84), an opinion held not only by Mannix’s political critics, but incidentally also later his own mother!

Similarly, back in Australia Mannix’s positions were not always endorsed even by his fellow Catholics, as the stinging words of Justice Charles Heydon in his response to Mannix’s infamous ‘Australia First’ speech in Chapter 5 amply demonstrate. Indeed, the vitriol of Heydon’s characterisation of Mannix’s speech as ‘faithless disloyalty… blacker ingratitude [and] enormous folly’ is perhaps only matched by
Mannix’s uncharacteristically sharp and *ad hominem* response: ‘If he [Heydon] were to go to address Catholics in Sydney he would not get as many to listen to him as would fit in a lolly shop’ (p. 108). Of similar interest here are the words of a young Robert Menzies, the same man who only days before Mannix’s death would take action to end the stalemate over State Aid to Catholic Schools which Mannix had sought to resolve since his arrival in 1913. In 1917 Menzies remarked to a Catholic friend: ‘I don’t think we’d better discuss Doctor Mannix. In my eyes he is cunning, sinister, and a national menace!’ (p. 96). This is a far cry from the future Prime Minister, whose Coalition Government Mannix’s political machinations would help to keep in power until the early 1970s.

From the opening chapters of this work one sees a portrait slowly take colour of Mannix as a figure driven to carve out a place for his community in a country still straining under a history of sectarian prejudices and whose Newmanesque passion for a liberal education at all levels sought to raise the status of the Catholic community from a still often discriminated against and intellectually benighted minority into a force capable of positively contributing to national life. By the time of his death in 1963, it is safe to say that Mannix had achieved many of the aims stated in his first speech in Australia on Easter Sunday 1913. By the 1960s Catholics had ceased to be ‘an inferior caste in their own land’ (p. 5) and thanks in part to Mannix’s unswerving advocacy were achieving levels of affluence and influence proportionate to those of their Protestant fellow countrymen.

Rather than the familiar narrative biographies of Mannix which have been appearing for decades, this book allows the key historical players to speak for themselves. Especially for historians this anthology will prove an invaluable future reference work, not least for how it brings together dispersed documents from Ireland, Melbourne, and Rome, no mean task given the often quoted anecdote that Mannix had all his papers burned by his staff at Raheen following his death, with the alleged bonfire taking three days to burn out! While the authors dismiss this story as apocryphal, such pieces of Mannix folklore are arguably as important as documented historical incidences. In this regard the authors’ inclusion of a section of so-called ‘Mannicdotes’, demonstrating the Archbishop’s well-known wit, is a welcome and colourful addition to an otherwise quite serious work.

These ‘Mannicdotes’, along with biographical reminiscences of
those who knew the Archbishop also help to humanise Mannix. Far from an aloof prince-of-the-church aristocratically lording it over his congregation, these documents reinforce the popular image of Mannix held by generations of Australian Catholics as very much a man of the people. This emerges even more clearly from the personal reminiscences of those who encountered him in daily life, like those from a woman to whom Mannix had warmly replied when she had written to him as a young girl and a nervous penitent for whom Mannix explained some of the practices of modern contraception in the confessional (though certainly not approvingly!). Indeed, the way in which the authors preserve the punctuation of many of Mannix’s public speeches with notices of applause helps to highlight just how this physically and intellectually towering man could move a crowd in a variety of circumstances.

Unlike other biographies, which usually restrict their use of pictures to a small plate section of photographs, this work is richly illustrated, not only with photos of Mannix in all manner of situations – from the cleric awkwardly pitching the opening ball at a baseball game in New York to the esteemed seminary rector accompanying Queen Mary on her visit to Maynooth in 1911. Similarly, the book is meticulously footnoted and these references will provide those wishing to explore topics discussed at more length with an accessible preliminary bibliography on a wide range of topics. In this regard one minor criticism which can be levelled at the book, however, is that likely in the copy-editing stage a number of the references, particularly in the Afterword have been garbled, and on occasion the shift between the quotation of sources and commentary by the authors is not entirely clear. These, however, are minor matters of presentation and do not take away from an otherwise fine book.

All in all, this work will prove to be a perennially useful book, not least for historians both of Australian politics, who will find in it a rich mine documentation on important matters like the World War I conscription debates (as well as the comical political cartoons which accompanied them), but especially for those studying the history of Christianity in Australia. Indeed, Mannix’s colourful rhetoric and self-deprecating wit will prove an unstinting pedagogical ally for historians seeking to keep undergraduate students from nodding off in lectures on otherwise often dry topics like the sectarian tensions of the 1920s. Given Mannix’s staunch advocacy for tertiary education
amongst Catholics, it is perhaps fitting that he be remembered in such environs, even if many contemporary Australians might cringe at some of the alumni of the establishments Mannix patronised.

