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St John's College tower, 1938

The cover image is from the black and white print of St John's College tower when new in 1938, which is included in the text of Dr Anne-Maree Whitaker's story at page 101 of this issue as 'Freehill Tower' (*Building*, 1938), which had been colourised using software developed by Emil Wallnér, founder & CEO of Palette.

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Contents

Janice Tranter, Tenison Woods on his visits to Newcastle and Maitland, 1871, 1872	5
Benedict Smith, The road less travelled: a nineteenth century journey with the Catholic pioneers of Tasmania	12
Mary Barthelemy, St Magdalen's Retreat Tempe – Just a penitentiary?	22
Jeff Kildea, 'The Missing Magdalens': the ABC resurrects a 'hidden story' discredited more than a century ago	42
Scott McCarthy, Federation, sectarianism, and the Catholic middle class in Australia	50
Monica van Gend, Confidently Catholic: The Knights of the Southern Cross and the 29th International Eucharistic Congress of 1928	71
Anne-Maree Whitaker, The Freehill philanthropy: benefactions to the Catholic Church by Patrick, Frank and Eileen Freehill	89
Patrick Kirkwood, "The Milk of Paradise": Reflections on family, church and media, 1935–2023	103
Edmund Campion, Can the Church change its mind?	122
Cardinal Pell-Gerard Brennan exchange on conscience, intro by Frank Brennan	128
Catherine Thom, From taproot to rhizome: What you never knew about the secret lives of women religious post Vatican II	139
Robert Haddad, George Cardinal Pell's contribution to tertiary chaplaincy reform: a personal recollection	154
Paul Collins, Resolving Catholicism's dichotomies	166

Book reviews

Paul K. Hawkes, <i>A Bold Story Well Proven: One Hundred Years of the Knights of the Southern Cross in South Australia</i> , reviewed by Monica van Gend	179
Charmaine Robson, <i>Missionary Women, Leprosy and Indigenous Australians, 1936–1986</i> , reviewed by Hilary Carey	182
Zvonimir Gavranovic, <i>Bleiburg: Massacre of the Croatian People 1945</i> , reviewed by Edmund Campion	184
Robert A. Sirico, ed, <i>Pell Contra Mundum</i> , book note by James Franklin	186
James Franklin and Gerry O Nolan, <i>Calwell</i> , reviewed by Michael Costigan	187
Paul Hartigan, <i>Seminary: My life in a spiritual gulag</i> , reviewed by Michael Costigan	191
Bob Wilkinson, <i>New Visions of Priesting</i> , reviewed by Michael Costigan	194
Colleen Keating, <i>Hildegard of Bingen: A Poetic Journey</i> , book note by Anne Power	198

TENISON WOODS ON HIS VISITS TO NEWCASTLE AND MAITLAND, 1871, 1872

Janice Tranter*

Introduction

Julian Tenison Woods' first visits to Newcastle and Maitland occurred in 1871 and 1872. After the second visit, he wrote an article on his impressions from both visits for his Catholic monthly, *The Chaplet and the Southern Cross*, a paper he founded in Adelaide to provide Catholic reading for the lay faithful. The article, part of a series, 'The Church in New South Wales', is especially significant because of the time of the visits: the first, a week after the excommunication of Mary MacKillop and the second, soon after the excommunication was lifted. The article, in a personal, conversational style, is a delightful piece of writing, throwing light not only on the places Woods visited, but on Woods himself.

He first visited Newcastle on the way to Maitland with Archbishop Polding to confer with Bishop Murray on the crisis that had just erupted in Adelaide: the excommunication of Mary. Murray was soon to go to Rome on his ad limina visit. Immediately prior to the excommunication, Woods was in Bathurst diocese, with the permission of Bishop Shiel and at Bishop Quinn's request, to give missions and choose a site for a Josephite foundation. On receiving a telegram from Adelaide asking him to 'come directly', as a convent was to be vacated, Woods and Quinn set out for Sydney. Here Woods received word of Mary's excommunication and went to Polding to discuss the crisis.¹

One week later, on Friday 29 September, Polding and Woods sailed to Newcastle, still in the archdiocese. Here, at Polding's direction, Woods preached a three-day mission for those preparing for confirmation. On Monday 2 October, they visited Murray, who then resided in East Maitland. Woods returned to Sydney the next day. It was a time of turmoil for Woods.

Woods next visited Newcastle and Maitland on 29–30 April 1872, seven months later and five weeks after the excommunication was lifted. At Murray's suggestion, the Dominicans had asked Woods to preach at the blessing and opening of their Church on the feast of Catherine of Siena.

1 For these events see Marie Foale, *The Josephite Story* (Adelaide: Gillingham Printers, 1989) 78–97; Margaret Press, *Julian Tenison Woods, 'Father Founder'* (North Blackburn Vic: Collins Dove, 1994, 100–125.

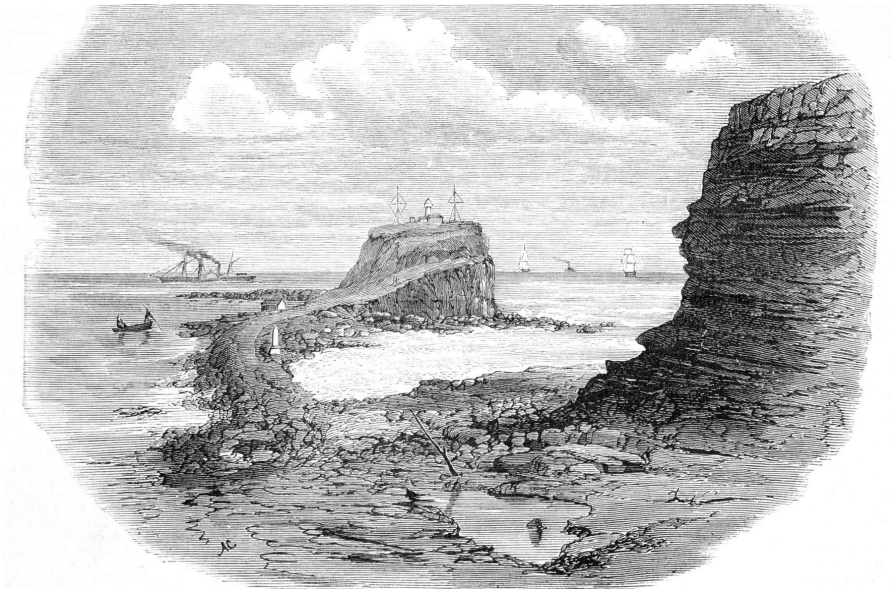
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From missions in Bathurst gold fields, Woods came to Maitland with Quinn, preached at the blessing and left the next day for his missions in the gold fields.

The article has no mention of the purpose of his first visit to Newcastle and Maitland, no recrimination, no word of injustice, no word of the five months of suffering of Mary and the sisters nor his own, which he said 'for sorrow and heavy affliction had no parallel in his life'.²

By the time of the second visit, not only had the excommunication of Mary been lifted but the sisters had regathered. The Josephite Institute was re-established.

