

the Provincial there when the Bishop of Bathurst tried to wrest control of the centrally-governed foundation so that it became a diocesan Order.

Many demanding situations took their toll on Teresa's health, particular in the 1870s. Although at times full of self-doubt, Teresa remained "humble but firm", a sensible and empathetic leader. She died whilst serving at The Vale, after only eight years with the Josephites.

Crowley's final chapter is a moving, mature reflection on Teresa's "inner life". She does not retell aspects of the Josephite story already well documented elsewhere, but useful footnotes guide readers to relevant work. Throughout, Crowley's writing on relationships and characters involved with the Institute during these years are a pleasure to read. *A Priceless Treasure* brings honour to one largely overlooked, and the book itself is, indeed, a treasure.

BOOK REVIEW

Of Labour and Liberty: Distributism in Victoria 1891-1966

Author: Race Mathews

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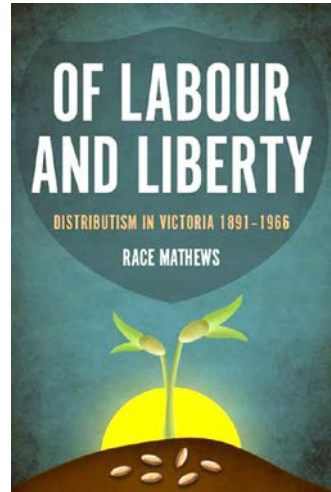
Sometimes the best surprises are the unexpected.

Race Mathews's new book on Catholic influence – once prominent now largely faded – on the ALP in Victoria is a fascinating story. Scholarship, clarity of expression, supportive exposition of the aligned compatibility between social democratic and Laborist positions and Church social theory – from the papal encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and Pope Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), the English-origin though universal ideas of Distributism, to Catholic social thinking in the heyday of Catholic Action in Australia from the mid-1930s to mid-1960s – are

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explored thoroughly and sympathetically.

The book, *Of Labor and Liberty, Distributism in Victoria 1891-1961*, complements Gerard Henderson's equally well researched *Santamaria and the Bishops* (1982) on the involvement of the Australian Catholic Church in social and political issues in an overlapping period. But this book goes further in discussing various creative expressions in Australia of Distributism (also known as distributionism or distributivism) – words that never really took to the English language. The ideology, however, for a time flourished in response to and based upon the principles of Catholic social teaching, especially the teachings in the above-mentioned encyclicals



defining and suggesting Catholic alternatives to Statist socialism and unfettered capitalism. Distributists popularised the merit of independent action in localised and independent communities, hoping and working for examples and achievements of conscientious expression of Catholic principles that might inspire and shape the society around them. Distinctively, they advocated widespread private ownership of housing and control of industry through owner-operated small businesses and worker-controlled cooperatives.

It might be noted that both in the UK and in Australia, particularly in the Edwardian era and in the 1920s, anti-Statist alternatives to socialism, such as the independent National Guilds and Guild Socialist movements in the UK, were widely reported and commented on in the radical press in Australia, and were influential in emphasising “socialisation” rather than “nationalisation” in the adoption of the ALP’s objective in 1921. This tradition interacted with Catholic advocates of social justice and in opposition to Bolshevism and doctrinaire positions of State control.

Mathews’s work, a rewrite of his 2014 Doctorate in Theology thesis, “Manning’s Children: Responses to *Rerum Novarum* in Victoria 1891 to 1966”, is in many ways an astonishing achievement coming from a non-Catholic ALP activist, former leader of the Victorian Fabian Society, former MP in the national and Victorian parliaments (a Minister in the latter), whom as a complete outsider has come to appreciate Catholic social thinking.

At the start of the book Mathews says that through serial biography, he

hopes to establish “through the prism of emblematic reformers the attendant clash of ideas, circumstances, aspirations and ambitions” and to tell the story that way.

He accounts for the social justice encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, referring to the influence of the English prelate Cardinal Manning (1808-1892), both in its conception and popularisation; and, in the Australian context, the advocacy of Cardinal Moran (1830-1911) in Sydney and across Australia, of social justice and freedom for workers.

Chapters on Cardinals Manning and Moran are followed by those on Archbishop Mannix (1864-1963), the Archbishop of Melbourne for 46 years; Frank Maher (1905-2004) and the Campion Society; Kevin Kelly (1910-1994) and the Campion Consensus – a reference to the ideas of Catholic Action, including those of the Belgian priest Joseph Cardijn (1882-1965) and his idea of Jocism – derived from his *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne* movement which taught that moral formation should be through the organisation’s ‘Inquiry’ or “see, judge, act” motto of applying moral principles to a workplace, communities, and in a person’s daily life.

Chapters proceed on the Australian National Secretariat for Catholic Action formed in 1937; the eclipsing of the Catholic Action old guard from the mid-1940s onwards by the polarising Catholic layman B.A. Santamaria (1915-1998); the political successes then the debacle that followed; an account of the Young Christian Workers movement – including the growth of co-operatives, particularly credit unions in Australia; then the Mondragon experience.