BOOK REVIEW

Mannix

Author: Brenda Niall
Publisher: Text Publishing, 2015
ISBN: 9781922182111
Hardback, 464 pages, $50

Book review by James Franklin*

Fifty years after his death, Archbishop Mannix remains Australia’s most prominent churchman of any denomination, its most famous Irishman, and a lightning-rod for the still vigorous passions aroused by the Labor Party split.

Brenda Niall has written the definitive biography. Of the fourteen (!) or so books written about Mannix, this is the one that tells the story most reliably and readably.

Unexpectedly, Niall is able to add considerably to what has been generally known about Mannix’s rural childhood in Ireland in the 1870s. The source is mostly Fr James Murtagh’s notes on the extensive research he did for his own projected biography of Mannix, conducted around 1970. The young Mannix came from a relatively well-off family, but lived close to Charleville Park, the “Big House” owned by the Sanders family of the Protestant Ascendancy. “As a young man Mannix was disgusted to see his cousin John Cagney take off his cap to Robert Sanders. ‘I always do that to my superiors,’ Cagney explained. ‘Well, my advice to you is to go about bald-headed,’ Daniel retorted.” Mannix’s father, a somewhat unknown quantity in earlier biographies, is revealed to have been a leading organiser of the (radical but not revolutionary) Land League agitation of 1880-1.

The general tone of clericalism in Maynooth seminary at the time Mannix was a student there is reflected in the lectures on pastoral theology

* James Franklin is the co-author of The Real Archbishop Mannix: From the Sources (Connor Court, 2015) and editor of the Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society.
by Thomas Carr, who was to precede Mannix as Archbishop of Melbourne. Carr’s notes say “It is contrary to taste in clerical behaviour to walk with a lady in the street, no matter how near. The laity do not like it. It seems to them incongruous and it is so.” The roots of Mannix’s distant and patrician rule at Raheen lie in the assumptions of the society of his youth as well as in his personality. In recounting these and other stories, Niall has an eye for the telling detail and wastes no time.

The standard of factual accuracy is very high. Gerard Henderson took Niall to task over her opening vignette, the three-day bonfire after Mannix’s death of his personal papers at Raheen (as opposed to the official papers in the archdiocesan archives). Niall’s evidence for this claim is solid – Fr Tom Boland, the biographer of Archbishop Duhig and a respected historian, interviewed housekeeper May Saunders, who did the actual burning. Archbishop Frank Little also confirmed the story to Niall. Nor are the papers in existence, to all appearances. Henderson’s claims of factual inaccuracies by media performers are often correct, but in this case he is not winning.

Equally high is the standard of fairness and balance, as is particularly required for anyone venturing into the fraught history of the Movement. Past biographies of Mannix have tended to either the hagiographic or the hatchet-job ends of the spectrum. As a young woman Niall worked in Santamaria’s office, but without much political commitment – or even, by her own account, much understanding of the political point of the operation. So she has a good understanding of the context and the individuals involved, but without passionate leanings to any side. It is a valuable background, especially for the personal aspects of the story.

Something is missing, however. Mannix was a man of many ideas and even more a man of many words. His speeches were his central performances, what he was remembered for. But rarely are Mannix’s words quoted at any length, nor are the reasons he gave for his positions treated. What was his vision for Australia? What did he really care about? What ideas exactly did his proteges like Calwell and Santamaria take from him? Niall does not seem fundamentally interested. His positions are mentioned, but not explored.

That is especially so when it comes to Mannix’s religious life. Jesus is not in the index, and not in the book either. To portray Australia’s most famous Catholic without making an effort to describe his prayer life, his theological ideas, what emphases in Christianity he saw as important, is to leave an enormous hole. Mannix’s ideas of what was central to faith
were unusual, to say the least. The loyalty to the Pope and to Vatican policy that is expected of a Catholic prelate was very much optional for him; successive apostolic delegates and his brother bishops were always complaining about it. (As Mannix said when Gilroy was created cardinal in 1945, “If I had ever wanted to be a cardinal, I would certainly have charted my life differently.”) On the other hand, social justice in the style of *Rerum Novarum*, little known to many Catholics ordained or otherwise, was for him fundamental to what he believed in. The consequences for Australia were momentous. In France and many other countries, the Church was in the process of losing the working class. In Melbourne, the Church *was* the working class, near enough, both in membership and ideology. Catholicism in Australia remains a church for all classes.