With his keen perception, gift with words and note of humour, the article lets the reader share Woods' first visits to Newcastle and Maitland. The places come to life and so does the writer. A close reading lets the reader sense his vulnerability.



The Nobby Rock, Newcastle NSW (from the Illustrated Sydney News, 25 November 1871)

Feast of our Lady of the Rosary, anniversary of Woods' death, 7 October 2023

2 'Memoirs of Reverend J. E. Tenison Woods' (dictated), Typed copy, Archives, Sisters of St Joseph Lochinvar, Book 2, 45.

From The Editor, 'The Church in New South Wales', *The Chaplet and Southern Cross*, Vol III, No 26, Friday May 31, 1872, 408–410

Shortly after my return from Bathurst I was sent by the Archbishop to give a mission at Newcastle, and took the opportunity of visiting the city of Maitland before my return. Since then I have visited both places at the dedication of the new Dominican convent and church at West Maitland. I shall endeavor to put the observations derived from both visits into the present letter. Newcastle is a large seaport town about seventy miles north of Sydney. It is the great coal depot of Australia, and perhaps as beautifully situated as any place on the coast of New South Wales, except Wollongong. The only way to it is by sea, for an overland road is only obtained by a wide circuit, in consequence of the Blue Mountains, the scrub, and the deep indentations of Port Jackson and Broken Bay. I left Sydney in one of the fine paddle steamers of the A.S.N.Co. In less than an hour we were far out of sight and hearing of the busy streets and wharves of Sydney, tumbling and rolling in the dark blue Pacific. The bold precipices of Sydney harbor were just behind us, like the ruined gates of a giant city. We were near enough to the north head to trace every line and mark on the strata of sandstone – too near, indeed, to be without a nervous realization of what would become of our large steamer were we to be slowly uplifted on one of the swollen blue masses of water and dashed against the cliffs amid the white cascades of foam which forever fringe the base of these cliffs. This was indeed the fate of the ship Dunbar. Mistaking the lights, she steered straight on to the cliffs of the South Head. In a few minutes all was over, and only the bruised and broken timber with the dead floating into the harbor told the tale to the people of Sydney.

Our course was along the coast northerly for 60 or 70 miles. I need not describe it closely. Except for the opening of Broken Bay it is sandstone cliffs, with here and there a patch of forest land, or a bank of sand running down to the water's edge. At last we came in sight of what looked like an island, with a lighthouse of corpulent proportions and a large lantern on the top. Away from this stretches a long line of broken water with angry-looking waves and foam all round. This is the bar of the Hunter River. The passage from Sydney is usually rather rough, owing to the long heavy swell of the Pacific; but when the steamer gets upon the bar, she tosses and pitches in good earnest and hot haste. But it is soon over. There is dash, and foam, and fury around for a moment or two, and then comes smoother water. Two or three high curling breakers sweep defiantly after the stern of the vessel, and as the last dies out she glides inside the island and breakwater straight to the forest of collier ships by the wharves of Newcastle. There is something very

remarkable in the change from storm to stillness in this voyage, and it makes one inclined to look upon the town before you with a pleasant feeling. It rises very abruptly from the water side and certainly in its first aspect awakens all the grimy associations of coal. It is rather inclined to be black; the houses are huddled together, and there is a good deal of smoke. It is a wonder how cities will give themselves up to their destiny and never attempt to elevate or emancipate themselves from their position. This one seems to have felt its black fate, and losing its self-respect, has become in the order of Australian towns what a collier is in the orders of ships. But it is a busy thriving place; they say that the supplies of coal are inexhaustible. The number of ships and steamers along the river side and in the stream is very great. The appliances for loading the vessels with coal are interesting, and the constant passing and repassing of trucks and waggons, with coal or without coal, across a wide space of railway with branches and switches and junctions, are astonishing—nay, bewildering. Fortunately I did not come to see these things, for I never could attempt to describe them.

But let us go up to the Catholic Church, which you can see from the river high up upon the hill side in the midst of a cluster of houses. As we go up you will remark the extraordinary steepness of the streets. Well, this cannot be helped. No conveyance can climb some of them. Only a fly belonging to the Alpine Club could be supposed to make the journey in comfort. But what then is the reason for metalling them with large two-inch macadam? Yes, that is singular. Artillery waggons might wear them smooth in a year or so. Meanwhile the humble pedestrian picks a precarious path along the kerbstone with patience and resignation inversely proportionate to the tenderness of his feet. If you go straight up the hill to the church you will find the street slightly interrupted by a cliff some 30 feet in height. When this discovery is made you turn away and skirt the hill coming down upon the church from above.

The church in Newcastle is dedicated to our Lady Star of the Sea. Singularly enough the lighthouse, which guides the mariner to a safe passage over the bar of the river, has had to be erected close beside the portal of the building. All night long therefore, there is a brilliant light at the church, which is a star of the sea in a double sense. It is a large and handsome edifice, built of brick and stone. Like St. Patrick's in Sydney, it consists of two storeys, and the school is underneath. I can't say that I like this arrangement either for the sake of the church or the sake of the school, but it is economical at all events. There is to be a tower to the building, so that as yet it is unfinished. The interior is plain, but very neat and orderly; indeed the nice cleanliness

and propriety of this church reflect the highest credit on the Rev Father Ryan, to whose care it is confided. There is one feature in the arrangements which I think might be imitated at Port Adelaide. There are reserved in the front of the church some sittings for foreign sailors, so that they may find their comfort consulted when they come to Mass, and be induced to come again. The altar is on raised marble columns, like the altar at Virginia, in South Australia; there are, besides, statues of our Blessed Mother and St Joseph, and the whole effect of the interior is devotional. There are no aisles, and the church is consequently long, but a pulpit placed about a third of the way down the nave makes the preacher easily heard. In this coal city it is hardly necessary to say that the building is lit with gas. Opposite the church there is a fine commodious presbytery. The view from the verandah is magnificent. Not only does it look down upon the city, but it includes the river, the entrance, the shipping, the islands beyond, and then the mountains in the distance, making a prospect of singular variety and beauty. I have seen little in New South Wales to surpass it.

There is a school — a large one, I think, connected with the church, which though under the Board of Education is conducted with a very careful regard to the religious wants of the Catholic children. I must say that the teachers discharge their duties conscientiously. In all the diocese of Sydney, I never saw better conducted children, or more carefully prepared for the sacraments than they were here. Let me add, however, that the Catholic wants of Newcastle and the suburbs can be but half supplied if this is the only Catholic school in the neighborhood. The rest must be public schools, and that is in the end, indifference. Denominational schools may or may not be a boon where there is no Catholic one, but where they are not to be found—and sad to say, the places are very many—the Catholic child has to defend its faith in a very unequal combat with a kind of paganism.