Mathews’ 2009 book, *Jobs of Our Own: Building a Stakeholder Society: Alternatives to the Market and the State*, works from the premise that there is little enthusiasm today for massive state ownership, and no trust in the alternative of unbounded capitalism. Despite the blighting realisation that Third Way proposals have often turned out to be no less sterile, he argues there is a little appreciated alternative.

In this new writing, Mathews again celebrates the Mondragón experience – the extraordinary 80,000-person grouping of worker-owned cooperatives in manufacturing, financial, retail civil engineering and agricultural fields – based in Spain’s Basque region. He sees Mondragón, whose first cooperatives date from the mid-1950s, as a guide as to how to move the ideas of worker-ownership and cooperation into high gear and large scale. He dedicates his book to Fr. Don José Maria Arizmendiarieta (1916-1976), the Catholic Action founder of the Mondragón experiments.

Maher and Kelly are now unfamiliar names, even though both were

instrumental in forming Catholic Action organisations in Australia. Interestingly, both are extensively mentioned in Gerard Henderson's biography *Santamaria. A Most Unusual Man* (2015) – although Kelly is dismissed unfavourably as some kind of naïve, impractical dreamer, given his concerns that religious priorities were being transfigured by and transfixed to Santamaria's wider political ambitions. Defeating the communist and fellow traveller takeover of the ALP in the 1940s was a justification for the diversion of concentrated, organised effort to that danger but this, in Kelly's view, had the potential of diminishing concentration on religious formation and the evangelising of Catholic Action principles.

Mathews sides with Kelly, in contrast to Santamaria and despite Henderson's critique. He cogently argues that Santamaria should have shut down the intense involvement of the Catholic Social Studies Movement (formed in 1941) in the ALP in 1953, once the communists were mostly beaten in the unions. The national emergency – of communist seizure of the Labor movement – was over. Then was the time to return to the true purpose of Catholic Action, drawing the distinction, in the phrase of French Catholic intellectual Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), between Catholic Action and action by Catholics in politics. But hubris turned to nemesis with Santamaria's grand plans of permeating and gaining control of the ALP with "our people".

The Split, both in the Church hierarchy – Sydney v. Melbourne, and in the ALP, unleashed poisonous passions; families were split, Church influence faded and, as the Split stirred sectarian strife, alienated for nearly three decades most Catholics from the Labor Party in Victoria.

Controversially, Mathews sees Dr H.V. Evatt (1894-1965), the Labor Leader who precipitated the ALP Split of 1954-57, as a reasonable man, given Santamaria's fanatical desire to take over the ALP. A better interpretation, however, would see Evatt, Santamaria, and Archbishop Mannix as all terribly flawed figures who destroyed so much of what they had created. Of the latter, on Mannix, Matthews says: "For half a century the prospects for implementation of the encyclicals, and the degree of formation needed to give effect to them, waxed and waned in concert with his priorities, and ultimately were defeated by them." Mathews sees the result as vindication of Kelly's view – and that of Mannix's successor, Archbishop Simonds (1890-1967) – that the active, factionalised involvement of the Church in party political fights would end in tears.

Henderson, in his works, argues that Catholic Action, the role of laymen and the religious in its development, its guiding principles, were porous

ideas complicated with plenty of scope for disputes concerning doctrine, meaning, and implications, which meant there were ample areas of conflict as to deciding what belongs to Caesar and to God in organisation and tactics. Perhaps this could have been more carefully explored by Mathews; but that is to wish for a different book. The issue points to further exploration by future scholars of the rich themes examined.

As does the concept of what, exactly, are the alternatives, Catholic spurred and otherwise, to untrammelled capitalism or socialism. To adapt a phrase of the Australian philosopher John Passmore,(1914-2004), there is a straw-man problem in referencing the rival theories as posited by Mathews. Straw men are empty headed, usually so described so that a competing theory can look more substantial. But there are many “Third Way” options, including the societies in which we currently live, and much else besides. Mathews’ book is stimulatory in suggesting avenues for debate on this important area, also.

Not content to be an historian merely recording one damn thing after another, there are tinges of regret in Mathews’ narrative as he calls for fresh action to revive Catholic theory and its friendly relations with compatible secular movements and traditions. Both the Labor and Catholic social theory traditions can be enriched through such interaction. Mondragón is a reference that dreams can turn real. His original research on Kelly’s and Maher’s efforts are another starting point. One might add that Pope Francis’ 2013 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* is another.

Mathews’ research, one feels sure, will invigorate fresh assessments – not only of Australian history, but on the applied efforts to develop in Australia practical reforms – and the application of Catholic social justice theory. He ends the book saying “...at a time when both the advocates of the statutory corporation school of State Socialism and their ‘greed is good’ counterparts in the corporate sphere have simultaneously and comprehensively discredited themselves, the way is open for Distributism to assume the larger role – locally, regionally, nationally and on a global basis - to which its merits so plainly entitle it.” That’s an inspiring rallying call that recouples Labor and liberty to Catholic social justice. Not for the first time, the future can be discovered through looking to the past.