Consequently Niall’s biography is well complemented by the other Mannix book of 2015, *The Real Archbishop Mannix: From the Sources* by James Franklin, Gerry Nolan and Michael Gilchrist (reviewed in this issue). It gives Mannix a chance to speak for himself, with long quotations from his speeches and writings. The picture of Mannix that emerges from both books is very similar – a showman, personally unforthcoming, intelligent, wholly committed to the Irish, the workers’ and the Catholic causes (and inclined to identify the three) – a man who cast a long shadow on Australia through his influence on men like Calwell and Santamaria. Niall’s book gives the story in traditional biographical form, *The Real Archbishop Mannix* serves up the raw data.

The complementary nature of the books is exhibited in their treatments of Mannix’s siding with John XXIII’s reform agenda, at the very end of Mannix’s life. *The Real Archbishop Mannix* prints extracts from Mannix’s response to the original highly conservative agenda documents for the upcoming Vatican Council. The response – probably drafted by Eric D’Arcy but approved by Mannix – is very critical of legalism and triumphalism and in favour of freedom of conscience and lay initiative. Niall tells the personal side of the story, recording Mannix agonising to Santamaria over whether he should have been more like John XXIII. “I think the whole of my policy has been mistaken, of standing up to unpopularity; this Pope shows that if you are ready to embrace the whole world you can have a much greater influence.” (Characteristically, Santamaria, who was to come close to leaving the Church over the post-Vatican II changes, snaps “I thought it was a completely wrong analysis.”) Too late. The avuncular Mannix, the earthy peasant Mannix, the cuddly Mannix – it was not to be.
BOOK REVIEW

St Joan of Arc Parish Haberfield 1909-2015

Author: Vincent Crow
Haberfield: St Joan of Arc Parish Haberfield, 2015
Paperback: 177 pages
 Reviewed by John Luttrell*

A parish over a hundred years old in the Sydney suburb of Haberfield, a suburb designed as a ‘model’ or ‘garden suburb’ at the time of Australia’s Federation – there had to be great potential for a parish historian. Vincent Crow has all the credentials for this, being the acknowledged historian for the suburb and the writer of several books on the history of Haberfield as well as having a lifelong association with the parish. In this history we see him in a First Communion photo for 1956 and as a member of the planning committee for the parish centenary in 1909.

St Joan of Arc Parish Haberfield 1909-2015 is intended as a history of church activities in Haberfield, but Crow notes that ‘events on the local level often reflect national and international events, movements and ideologies’. Crow brings this out as he sets the parish history in the context of the history of Haberfield as a ‘heritage’ and ‘Federation’ suburb, two World Wars and the Great Depression, Italian immigration to the area, Vatican II changing the Australian Church, and the various social influences of recent decades.

His structure is largely chronological, based around the terms of office of parish priests. Each term or ‘act’ is divided into short sections with titles such as ‘First Parish Priest Appointed’, ‘Blessing of Foundation Stone’, ‘Parish Life, 1920-24’. The first third of the book relies extensively on the Gold Jubilee history written in 1959 by then curate, Fr Norm Grady. Vince Crow has supplemented the earlier account in places, and has then researched and compiled the remainder of the parish history 1960-2015 from a great variety of parish and other sources.

The history covers key developments of the parish in a balanced way over 170 pages. Major topics include the foundation of the parish, distinctive contributions of eight parish priests and other clergy; the story behind the churches, schools and other buildings in Ramsay Street and

* Dr John Luttrell fms has long had a research interest in Australian religious history. His main involvements have been with the Catholic Institute of Sydney, the Broken Bay Institute and the Australian Catholic Historical Society.
Dalhousie Street; descriptions and photos of milestone events such as the foundation of the current church in 1954; cameos of ‘parish life’ captured in various decades; Catholic schooling pioneered by Presentation Sisters and De La Salle Brothers and extended by lay teachers and catechists since the 1950s; parish outreach through groups such as the St Vincent de Paul Society, international mission organisations and ecumenical groups; the links with various religious orders who had houses in the parish and sometimes received recruits from the parish. All of this substantial content is interspersed with and enhanced by numerous photographs well spread over the century and carefully captioned (to the extent that the information is available). The chronological account ends with a feature on the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the current church in 2015. Crowe then has thirty supplementary pages of useful supplementary information, such as on parish groups and sodalities, religious orders in the parish, lists of priests and school principals.

It is generally an informative, neutrally toned narrative. Crow does become critical when he discusses the fate of the original church in Ramsay Street, after the property had been sold to Ashfield Council. The council voted to demolish the church so that a community centre could be built on the site. Crow queries the claim that ‘1500 Catholics’ had been consulted before this happened. In the event there were no funds for the development and a heritage building had disappeared. He has a photo (p.87) of the current Federation Place which he captioned ‘a pleasant but empty area in comparison to what might have been if the world’s first church named in honour of St Joan of Arc had been renovated and used for community purposes.’