And now we are on our road again, travelling up the banks of the Hunter on a railway which extends from Newcastle into the interior for nearly 200 miles. The country is flat, and if you will, of rich soil, but marshy, and very liable to inundation. The scrub on either side is thick, and of dark luxuriant foliage almost woven into a wall of leaves by creepers and wild vines. We stayed at one or two little scattered hamlets on our way. Waratah was one of them—a coal mine—round which the miners live in a straggling encampment of red brick houses. About 18 miles from Newcastle the scrub disappears, and the country opens out into fine alluvial plains, undulating more and more to the westward until they rise to a bold mountainous chain. The river is now confined to an open channel with grassy banks like downs

and with little timber. It is now a meadow land with pleasing marks of care upon it that seems richly to repay the cultivator's toil. In the midst of this there is a fine, open, well-built town of very cleanly appearance. This is East Maitland. A few miles further on and a regular city takes its place, a city which is larger than Bathurst, and almost as well built. This is West Maitland. Why are these two towns so near, or rather, why are they separated by this rich alluvial plain? Ah, this tells a sad circumstance in the history of Maitland. Like all the eastern waters, the Hunter is subject at times to extraordinary inundations. All the plain that you see, and not only the plain but the city, is flooded at times. There is scarcely a street or a house in East and West Maitland to which some melancholy story is not attached about the damage or the loss of life which floods have caused at various periods. But you see the houses occupied and busy as if there were never to be another heavy rain, while the inmates are certain to have to quit these places at the risk of their lives before long. To be astonished at this is to know very little of human nature.

The Bishop's house is, however, out of the reach of the floods. It is a fine and airy villa built in the West Indian style, partly of wood and partly of stone. There is a green lawn before, and an open carriage drive up to the door. There is a fine view of the valley of Maitland and the mountains beyond, from the verandah, which like the whole house is light, spacious, and very cheerful-looking. His Lordship Dr Murray was at home in Ireland on my last visit. His health has suffered much of late, and he has gone home to recruit. That he may soon return in entirely restored health and vigor, is the prayer of many more than his flock, by whom he is so deservedly beloved. As a learned and zealous bishop, a warm-hearted friend and a kind adviser, he is an ornament to the Church of God. My first visit was made in company with the Archbishop and I shall never forget the kind way in which His Grace referred to the progress made in the diocese under the administration of Dr Murray. How gratifying must it not be for His Grace to witness this second crop of the seed he himself has sowed.

The cathedral is situated in West Maitland. It is dedicated to St John the Baptist. I don't know any church in New South Wales more like St Patrick's in Adelaide, except that it is built of cut stone, and is a little more ornamental. It may be a little larger too. But the inside is very tasteful, and highly ornamented. The Lady altar is a real gem of its kind, and so is the altar of St Joseph. Everything about the cathedral breathes an air of tasteful neatness and devotion. It is situated close by the river on the alluvial soil, which is every year worn away by the encroachments of the stream. Year

after year the space between the foundations and the water becomes less and less. There is only a few feet left now, and any flood may decide the fate of this fine building. It is a great pity it was ever erected where it is, but now it must take its chance. Unless St John the Baptist protects his church, the Catholics of Maitland will soon have to assemble in some other place for their devotions.

Not very far from the church, but out of reach of the river, is the Dominican Convent. This was at first a plain square, upstanding house of two storeys, close to the road, and not at all like a cloistered convent. But the good nuns had to take what they could get in the commencement of their boarding school, and they have made a beautiful establishment of it since then. A large wing has been added to the back of the house, and this again has been connected by a cloister with a splendid oratory and large and commodious choir. The latter runs off at right angles from the sanctuary. Altogether the church and the convent have been so laid out that the small spot of ground which is enclosed for recreation becomes varied so as to seem of greater extent than it is. The buildings are of brick and the style is Norman, which permits the architect to make the most of small means and poor material. Mr Gell, of Bathurst, is the architect and he has made a simple and economical design worthy of the object for which it is intended. I had the pleasure of being present at the opening of this convent church. The ceremony was performed by the Archbishop of Sydney, assisted by the Bishops of Armidale and Bathurst and many of the clergy. It was a splendid ceremonial, and, I trust, augurs well for the future of the nuns in the diocese of Maitland.

As I returned to Sydney after my first visit to Maitland, the day was very stormy and a large collier had struck upon the sands just outside the bar. The lifeboat was putting out to sea, as our steamer passed the lighthouse. I never shall forget the scene. The sea was so rough upon the bar, that our vessel often plunged bows under the water, taking great quantities of water on the deck, which swept from stem to stern. Yet there was the little lifeboat, its blue and white colors making it appear more light and fragile, with its crew dressed in their cork floats, all seeming like a toy on the crest of the waves. We passed in sight of the wreck and saw the sea making a clear breach over her, yet the lifeboat saved every one of the crew. It was a memorable sight. After that we took some nine or ten hours going to Sydney. The wind was half a gale and blew right against us. How we tossed and tumbled, and how thankful I was to get safely back to the harbor.

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED: A NINETEENTH CENTURY JOURNEY WITH THE CATHOLIC PIONEERS OF TASMANIA

Benedict Smith*

Tasmania's relative isolation from the zentrum of Australian Catholic life has often ensured its pioneers have been relegated to the status of footnotes in comparison to their mainland peers. If one gathers the threads of these historical footnotes one can weave a rich tapestry that tells a story of a Church that has patiently endured despite being founded in conditions of extreme poverty and adversity. This journey through some of the pivotal nineteenth century characters that shaped both the civil and ecclesiastical life in Tasmania¹ and Sydney helps to retrieve the nation making and church planting dimension of this historical record.

While his colonial co-religionists were enjoying rare access to the public ministry of a Catholic priest, James Meehan began his rise through the ranks of colonial surveyors with his inclusion on an expedition to Van Diemen's Land (VDL) in October 1803 to help found a new colony. During his four months stay, he made extensive surveys of the land east of the Derwent River around Coal River and Sorrell. He also surveyed land on the Western side of the Derwent and found multiple sources of fresh water stemming from Mount Wellington. His expert opinion on the suitability of the Western side of Derwent guided Lieutenant Governor Collins' choice for Hobart's location in February 1804.²

On Meehan's return to Sydney, he continued to use his surveying skills in various areas of NSW and received a full pardon in 1806. During another trip to VDL in 1811,³ in which he accompanied Governor Macquarie, Meehan mapped out the location of the streets of Hobart that has changed very little in over 200 years. His hard work paid off when he was appointed Deputy Surveyor of Lands by Governor Macquarie in 1812.

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- 1 Southerwood, T. (2010). *Priceless heritage: the Tasmanian Catholic community 1772–2010*, Stella Maris Books. (Availability information: <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/4933627>).
 - 2 Hardstaff, G. (20 February 2020). First Beginnings of Hobart. *Hobart Town (1804) First Settlers Association Inc.* https://www.htfs.org.au/hobart_beginnings.php.
 - 3 Dowd, B. T. (1970). 'James Meehan', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, 3(2), 8–12. <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/ielapa.81114273911>.

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He made another major trip to VDL in 1812 that lasted twelve months in which he surveyed the land grants around Port Dalrymple in the north of VDL and planned the design of a number of towns. On his return to the mainland his work took him even further afield as the colony began to extend over the Blue Mountains, down the South Coast and inland around Goulburn.

