

Benedictine arrivals in the Australian mission such as Vincent Dowling' (p 139). Dowling was a Dominican who had arrived in 1831.

In the foreword to the book, Abbot Geoffrey Scott of the Douay Benedictine community, to which James Ambrose Cotham belonged, comments that this book marks a shift in biographies of English Catholic clergy from studies of leaders to the 'lower echelons of the ordinary parish clergy'. The same cannot be said for Australia, where leading Benedictines, Archbishop Roger Vaughan and bishop-elect (évêque manqué) Austin Sheehy, still lack biographies.

This is the definitive biography of Cotham; there will not be another. It fully realises the dedication Vials has shown to her subject and her exceptional grasp of the sources.

BOOK REVIEW

A Cause of Trouble? Irish Nuns and English Clerics, 2nd edition

Author: M M K O'Sullivan (Moira RSC)

Publisher: Kindle Direct Publishing

ISBN: 9781986685405

Paperback, 268 pages

Reviewed by Irene Franklin*

Having read the book several days ago the main impression I have of its substance is that it contains a catalogue of differences between the first Catholic nuns to arrive in Australia, in 1838 (the Sisters of Charity from Ireland) and Archbishop Polding and other priests, particularly his right-hand man Abbot Gregory.

Polding was a Benedictine whose ambition it was to grow the Benedictine presence and therefore influence in the colony. He also firmly believed that all money from a Catholic source should be under his control no matter what the donors' intentions were. He greatly resented it if he was unable to wrangle away, for example, money raised for the building and setting up of St Vincent's Convent and Hospital.

The few dowries that were sent to Australia with nuns from Ireland were

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taken by Polding and added to diocesan funds. (Some were left in Ireland because the Mother House did not realise the dire straits of the nuns on arrival.)

A parishioner Mary Corcoran had a deed drawn up in which she “sold” two cottages for a nominal sum to two priests to be rented out with the money going to the support of the nuns, but the nuns never received any benefit. Similarly when property in Parramatta that the nuns had used was sold when they went to work in Sydney, the money again was not available to them. William Davis willed a house and invested £1500 for the nuns to yield an income, but again they received nothing.

One of the sisters, Sr Mary Baptist de Lacy, charged Polding with amalgamating the Sisters of Charity with the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, changing the rules and constitutions that had been approved by the Holy See and should not have been changed by any lesser authority. Polding had also had himself declared principal superior of the congregation against the constitution.

In order to attract nuns to do necessary work Polding had agreed that the Archdiocese would be responsible for their upkeep, but he did not keep his word. He disgracefully claimed to Propaganda Fide in Rome, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in Lyon, and to Sydney Catholics that the Sisters of Charity were a financial burden on the Archdiocese.

When the Sisters of Charity began in Ireland their constitution was radically different from other orders because they were not to be an enclosed order. The clerics misunderstood this and how it impacted on the nuns’ lives.

Fr John McEncroe, who was Irish and not a Benedictine, was very active in working to meet the needs of the Catholic Church in Sydney. That did not please Polding as he saw it working against his Benedictine hopes, so, with questionable judgement, he was obstructionist.

Polding’s behaviour was a clear example of the clericalism that has infected the Church up to almost today. The unrealistic belief that being ordained made the priest infinitely superior to a normal human being resulted in hiding priests’ misbehaviour to avoid scandal. The very act of hiding priests’ misdemeanours is yet another scandal, as shown in the reaction to bishops hiding sexual abuse of children by priests. The intention of Pope John XXIII in calling the Second Vatican Council was to correct such attitudes and behaviour. His intentions have been disregarded and abuses have continued.

The book has a number of other interesting observations of personalities, behaviour, both singular and collective, but these can be discovered by those lay Catholics who sincerely want to find out what went on inside the religious and clerical sides of the Catholic Church.

BOOK REVIEW

The Doers: A Surgical History of St. Vincent's Hospital Sydney 1857–2007

Author: Maxwell J Coleman

Publisher: JAM Graphics, 2018

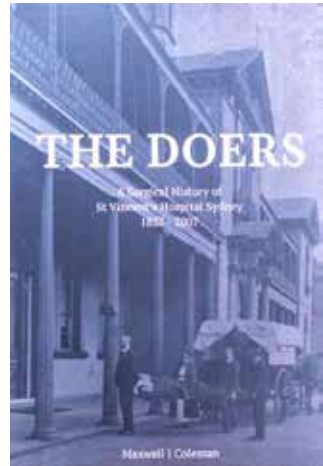
ISBN 9780646995205

363 pages

Price: \$75

Reviewed by Anne Thoeming*

Perhaps marathon running and mountaineering should be pre-requisites for anyone writing a prosopography such as Maxwell J Coleman's *The Doers: A Surgical History of St. Vincent's Hospital Sydney 1857–2007*. Coleman—whose own entry is on page 272—completed such physical feats then turned his intellectual talents to crafting a corpus that is indispensable to Australian medical history. He has also presented historians with an intriguing classification dilemma: is the work a micro-biography of the men and few women surgeons who operated on the thousands of patients that passed through St. Vincent's Hospital in Sydney in a one hundred and fifty-year period; or is it an institutional history as seen through the engagement of its actors? It is probably a bit of both as Coleman has wrapped the institution around the people. Categorisations aside, the people in this extensive, painstakingly researched, carefully footnoted, and beautifully



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