In many ways this history should help to build a sense of identity and of belonging in the parish. Smiling faces in photos of First Communion groups, school class photos, missionary groups, school and youth concerts and recent Social Committee events all create a sense of belonging and celebration in the parish. Crow acknowledges seventy-eight individuals as contributors to his account (page v). Scores of parishioners appear in captions to photographs and the roles of key individuals (clergy, religious and lay) groups are sketched. We also have recognition of many significant parishioners. Examples include Fr Patrick Baugh, founder of the parish and parish priest for 27 years; Michael Toohey who in 1938 donated £5000 to liquidate the parish debate (equivalent today?); Nerina Frisone, a catechist for 25 years; Harry Stephens, a local architect closely involved with building and renovation over twenty years; and John Phillips who first appears in the
history in Catholic Youth concerts of the 1940s and in later years as chair of the parish council and parish treasurer (well qualified considering his earlier career as Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia).

Parish identity is also enhanced by explanations of associations with Saint Joan of Arc. It is believed that Haberfield was the first parish in the world dedicated to the saint; Domremy College is named after the saint’s birthplace; statues and stained glass in the church evoke the story of the saint.

For the general reader outside the parish there is the value of a parish ‘case-study’ of broader influences on church life in Australia since 1900. In 1901 the area was largely Anglo-Celtic and the parish began with an Irish parish priest under the Irish Cardinal Moran. Large scale immigration of Italians after 1945 saw the Catholic proportion of Haberfield rise to 60 per cent in 1960. The Sunday Mass in Italian was the best attended. The rise and fall of sodalities is also well illustrated. Adults and children in 1950 were in about twenty parish sodalities and groups, such as the Legion of Catholic Women and the Children of Mary sodality. Crow notes that in 2015 only three remain: the Catechists, the Altar Society and the St Vincent de Paul Society. Eucharistic and liturgical theology from Vatican II is given as one of the reasons for the decline of the sodalities. The Vatican II influence is also clearly documented in the church renovations required for community participation in the Mass (now in English or Italian), with the priest facing the people.

_St Joan of Arc Parish Haberfield 1909-2015_ is a valuable record for the parish. When the next chapters are written, perhaps for the sesquicentenary in 2059 or 3009, the future chronicler will be grateful to Vince Crow.
BOOK REVIEW

Catholic Converts from Downunder ... And All Over

Editor: Wanda Skowronska
Publisher: Connor Court Publishing, 2015
Paperback, 230 pages, Price: $29.95

Book review by R J Stove*

Post-Watergate, and particularly post-Iraq, the USA’s journalism has abounded in explicit ‘declarations of interest.’ While on occasion these take self-defeatingly conscientious forms, one can welcome the basic sentiment involved. It renders impossible the fake-objectivity disfiguring Britain’s and Australia’s respective Fourth Estates, wherein ex-husbands, ex-wives, ex-mistresses and ex-toyboys review each other’s literary effusions with every appearance of disinterested expertise.

So to Catholic Converts Down Under ... And All Over. I have known its editor Wanda Skowronska since she approached me with a request that I contribute material to the volume. Besides, I have known JACHS’s James Franklin for almost 40 years. The book includes a short profile of recently deceased editor-columnist Christopher Pearson, for whose Adelaide Review I rather often wrote. Accordingly I cannot bring to this release that judicial detachment doubtless desirable, and elsewhere, at least theoretically, feasible. My own contribution can be read, or at any rate avoided, on pp. 5-13.

Of the converts here, one has come to Catholicism from Judaism (pp. 184-187), one from Zoroastrianism (pp. 14-22). Two came (pp. 204-208) from Hinduism. Some are ex-Muslims. We have a sprinkling of ex-communists. The late New Yorker Bernard Nathanson (p. 177-183) used

* R. J. Stove, who underwent Catholic baptism in 2002, lives in Melbourne. His books include César Franck: His Life And Times (Scarecrow Press, Maryland, 2012).
to be an abortionist (François Mauriac once observed: ‘Hell has its own cloisters’). Surprisingly numerous contributors possess New Age or Buddhist backgrounds. More predictably, Protestantism (ranging from Lutheranism to Pentecostalism) is also represented. Malcolm Turnbull failed to make the cut.