As the 1820's began, Meehan's exploring began to slowdown. After Fr Phillip Conolly and Fr John Therry arrived in Sydney in May 1820, church matters became a focus of his professional and personal life. He became a founding member of the committee for the construction of the first Catholic Church that was chaired by Fr Phillip Conolly, presiding as the Vicar General. When the Committee began the search for a suitable site for the Church, Meehan identified the site and paced out its boundaries. His professional success had ensured that he was a man of some means and he was a generous contributor to the Church building fund. He retired soon after to his property at Macquarie Field and died in April 1826.

In 1821, after Therrys unsuccessfully attempted to travel to VDL⁴, Conolly decided to assume the role of the Chaplain of VDL. He arrived in Hobart in April 1821. He celebrated his first Mass in the shop of a Mr Curr with a handful of free settlers in attendance including Mr and Mrs John Connell, a young Irish couple who had just arrived in Hobart.

Conolly set about ministering to the Catholic population that was primarily composed of convicts with a small group of free settlers and military personnel who were based across VDL. Conolly made regular visits to Launceston and Georgetown in the North of VDL that were over 150 miles from Hobart.⁵ The archives of the Archdiocese of Hobart demonstrate that Conolly officiated at many baptisms, marriage and funerals during his ministry including the baptism the Connell's first child, Daniel Vincent Connell, in 1825. This particular ecclesiastical action helped to shape the destiny of someone who played a significant role in the future growth of the Catholic Church in Australia.

Within a year of his arrival Conolly was in the process of raising money and organising for the St Virgil's chapel to be built. The modest funds that he raised ensured that the chapel was wooden in construction and was never properly completed in the interior.

Another important feature of Conolly's ministry in the 1820's was the

4 Southerwood, T. (2014). 'The first permanently appointed Catholic chaplains in Australia, Fr Philip Conolly and Fr John Joseph Therry', *The Australasian Catholic Record*, 91(3), 305.

5 Ibid., 306.

role he played in preparing condemned convicts for death at the gallows. One of them was the infamous Matthew Brady⁶ who was being pursued by authorities for two years.⁷ Another famous execution in which Conolly prepared the condemned criminal was for Alexander Pearce.⁸ Pearce had escaped from Macquarie Harbour with a group of convicts and during their journey through the bush he murdered and ate some of the group. His act of cannibalism and Fr Conolly's account of Pearce's non-sacramental confession received considerable media attention.

In 1824, Fr Samuel Coote, an Irish Carmelite, arrived in Hobart.⁹ While Coote had received approval from the civil authorities in England, his ministry had not been approved by the colony's ecclesiastical authorities in Mauritius. Conolly took issue with Coote's lack of priestly faculties and sent him to perform limited duties at Richmond. Coote built up a following but Conolly quarrelled with Coote and suspended him from duty for his reckless behaviour in the taverns of Richmond. This suspension upset Coote's supporters and 169 of them signed a petition addressed to the Governor.¹⁰ This protest also highlighted Conolly's lack of progress in finishing St Virgil's Chapel. The Governor sided with Conolly and Coote left VDL at the end of 1825.

Conolly continued to conduct his pioneering ministry with great dedication through the remainder of the 1820's. However, his ministry seemed to suffer in the 1830's. In Hobart, factions developed in the Catholic population. There was a group of free settlers who wanted to replace Conolly. They felt that he was neglecting his ministry to the sick and spent too much time socialising with Protestants. In early 1833, Conolly received a visit from his new Vicar General, Fr William Ullathorne OSB, despite never being informed that he had been relieved of his Vicar General duties. Conolly did not make a good impression on Ullathorne who also paid too much attention to the opinions of the free settler Catholic faction in Hobart. Ullathorne's jaundiced view of Conolly rubbed off on Polding.

In early 1835, Bishop Polding set sail for Australia, but his first stop was

6 'The Late Bushrangers'. (24 May, 1826). *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 3. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article2185860>.

7 Campion, E. (2020). 'Bicentenary of our First Official Priests: Fr Philip Conolly and Fr John Joseph Therry', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, 41, 2. <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.753740971497497>.

8 Ibid., 2.

9 Southerwood, T. (1993), *A Time-Line of Catholic Australia*, Stella Maris Books, 4.

10 Chandler O Carm, P. *Carmelite in Van Diemen's Land*, <https://www.carmelites.org.au/item/50-carmelite-in-van-diemens-land>.

not Sydney but Hobart. He met with Conolly and took issue with the title deeds for the Church land around St Virgil's Chapel being held personally by Conolly. This disagreement developed into a land dispute that took a number of years to resolve.

During his one-month trip to Hobart, Polding travelled to the town of Richmond to visit a Catholic community based in that area. He secured some land for a Church from a Catholic layman and performed the first official episcopal act in Australia by blessing the foundation stone for the new church. He also secured a commitment from the VDL Government to match the private subscriptions raised to build the church and provided the community with a church design that he had brought from England. On 5 September, Polding set sail for Sydney. He left Fr Cotham OSB¹¹ to help Fr Conolly, after having set the wheels in motion for the building of St John the Evangelist Church, Richmond, that is the oldest Catholic Church in Australia that has been in continuous use since its opening in 1837.

Polding returned to VDL with Ullathorne in 1836 to resolve the land title dispute with Conolly. Conolly did not back down and took the matter to court. He was also suspended from duty by Polding in 1836¹². He responded to this suspension by commencing a libel action against Polding.

In 1838, as Conolly's ecclesiastical career had reached a point of termination, a young man, Daniel Vincent Connell, who Conolly had baptised thirteen years prior, was beginning his vocational journey. He left his parents' Glen Connell property, near the midland town of Ross, and travelled to Sydney to enter the Benedictine Seminary.

Travelling in the opposite direction to Connell in the same year, Therry finally reached Hobart after the failure of his first attempt many years prior. On this occasion he was taking up his appointment by Polding as the Vicar General of VDL. Soon after he arrived, he wasted no time in initiating the construction of three churches. He secured partial Government funding for two of these churches but not for the building of St Joseph's Church in Hobart. Apart from Church building, he also helped mend some ecclesiastical bridges by befriending Conolly whose health was declining rapidly and he died in August 1839. Therry celebrated his well-attended Requiem Mass and was able to resolve the property dispute by ensuring Conolly's relative relinquished any claim to the Church property. While he resolved one church property dispute, Therry was about to create his own. St Joseph's Hobart

11 Vials, J. (2019). *The Indomitable Mr Cotham: Missioner, convict chaplain and monk*, Gracewing UK.

12 Campion, E., 5

was the first of the three to be completed, but its construction incurred a debt of £3300 that was owed by Fr Therry and the other trustees. The substantial size of the debt would come back to haunt him a few years later.

On the last day of 1838, another important Church pioneer, Sister Xavier Williams, arrived in Sydney with four other Sisters of Charity. They were the first religious sisters in the colony. Their first ministry was at the Parramatta Female Factory. In 1839, Sr Xavier became the first female in the colony to profess her vows in the presence of Bishop Polding. She and her fellow sisters conducted their ministry of visiting people in Government hospitals, orphanages and jails around Parramatta and Sydney. They also helped out in the Catholic school in Parramatta. They travelled around the colony by foot and were known as the “walking nuns”.

In 1844, the first Bishop of the Diocese of Hobart, Robert Willson, arrived in Hobart and the outstanding debt for St Joseph’s Hobart became a major point of division between himself and Therry. Willson wanted the title deed, but Therry would not part with the deed until Willson took responsibility for the debt. The dispute led to Therry being replaced as Vicar General by Fr William Hall in 1844. Therry continued quietly with his priestly duties in Hobart until he left for Melbourne in 1846.

In 1846, Polding left Sydney for a two-year trip to Europe. His Vicar General at that time, Abbott Gregory, caused some major rows with two religious orders. The Christian Brothers, who were running a school at Church Hill, withdrew from Australia as a result their row. Secondly, he had a major disagreement with the Sisters of Charity by trying to bring them under Diocesan control. This led to Sister Xavier Williams and two of her fellow Sisters of Charity to take up an offer from Bishop Willson to work in Hobart under his authority. They set off for Hobart in June 1847. As they disembarked from their ship they were greeted by a large crowd at the docks and a procession led them up to St Joseph’s Church in Hobart where they were based for many years. Their initial ministry was at the Cascades Female Factory and soon after they began running St Joseph’s School in Hobart. Sister Xavier became the first female religious Principal of the school. The Sisters were also involved in visiting children at the Orphanage. Their ministry was conducted in austere circumstances, and they shared the burden of poverty with those who they served.

In 1848 Fr Therry returned to VDL. For many years he made requests for the Sisters of Charity to come to Hobart. Now he could see them at their work in Australia. He remained an ecclesiastical outcast due to his ongoing property dispute. He continued to raise funds to pay off the debt and

continued his ministry to his loyal following in Hobart.

In the same year, Daniel Vincent Maurus Connell (Maurus was his religious name) was ordained to the priesthood for the Benedictine Order in Sydney by the now Archbishop Polding. He was the first Australian born priest to be ordained. For some reason his surname had changed to become O'Connell. In a letter Bishop Polding sent to England to announce this significant milestone he said: "*I have ordained two of my Australian Benedictines to the Holy Order of Priesthood. One of them is a native, the first Australian who has ever received the Order. Singularly enough his name is Daniel O'Connell.*"¹³ Polding was obviously referring to Fr O'Connell's famous namesake, Daniel O'Connell the Liberator, the man who achieved Catholic emancipation in the early 1830's.

A few weeks after Fr O'Connell's ordination, a breakaway faction from the Liberator Daniel O'Connell's Repeal movement, the Young Irishmen, led an insurrection in Tipperary. The leaders of the Young Ireland movement were either arrested or escaped to continental Europe or America. Seven of them were sent to trial and were convicted of either treason or sedition. They were sentenced to exile in Van Diemen's Land. Six of the Young Ireland exiles arrived in Hobart in October 1849: William Smith O'Brien, Thomas Francis Meagher, Kevin Izod O'Doherty, Terrence Bellew McManus, Patrick O'Donohue and John Martin. John Mitchel arrived separately on the *Neptune* in April 1850.

Prior to their arrival in Hobart, O'Doherty and Martin, who were travelling on the *Mountstewart Elphinstone* landed in Sydney Harbour in early October. They were detained on the ship for around three weeks. During this period of time, the Irish community of Sydney held a meeting at the Lighthouse Hotel that was attended by over 400 people. They were hoping to put pressure on the NSW Governor to reduce their punishment. However, this approach was determined to be fruitless as it was out of his jurisdiction. So, they decided to collect funds for a donation to the Young Ireland exiles and £94 was given to them to help them pay their way in VDL. To ease their pain, a number of ships deliberately passed by their boat and cheered for them. One steamer¹⁴, with its onboard band, made several laps of the *Mountstewart Elphinstone* and played numerous Irish tunes such as *The Exile of Erin*, *Green Isle of the West* and *St Patrick's Day*. Ultimately O'Doherty and Martin were transferred to the *Emma* and they departed for

13 'Fifty Years Ago: Archbishop Polding and the Pioneer Priests', 20.

14 'Pleasure Excursion Down the Harbour' (30 October, 1849). *Colonial Times*, 3. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article8765927>.

Hobart on October 21. It should be noted that the *Emma*, a brig owned by one of the leaders of the Sydney Irish community, John MacNamara, came to the aid of two of the exiled Young Irelanders a few years later.

When O'Doherty and Martin arrived in Hobart on October 28, they could see their four Young Ireland colleagues, who had arrived on the *Swift* on October 27. These men were not the typical Irish rebel convicts. They were well educated, some of them were from rich families and their leader, Smith O'Brien, had been a Westminster MP of noble birth, who was a direct descendent of Brian Boru, the High King of Ireland from 1002 to 1014. They were also from different Christian traditions, with four being Catholic, two being Presbyterian and another from the Church of Ireland.

They were not treated like convicts. They were required to give their word not to escape to obtain a ticket of leave so that they could effectively live like gentlemen confined to separate districts throughout VDL. They were banned from meeting with their fellow exiles. Despite these provisions it did not take long before the Young Ireland exiles came up with various schemes to meet. They had many gatherings at Lake Sorrell in the remote Tasmanian Highlands and on other occasions at Glen Connell, the farm owned by Fr O'Connell's family. They were often joined by various Irish born clergy serving in VDL who enjoyed the companionship of educated men whose rebel cause had produced volumes of rousing rebel ballads that they all sang together and dreamed of the possibility of an Ireland in control of its own destiny.

At the time of Fr O'Connell's ordination, the Catholic Church was in a significant growth period driven by the leadership of Archbishop Polding. Fr O'Connell was a trusted member of Polding's inner circle and subsequently he was involved in many major ecclesiastical developments. A few months after his ordination, Fr O'Connell accompanied the Bishop elect for the new Melbourne Diocese, Dr Goold, from Campbelltown, just outside of Sydney, to Melbourne on a coach and was the Master of Ceremonies at the Episcopal Ordination.¹⁵ Fr O'Connell also accompanied Bishop Polding on a trip to the goldfield in the Turon Ranges near Bathurst in September 1851.¹⁶ After an initial posting at St Benedict's parish at Broadway, he was soon based at St Mary's Cathedral where he acted as Administrator for over 18 years.¹⁷

15 'Fifty Years Ago: Archbishop Polding and the Pioneer Priests'. (24 December, 1925). *The Catholic Press*, 20. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/114744802/11832525>.

16 'Local Intelligence'. (27 September, 1851). *Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal*, 4. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/62518673>.

17 'The Late Dean O'Connell'. (28 September, 1901). *Freeman's Journal*, 13. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article111081292>.

Back in Van Diemen's Land, despite the Young Irelanders receiving regular hospitality from the inhabitants, escape was not far from their minds. The first Young Irishman to escape VDL was McManus, who with the help of Fr Butler from St Joseph's in Launceston and some other supporters, was able to use a doppelganger to create a diversion to allow him to make an escape to America in February 1851.¹⁸ Meagher was the next to escape VDL in January 1852 and he travelled to New York. On his arrival he received a hero's welcome. His most notable achievement in the USA was his involvement in the American Civil War as the founder and General of the Irish Brigade in the Union Army.