The absence of big literary names – Pearson excepted – has the merit of nullifying the charge once routinely levelled at British converts: that of wanting to join what Belloc, in 1920, somewhat tactlessly called ‘the bosses and the chic.’ Many avenues remain open to any Australian craving membership among ‘the bosses and the chic’ (Liberal or ALP preselection, reality-TV appearances, Taylor Swift’s media secretariat); yet Catholicism is not among them. To Whittaker Chambers’s admission that by abandoning his Soviet allegiance ‘I am leaving the winning side for the losing side,’ we sincere Australian converts inevitably relate. Not losing in the next life, of course; Catholicism prohibits suchlike despair. But indubitably forfeiting our career hopes within Australia’s post-Christian polis, which Bob Santamaria long ago described as the world’s first culture ever to believe in literally nothing at all.

‘[R]elatively little,’ Wanda Skowronska’s introduction notes (p. xv), ‘has been written of conversions to Catholicism from Down Under.’ Does a genuinely anti-convert spirit afflict mainstream Australian Catholicism? Maybe in Archbishop Mannix’s militantly Hibernian Melbourne it once did. Speak as one finds: Australian cradle-Catholics have nowhere audibly deplored my convert status, nor did I experience the deliberate familial antagonism which hurt some of this book’s contributors. From the account by Canberra public servant Henry Craft (p. 145): ‘They [Craft’s Anglican parents] spoke of disowning me ... They did burn my Catholic books and pamphlets.’

Ex-communist Galina grew up in Cold War Uzbekistan. Transferred to Lwiw, Ukraine, she somehow discovered a local Catholic parish. There (pp. 161-162) ‘[s]he heard that there was a place called heaven, another called hell, someone called “the Blessed Virgin,” Joseph, saints, and a book called the Bible.’ (All credit to her for working that out, within the Evil Empire too. There exists many an upper-middle-class teenage Australian whom 12 years of notional Catholic schooling have left in apparently invincible ignorance of these data.) Another convert, Wagga-Wagga-based Maylee, spent her girlhood in Red China. Upon the death in 1976 of history’s greatest mass-murderer, ‘we all cried – Mao was like a god to us’ (p. 80).

At times (and even omitting the workers’-paradise factor), conversions
have necessitated financial punishment, such as adopting modish anti-Catholic blackguardism would have forever dispelled. Once erstwhile Lutheran pastor Peter Holmes submitted to Rome, he still had a family to support somehow. ‘When the time came to move, a kind Catholic priest put up the bond money ... A week later he [Holmes] had just spent the family’s last $16 on fish and chips for dinner on Friday evening and they ate packaged noodles and powdered soup on the weekend’ (p. 78).

In my view, the best essay (pp. 130-141) comes from Fr Brian Harrison, examining with unruffled politesse the claims of Eastern Orthodoxy, and fundamentally rejecting them. Even 10 years back, this analysis might have seemed like overkill. It seems nothing of the sort now, with Catholic-to-Orthodox converts (Louisiana’s Rod Dreher and Switzerland’s Gabriel Bunge are the two best known) far outnumbering Orthodox-to-Catholic converts, and with Pope Francis having inspired in his ostensibly Catholic enemies Stateside – enemies whose ‘thinking’, a.k.a. the Americanist heresy condemned outright in 1899 by Leo XIII, occupies the entire ideological spectrum from Ann Coulter to Donald Trump – an ad hominem vitriol unsurpassed since the Orwellian hate-sessions against Paul VI over *Humanae Vitae*. Truly, though, not just Fr Harrison’s article but the book as a whole merits repeated perusal, and is bound to do good in Religious Education classes. A pity that no index adorns it.

Will Catholic Converts ... acquire non-Catholic readers? Has the 21st century an analogue to Arnold Lunn passionately defending Protestantism against Monsignor Ronald Knox, only to discern a strange sensation of the ground under his feet turning to quicksand? Is there an Australian equivalent of Joseph Pearce, who found while in jail that his neo-Nazism could not survive his discovery of Chesterton? To these enquiries we shall have answers soon enough. Meanwhile, for Catholics themselves, this anthology is perhaps best understood in that spirit articulated, outside Catholicism, by Robert Frost:

‘Home is the place where, when you have to go there, /
They have to take you in.’
**BOOK REVIEW**

*Australia’s Catholic University: the first twenty-five years*

Author: John Hirst  
Publisher: Australian Catholic University Ltd, 2015  
ISBN: 978-1-922097-29-3  
Paperback, 170 pages, $36  
Reviewed by Michael Costigan*

Two of a number of events during 2015, marking the 25th anniversary of the founding of Australian Catholic University, were a Solemn Mass of celebration led by Archbishop Denis Hart, President of the University Council, in St Mary’s Cathedral, Sydney, and the publishing of this history of those action-packed twenty-five years.

I have had some associations with ACU almost since it came into being at the beginning of 1991. At that time, I was employed by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference in the areas of social justice, human rights and overseas development. In some of its major undertakings, the Bishops Committee of which I was the executive secretary was to receive considerable help from members of the new university’s staff. Those projects included national consultations on the distribution of wealth in Australia, the situation and future of young people in this country and the role of women in the Catholic Church here.