The third escapee was O'Donohue who left VDL in November 1852. His escape was far from smooth and involved many twists and turns. O'Donohue eventually arrived in San Francisco, with the help of Sydney based shipping merchant John MacNamara, 185 days after he departed VDL. He soon travelled to New York to meet his family, but his health declined after a number of years of struggle and he died before he could be reunited with his loved ones.

The final and most dramatic escape from VDL was executed by Mitchel in July 1853. He documented the escape meticulously in his famous *Jail Journal*¹⁹. After handing in his Ticket of Leave at Bothwell Police Station he was able to speedily escape into mountain country while the police were caught flat footed. He spent many weeks in hiding attempting to catch a boat from Launceston. He decided to travel to Hobart to attempt an escape from the south. He was assisted by Fr Butler, a great friend of the Young Irelanders, who lent him some priest robes and rode with him through various toll gates to catch a coach to Hobart. Mitchel's disguise succeeded and he was able to reach Hobart undetected. He was smuggled onto the *Emma*, the same boat that had brought Martin and O'Doherty to Hobart from Sydney almost four years before. Mitchel maintained his priestly disguise and continued to be undetected by the authorities. After disembarking from the *Emma* in Sydney, he stayed in the house of John MacNamara, the owner of the *Emma*. After a few days he was able to secure a passage on a ship to the USA. He gained work as a journalist in the USA and he was a major supporter of the Confederate cause in the US Civil War.

In early March 1854, the British Government announced that Smith O'Brien, Martin and O'Doherty had been conditionally pardoned. Once the news reached VDL around three months later, the remaining Young

18 Kiernan, T. J. (1954) *The Irish Exiles in Australia*, Clonmore & Reynolds, 113.

19 Mitchel, J. (1921), *Jail Journal*. M. H. Gill, <https://archive.org/details/jailjournal0000john>.

Irelanders made their way to Melbourne for a grand farewell dinner and a tour of the gold fields. In July 1854, Martin and O'Brien returned to Europe. O'Doherty tried his luck in the gold fields without success and returned to Europe in early 1855 to be reunited with his sweetheart who he married on August 23, 1855 in Paris. He completed his medical studies and eventually emigrated in the 1860's to Australia with his young family to settle in Brisbane to practise medicine and to support his friend Bishop Quinn.

Therry was acquainted with the Young Irelanders and organised a number of petitions to aid their cause during their stay in VDL. As the Young Irelanders' time in VDL was coming to an end Therry returned to Sydney in early 1854, never to return to the island. In 1856 he was appointed as the parish priest of St Augustine's, Balmain. Therry rekindled his relationship with the Sisters of Charity in the mid 1850's and became their Spiritual Director when St Vincent's Hospital was established in 1857. His property dispute with Bishop Willson was finally resolved in 1858. In 1864, Therry died in his parish in Balmain. His body was received into St Mary's Cathedral by Fr O'Connell in preparation for his burial. His Requiem Mass drew a large crowd that was attended by many civil and ecclesiastical dignitaries. His 44 years of pioneering service on both sides of Bass Strait was much appreciated by Catholics and also Protestants.

Therry's death would have been grieved by the Sisters of Charity communities on both sides of Bass Strait. Their geographical separation was also ecclesiastical. But this gulf was not to remain forever. In 1871, Sr Xavier Williams, one of the famous five pioneer sisters, became the Mother Superior of the Tasmanian community. Her leadership displayed all the boldness that had forged their pioneering ministry. She also established St Joseph's Orphanage in 1879 after the Government closed the state-run orphanage. The fundraising effort to build this building next to St Joseph's Church in Hobart was not a negligible challenge for a poor Catholic community.

Her last major achievement was the reorganising the Congregational ties between Hobart and Sydney. Excerpts obtained from the Congregational Archives of the Sisters of Charity of Australia reveal some of the details. During her Golden Jubilee celebrations in 1889, Mother Xavier was able to secure the help of the visiting Cardinal Moran in assisting with the amalgamation. After much ecclesiastical correspondence and a visit by the Mother Superior of the Sydney branch to Hobart, the amalgamation was secured in June 1890. The amalgamation ensured the Tasmanian branch obtained access to extra financial resources and new sisters for their

continuing mission. Mother Xavier died on March 8, 1892 at the age of 91 and was buried in Cornelian Bay Cemetery.

As the nineteenth century came to a close, Dean O'Connell, as he became known, retired from active ministry and returned to live at Glen Connell in Tasmania until his death in September 1901.²⁰ In addition to his supporting role for Polding his most significant achievement was the important role he played in the establishment of St John's College at Sydney University. He was the foundation Rector from 1858 to 1860 who helped establish the College Council that guided the College building fundraising program and the initial planning for the design and construction of the College. His death represented the closing of an era in which the church emerged from the age of wooden chapels to Cathedrals built of stone. The days of riding long distances on horseback to service widely dispersed congregations were now largely over as a new nation emerged from Federation.

20 'The Late Dean O'Connell', 13.

ST MAGDALEN'S RETREAT TEMPE – JUST A PENITENTIARY?

Mary Barthelemy*

Introduction

St Magdalen's Tempe was an offshoot of the Good Samaritan Sisters' House of the Good Shepherd in Sydney's Pitt Street. Destitute women, including former prostitutes, were cared for in this refuge from the Order's beginnings in the mid-19th century. Laundries were features of these establishments as they had a dual function – to help the women and provide a regular income to support the institution. These 'fallen women', 'penitents', are the subject of the ABC Radio National program *The Missing Magdalens*.

The ABC illustrated the first version of the program (19 July 2023) with an image of a young girl in a messy, depressing laundry. Whether the girl worked at this unidentified **Irish** laundry, whether it was Catholic or Protestant, is unknown.¹ But, it suited the story they wanted to tell.² The program used reports about Irish Magdalen laundries to sensationalise its story about St Magdalen's. In the revision, published mid-November 2023 (August 2023 ABC website), this has been replaced by a picture of the real St Magdalen's laundry c1980.

The narrator, Donna Abela, gives a particular slant to the story of the penitents – especially in her search for a voice from one of the 'hidden' women. She presents May Gould as such a voice. Gould's misleading claims about working in the Retreat's laundry in 1906 were widely disseminated in *The Watchman*; later repudiated by her former supporters.³ It is a travesty that nearly 120 years later these are presented as a 'factual account'. One of Gould's assertions, that three nine-year-old girls were working in the laundry, was highlighted in the broadcast. In her rebuttal, Mother Dominic stated that the youngest there in fact was 14 and a family placement.⁴ Another

1 Unidentified Magdalen Laundry in Ireland early 20th century https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magdalone_Laundries_in_Ireland.