An early professional assessment of the bishops’ consultation methodology by ACU’s Dr Muredach Dynan was of considerable value to these projects. Advice from university academics with expertise on the

(This review draws in part on an address by Michael Costigan, substituting for an ailing Professor Craven as guest speaker, at the annual Christmas lunch of the Australian Catholic Historical Society on 29th November 2015.)

* Michael Costigan, Adjunct Professor at Australian Catholic University, associated with the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy
economy had been helpful during the wealth inquiry. Later I was invited to address one of ACU’s early graduation ceremonies on the bishops’ hopes for the young. And the hierarchy’s remarkably successful consultation on women in the Church was the occasion for years of close collaboration between my office and representatives of ACU and of Religious leaders. The contribution to that project by ACU people and associates like Professor Peter Carpenter, Dr Marie Macdonald, Sisters Margaret Malone sgs and Sonia Wagner sgs, Ms Sandie Cornish and Professors Gabrielle McMullen, Bob Dixon and Bernard Daffey cannot be over-estimated.

I sense that cooperation between ACU and the Bishops Conference, together with its agencies, as well as Religious Orders and Congregations in such other areas as concern for the environment in the wake of the encyclical Laudato Si has continued and indeed intensified since my retirement from the formal service of the bishops.

That departure occurred just over ten years ago, in 2005. Soon afterwards, still in that year, to my surprise and delight I was offered an adjunct professorship at the University. My link has been with the Theology and Philosophy Faculty, with my base on the Strathfield campus for several years and now in North Sydney.

During eight of those ten years, Professor Greg Craven has been the University’s Vice-Chancellor. With a legal background he brought to the role his extensive administrative and teaching experience in other universities, including Notre Dame in WA, as well as a national reputation as an articulate expert on government, the Australian Constitution and public as well as religious affairs. My association with Greg Craven since his arrival at ACU has given me some chance to witness or become aware of just some of his achievements there, added to those of his predecessors, Peter Drake and Peter Sheehan, which I already knew.

Some of the evidence for this, in the form of buildings, could be seen in a five-minute walk from where St Mary MacKillop lies buried. There is the Vice-Chancellor’s Quarters at 40 Edward Street, occupying what for years was the Apostolic Delegation, where Pope Paul VI rested his weary head in 1970 during the first ever papal visit to Australia. Looking from the street towards that imposing edifice, one can now see to its left the exquisite small chapel and baptistery dedicated to Our Lady Seat of Wisdom. This was a Craven initiative, as is the reconstructed plaza in front of the Vice-Chancellor, with its beautiful statue of St Mary MacKillop, patron of the North Sydney campus. Behind and a little to the right of the vice-chancellor’s office is the four-storey Carroll Building, opened in 1988 by Prime Minister Bob Hawke and named after Archbishop James Carroll, who played a key role.
in winning government support for religious education institutions from primary to tertiary level.

Several other buildings in streets close to the central campus, mainly Berry and Napier Streets, have been bought or are being leased for University purposes. Valuable acquisitions include the recently baptized Caroline Chisholm House at 33 Berry Street and, at 8-30 Napier Street, the 22-storey office block now named Tenison Woods House.

One could list many other similar developments, some of them architecturally outstanding, on the University’s other campuses in Strathfield (NSW), Fitzroy (Melbourne), Banyo (Brisbane), Ballarat (Victoria), Thebarton (Adelaide), Dickson (Canberra) and, last but not least, on the Janiculum Hill in Rome, where only this year Professor Craven, in collaboration with the Catholic University of America, oversaw the opening of a Centre designed to enhance the cultural, educational and research capabilities of students and personnel from both universities.

Statistics too reveal much about what has to be judged the extraordinary success of the ACU project, for which some prophets of doom twenty-five years ago predicted almost certain failure. What began as the difficult and painful amalgamation of relatively small training institutions for future teachers and nurses in three States and the Australian Capital Territory is today a thriving multi-campus national university with some 33,000 students from Australia and overseas and a staff of 2,100 academics and other professionals. It has been an astonishing transformation.

Another indication of the project’s success and of ACU’s now unchallenged authenticity came to my attention recently with the announcement of the list of awards to universities for Excellence in Research in Australia (ERA). Many of ACU’s disciplines received Field of Research scores that were at or above (in the case of Psychology well above) world standards. In the words of the Vice-Chancellor, “these excellent results demonstrate that ACU is positioning itself to become a leading research university and highlight our commitment to supporting and developing excellence in research”.

Lest my reflections give the impression that I am simply doing a PR job for ACU, I would refer history-lovers to the account of those twenty-five years and what preceded them by the skilled writer and historian John Hirst.

This book, written with the flair one would expect from John Hirst and adorned by many fascinating photographs, gives a frank account of the many problems and controversies that confronted the university before and
during its life-time, even to the present day. One of these relates to varying approaches among interested parties to the University’s Catholicity. Others have been concerned with bruised feelings over appointments or the naming of campuses, with inter-city rivalries or with the obvious “tyranny of distance” difficulties facing managers and overseers of national enterprises in Australia.

Some contentious issues have involved one of the most famous and at times controversial figures in the Church in Australia, Cardinal George Pell, who is rightly credited as one of ACU’s principal founders, together with the likes of Brother Ambrose Payne, Sir Bernard Callinan, Cardinal Clancy (the University’s first Chancellor) and a sometimes sceptical government minister and architect of university reform, John Dawkins. A passage on page 111 introducing the fascinating Chapter 8 (“Crisis”) about the funding of Notre Dame University and the taxing of ACU is only one of several in the book where the author places George Pell at centre stage, both favourably and less so. I can only applaud this kind of open approach, not always found in commissioned institutional histories.

Leaving all of that to one side, I make no excuses for my enthusiasm for Australian Catholic University and its exciting growth and development. In these times the Church in Australia can do with a good news story like this. John Hirst’s handsome volume, which could have benefitted from an index, is a highly recommended source of optimism-inspiring information.
BOOK REVIEW

Post God Nation? How Religion Fell Off the Radar in Australia – And What Might be Done to Get It Back On

Author: Roy Williams
Publisher: ABC Books, 2015
ISBN: 9780733333583
Paperback, 406 pages, $32.99

Book review by James Franklin*

In two previous books, Roy Williams established himself as one of the leading commentators on religion in Australia. His God, Actually (2008), written at the height of the Dawkins-Hitchens “new atheism” push, defended the Christian vision on a wide front. As befitted a former lawyer, he dispassionately considered the whole range of evidence for and against God. His 2013 book, In God They Trust? surveyed the religious beliefs of Australia’s Prime Ministers. He found they almost all had a genuine Christian or semi-Christian faith, but generally of a somewhat non-sectarian flavour – none showed either the rather florid Catholicism of Arthur Calwell or the crusading atheism of John Latham, two opposition leaders who did not succeed in entering the Lodge.

The present book is an impressive, large-scale survey of the Christian heritage in Australia – whence it came, where it went, and what might be done to encourage its return. The first of its two parts is an important work of history. It is a very carefully researched, comprehensive and fair survey of the influence of Christianity in Australia. Reviewing the book in The Australian, Gerard Windsor suggested skipping this part as it is a “commonsense assumption” that religion was central to the foundation of Australia. That is absolutely false. The younger generation in particular is unaware of that, and they certainly will not learn about it in school.

* James Franklin is editor of the Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society and author of Catholic Values and Australian Realities (Connor Court).
Australian historians, with the notable exception of Manning Clark, have generally been uninterested in the religious ideas that motivated so many earlier Australians (indeed, they have not shown much interest in ideas in general, except for narrowly political ones). The task of digging up the pervasive and deep commitment to faith by the great majority of the white Australians of the first hundred and fifty years is one that very much needed doing. Williams has done it in resounding and readable completeness.

Some of the most interesting historical information is in a long appendix of “biographical sketches”, potted biographies of a wide range of Australians with special attention to their religious backgrounds and commitments. It is an eye-opener, given the neglect of that aspect in standard biographies. It is well-known that Sir William Deane is Catholic, for example, but in a single page Williams shows there is much more to it than that. As an altar boy, Deane was close to Canberra’s first parish priest, Monsignor Haydon, then knew well the celebrated Brother Liguori at St Joseph’s, Hunters Hill. He was an enthusiastic DLP worker in its early years, though soon fell out with that party. That background goes some way to explain his commitments to social justice and to natural law legal theory when he was High Court justice and then Governor-General.

Williams naturally has to negotiate the difficult issue of sectarianism. A Presbyterian himself, he succeeds in giving a fair and balanced view of the contributions of both Protestants and Catholics (and helpfully includes an appendix on the basic differences between the two traditions). He praises those Christians in Australia who contained sectarian tensions, such as Governor Bourke, a solid Anglican who argued that Catholics were Christian and “both roads may lead the faithful to salvation”. The massive Catholic contribution to schools, hospitals and charities is well covered, and Williams admits that the Catholic Church’s commitment to its schools has been a big factor in its numbers holding up better than those of Protestant churches.