2 *Australian Town and Country* produced a story and a two-page spread with photos of the Tempe laundry, dormitory, dining room, chapel, house and grounds in 1899. It also appears to be a source for some of the restoration of Tempe House. There are two laundry interiors either of which could have been used. "St Magdalen's Retreat, Tempe" *Australian Town and Country Journal* 10 June 1899 p 31 ff.

3 "The Bathurst Presbytery and the Tempe 'Escapee': a retraction by Dr Dill Macky" *National Advocate* 6 August 1906 p 2. Her former supporters were not afraid to class her a liar and in print.

4 "A Shameless Slander Exposed" *Freeman's Journal* 14 July 1906 p 17.

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was that she had worked in a Bathurst presbytery (she had not). The list goes on. (Details are given in Jeff Kildea's article in this issue, "'The Missing Magdalens': the ABC resurrects a 'hidden story' discredited more than a century ago".) The story has been retained and its use defended.

Listening to this program, particularly the story of 'the penitent', I realised that I first encountered it in recent research.⁵ This prompted another look at the history of St Magdalen's. By highlighting the so-called 'hidden voice' and restricting the discussion to the institution's earliest phase – up to the first decades of the 20th century – the one most removed from modern society, the broadcast, even in its current form, continues to do a disservice to many girls and women, including the Religious, who lived there.⁶

St Magdalen's was a part of my childhood in the 1960s and early 70s. I had a privileged experience. My father was in charge of the grounds. When I was in primary school and into my teenage years I spent some time in the holidays there. I rarely saw the girls but I do remember one, perhaps 16+, quietly sweeping the paths near the chapel on one visit. Not only was I free to explore the grounds at the front but I was permitted to use the swimming pool (I had a hearing condition). I fondly remember 'Rosie' calling out, "Hello Mary Angela" followed by an echo from someone else ... the many styles and colours of the swimming costumes hanging in the dressing room. I recall the convent as a place of welcome and many of the Sisters, including Sister Processus (Sister Mary Gregory); the kitchen at the rear of the house – the aroma of decades of cooking baked into the plaster.⁷ It was there still in the early 1990s at an open day for Tempe House organised by the local historical society. The scent of the cedar ceiling in the chapel remained though the furnishing was sadly derelict. By that time the large buildings had been demolished following a fire – a few years after the Sisters sold the property to Qantas (1989).

The Order hoped the site could be developed into aged living, like the Good Shepherd Sisters' Ashfield laundry, but Rockdale Council rejected this. A small group of Vincentians lived there for a few years. Qantas eventually sold it: enormous change followed. The front paddock was used in the

5 I intend to update this book: M Smith, M Barthelemy-Reason, *A History of Sts Peter & Paul Cook's River Tempe 1858-2008* Enmore-Tempe Parish, Enmore, 2008.

6 For all the program's emphasis on young unmarried mothers, St Magdalen's at Tempe/Arncliffe was not this type of refuge. The Sisters of Mercy Foundling Home at Waitara became one.

7 The shed housing equipment my father used had a large crack in its base due to having been built over a pool, there was also a large stand of tall bamboo nearby. The pool and bamboo are mentioned in "Our Catholic Institutions. No. XV. Magdalene Retreat." *Catholic Press* 20 June 1896 p 16. Neither was preserved in the redevelopment.

construction of the airport railway line. Wolli Creek station was built and the surrounding area developed into what is seen today – high-rise residential buildings. What little remained of the laundry was not considered valuable built heritage, was demolished and replaced by multi-storey apartments. Tempe House was the focus of heritage restoration and also the chapel.⁸ A plaque near the chapel provides a brief outline of the Retreat and the chapel's architectural heritage. 'Wolli Creek' replaced 'Arncliffe'.

There is another story to tell. In St Magdalen's 100 years tremendous changes occurred – more subtle than the foregoing but change nonetheless. This article can only be a sketch of such a long and complex record. A knowledge of local history situates this institution in a new context and offers some insights into its place in the local community.

Tempe Retreat

From the beginning of their tenure in 1885 to their exit in 1985 the Sisters created a home for members of their community and built a refuge, retreat and training centre for the women, young and old, they sought to help.⁹

The Sisters' purchase of historic Tempe House and estate from Fred Gannon¹⁰ undoubtedly saved for posterity the house, terraced gardens and remaining grounds from subdivision.¹¹ This alone was an outstanding contribution.

The new convent was a Georgian-style country retreat built in 1836 by

8 Casey & Lowe Pty Ltd *Tempe House and Grounds: Non-Indigenous Archaeological Investigation (2002–6) – Report to Australand* May 2010 (laundry remains pp 19–21). The lack of a plaque for a non-existent laundry building can hardly be blamed on the Sisters (or the Catholic Church). That was the provenance of the site conservationists and the developers.

9 A well-researched, in depth and factual account (nearly 40 pages with photos), is provided in Margaret Walsh's history of the Order (its cover is a group of girls from St Magdalen's with Sister Leon late 1950s/early 1960s) M Walsh, *The Good Sams: Sisters of the Good Samaritan 1857–1969*, John Garratt Publishing, Mulgrave, 2001; Sister Mary Gregory delivered a paper in 1984 bringing the story up to the present, shortly before the Sisters ended their association. Sister M Gregory SGS, "From Refuge to Retreat to Community: the social work ministry of the Good Samaritans at Pitt Street and Tempe/Arncliffe, 1857–1984", *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol 7 1984, pp 3–19, M Fox 'From Penitence to Pastoral Care: The Work of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan at St Magdalen's Retreat, Tempe (Arncliffe)' M Ed Thesis University of New England 1984 – a detailed study including original sources; James Franklin included St Magdalen's in a very critical but not unsympathetic examination of the Australian laundries, J Franklin, "Convent slave laundries? Magdalen asylums in Australia" *Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol 34, 2013 pp 72–92. In the same issue Janice Konstantinidis provided a 1960s' insider's view of Mount Saint Canice Tasmania, "Life in 'The Mag'" pp 93–104.

10 Gannon continued to support the Sisters – he was listed at the meeting to assist with more building funds *Freeman's Journal* 8 April 1893 p 18.

11 Subdivision noted in *The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser* 12 May 1883 p 873.

the Scottish merchant banker and businessman, Alexander Brodie Spark. He lived there until his death in 1856, despite losing much of his wealth in the 1840s economic depression.

Caroline Chisholm established a school for young ladies, Green-Bank, and resided there with her family for several years (1863-66). Once a favoured candidate for canonisation, she was noted for the care of single young women and families in search of a better life in the colonies.

Contemporary with Chisholm, the Good Samaritan order was founded by Archbishop Polding and Mother Scholastica Gibbons in 1857. One year later, another Polding foundation – Sts Peter and Paul's Church (and school) Cooks River Tempe – was founded. In its early years it was the only Catholic Church between St Benedict's at Broadway and St Francis at Wollongong.¹²

Care of prostitutes and destitute, abused and other disadvantaged women was a core part of Polding's foundation.¹³ The Sisters' goal was to rescue these women, give them spiritual guidance, the chance of a better life, amend bad habits, acquire new skills, and perhaps to go out to a new life – usually as a domestic servant, but also to marry or return to their family. During this time they adopted the mantle of 'penitents' both to maintain privacy and leave the old ways behind.¹⁴ One way of doing this was giving them new, saints', names. The Order's registers list both their full names and the one provided.¹⁵

The means by which this reformation was exercised has often seemed harsh and controversial.¹⁶ For various reasons, more so in modern decades.¹⁷ Over time and with changing circumstances the focus was more on young women and prevention but the essential aspects of the Sisters' ministry remained.