The second half of the book traces the decline of Christianity in Australia since 1900. The fact of the matter is clear enough from statistics and the absence of Christian talk from the public square. The causes are less clear, and Williams explores them carefully. The tendency to think that science has all the answers is one. A less obvious one is the lower visibility of death and serious illness – although the death rate still stands as it always did, at exactly one per person, death is hidden in nursing homes, so can mostly be ignored during the years when people’s ideas are formed. Hence the complacency and sense of self-sufficiency that form one of religion’s...
chief enemies take hold. Simple prosperity too – it is a good thing in itself, but, as he writes, “The state of your soul is the core issue, not your level of wealth. Accordingly, to the extent that prosperity tends to deflect attention from this issue, it is a killer of belief.” Guilt is not what it was either, often psychologised away as “hangups”. Williams, whose views are strongly pacifist, is also inclined to attribute some effect to the churches’ siding with war, especially World War I and the Vietnam War. It is not easy to say if that is right. Certainly the 1920s were an era of disillusionment with religious along with other ideals; on the other hand, the anti-religious currents of the late 1960s were equally apparent in Britain, which had no involvement in the Vietnam War.

As to what can be done to bring religion back, Williams has several suggestions, including that the churches should ditch their moral objections to homosexual acts per se (though not to homosexual marriage, which he regards as a distinguishable issue, and does not endorse). His central thesis is that education is the main arena for action. “Religious ignorance is the main factor in secularisation”, he says. Children simply do not learn anything much about religion at school. A brief look at the National Curriculum supports his view; one will be hard put to find anything about post-medieval Christianity in the history curriculum. “Judeo-Christian civilization” is a meaningless term for the products of Australia’s secular schools (and many of the so-called religious ones as well).

If readers are inspired by Williams’ book to make a small contribution to making Christianity in Australia more visible, there is one simple thing that any literate person can do. Pick at random an Australian town or suburb, google the churches in it and their webpages, then edit the Wikipedia article of the town or suburb to include a section on them.
Book Note

Soul of the West: Christianity and the Great Tradition

Author: David Daintree
Publisher: Connor Court Publishing, 2015
ISBN: 9781925138818
Paperback, 76 pages, $22.95

Book note by James Franklin

Small but perfectly formed, Australian civilization is a chip off the old block. (That is, Christian Europe.) Australian culture was transported whole from the British Isles to the edge of Asia. It has been broadened but not fundamentally transformed by immigrants from different cultures, yet it has been greatly changed – some would say flattened and degraded – by the secularisation common to Western countries.

Australians, and indeed Asians who deal with Australians and other cultural Europeans, need to understand the basics about the origins and orientation of European civilization. Unfortunately they don’t. The causes are more than the young being inevitably born knowing nothing. Something has gone seriously wrong with the normal mechanisms of cultural transmission. “Other” cultures are praised and studied, our own is abused and apologised for from a position of wilful ignorance. Consider the National Curriculum in history, which last mentions Christianity in connection with the Black Death and completely ignores the role of religion in modern history.

Daintree writes, “For all its occasional outbursts of patriotic ebullience, Australia today is transfixed and partially paralysed by cultural uncertainty … the public displays of patriotism and the myths of mateship paper over the reality of a society riven by self-doubt, a small enclave of twenty million people mainly of European origin cast adrift in a huge continent on the fringe of Asia, ashamed of our treatment of our aboriginal predecessors, embarrassed by our British institutions, muddled by political correctness.”

His short book is the perfect antidote to Australia’s self-imposed cultural amnesia. Immensely well-informed but fast-paced and easily readable by anyone, the book runs through the role of Christianity (as well as the pagan ancient world) in forming the “Western patrimony” of ideas in language, literature, law and society, music and art, and humour. Daintree puts simply such obvious, deep but easily forgotten historical lessons as “Caring for
the poor – the sense that we actually have a debt to those less fortunate than themselves – and sorrow for sins – the idea that we should try to make amends for the evil that we’ve done, an idea that led to the foundation of so many foundations and charitable institutions in Europe, all these things we owe to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Even those who have lost or never held the Faith retain the conscience.”

David Daintree is head of the Christopher Dawson Centre for Cultural Studies in Tasmania and was previously President of Campion College in western Sydney. Those two institutions are leaders in promoting and revivifying Christian civilizational values in Australia. His new book deserves success in making that perspective available to a new generation.
Stations of the Cross, Sacred Heart parish, St Albans, Good Friday 1953:
Father Con Reis and parishioners

See article by Val Noone, *Father Con Reis and the Movement’s attempted takeover of Catholic immigration ministry: a Melbourne and a national issue, 1950-53*, p 137
Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart Mission in the Snowy Mountains region in the early 1960s.


Archives of the Sister of St. Joseph - printed with permission.