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- 12 Led by Michael Gannon, Thomas Smidmore and Edward Campbell. The church was located in Station Street Tempe and afterwards on the Princes Highway (1913). The school remained on site till 1916 when the new one was completed.
- 13 K L Toole, *"Innocence and Penitence Hand Clapsed in Hand": Australian Catholic Refuges for Penitent Women 1848-1914*. Thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the Discipline of History in the Department of History and Politics University of Adelaide April 2010. In general, the refuges offered a safer and more secure home than some women would have experienced prior to entering p 23.
- 14 L P Hughes, *To Labour Seriously: Catholic Sisters and Social Welfare in Late Nineteenth Century Sydney* A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy School of Social Work University of New South Wales 2002 <https://doi.org/10.26190/unsw-works/20857> pp 293–4.
- 15 K L Toole, op. cit. From the Registers for St Magdalen's Lucy Kennedy (Barbara), pp 96–97.
- 16 L P Hughes, op. cit. p 292.
- 17 Different perspectives – for example: class, gender, political, sociological, welfare, feminism – have contributed to analysis of these institutions.

The expansion to Cooks River was prompted by the inadequacy of the original refuge in congested, industrialised Pitt Street.¹⁸ The advertisement for the blessing of the foundation stone in November 1885 refers to the ‘St Magdalen’s Penitentiary’.¹⁹ The later name, ‘St Magdalen’s Retreat’, implied a kinder, more reformatory approach.

Just a few months before the move, reporters from *The Protestant Standard* visited. What they found was the essential laundry ‘template’ – transferred to Tempe but in a larger, modern, setting. Working in different rooms for washing, ironing and needlework, under the supervision of the Sisters were 89 women, young and old. All were dressed in uniforms (neat blue check prints and white caps). Everything was clean and orderly.²⁰

The movement of Sisters across education and social work was a feature from the start. At some point during the two years (1885–1887) it took for the new laundry and Retreat to be built and ready for operation and accommodation two Sisters taught at Sts Peter and Paul’s School. This was about a 10 minute walk and would have generated some income.

In November 1885 Cardinal Moran blessed the foundation stone.²¹ On 1 October 1887 Cardinal Moran was no doubt delighted to be able to stand on the porch at Tempe House and bless the Retreat’s opening – it was one of many visits and a grand occasion. Flowery language aside, in essence, his speech praised the Sisters for taking on the work of helping the penitents, the worthy goal of bringing them to a new and better life and exhorting visitors and readers of newspapers, Catholic and secular, to be generous in their support of the Sisters and those poor ones in need of their care.²²

The support from the wider community, including governors and their

18 The NSW Police Barracks, Sydney Female Refuge, House of the Good Shepherd and the Devonshire Street Cemetery were resumed in 1901 for construction of Central Station.

19 *Evening News* 18 November 1885 p 1. Also LP Hughes, op. cit. Some practices at the House of the Good Shepherd and St Magdalen’s, with their highly structured regimes, were not as punitive as they seemed p 293. A caution worth noting.

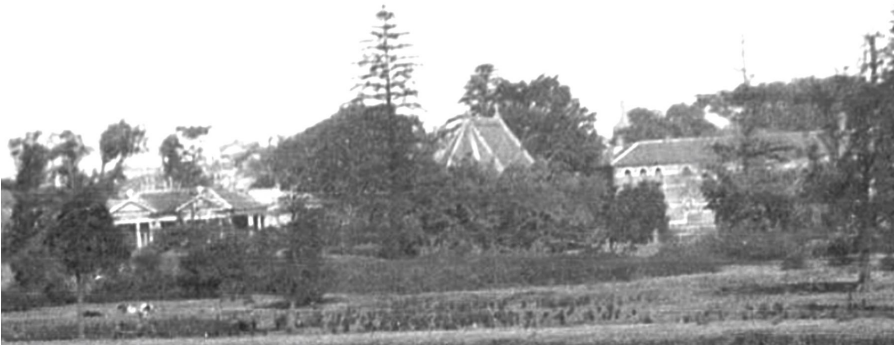
20 “The Convent of the Good Samaritan” *The Protestant Standard* 5 March 1887 p 8. [Manly Industrial School and Orphanage was established for young girls in 1881.] The gentlemen noted there were many women, including girls, some good looking and others ‘respectable’. They were told that drink was responsible for many of these women being there and that some came from respectable, highly connected, Sydney families. (‘Penitents’ is a more suitable general classification than ‘fallen’.) Toole notes for many of those women who had been prostitutes opium addiction was also a problem. K L Toole, op. cit. p 97–98.

21 Father James Berry, priest in charge at Sts Peter and Paul was a guest. “Convent of the Good Samaritan” *Sydney Morning Herald* 23 November 1885 p 6. It was the second Order to move into his pastoral district. In 1885 French Carmelite nuns, an enclosed Order, bought Thomas Holt’s mansion on a hill diagonally across from the Tempe convent. After about 15 years they left following the foreclosure on the mortgage. A fate the Sisters surely noted.

22 “St. Magdalen’s Refuge for Women” *The Sydney Morning Herald* 10 October 1887 p 4.

wives, as well as the wealthy Catholic community and Protestant and Jewish ladies – especially in the 1890s – has often been reported and commented upon. The genuine impulse to help those less fortunate within the community has not often been noted. This support was something of which the Sisters themselves were keenly aware.²³

More broadly, the leadership of Cardinal Moran, supported by religious congregations, could not have succeeded without the co-operation of the Catholic laity and, also, many non-Catholics.²⁴ Indeed, “Promotion of the Sisters’ charities and celebration of their achievements contributed to raising Catholics’ collective self-esteem and the social standing of Catholics and Catholicism.”²⁵



Truly a retreat. Vista of the convent, chapel and laundry with cows grazing in the foreground 1928–9. (Photo © Mary Barthelemy, family archives.)

Non-Catholic Refuges

The fact there were non-Catholic laundries (even in Ireland) that supported institutions for women in need is not acknowledged by the ABC program. It certainly was a fact of which I was unaware. All competed in the laundry

- 23 Sr M Gregory SGS, “From Refuge to Retreat to Community: the social work ministry of the Good Samaritans at Pitt Street and Tempe/Arncliffe, 1857-1984”, *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol 7 1984, pp 3–19; p 6. From the start the Sisters enlisted the aid of well wishers of various types from the governor and his lady, members of parliament to generous men, women and youths who rallied around them to help with worthy causes including balls, bazaars and fetes.
- 24 S McGrath RSM, “Cardinal Patrick Moran and Social Welfare: A Snapshot 1884–1911” *Compass: A Review of Topical Theology* 45(4), pp 38–43. p 43: <https://acuresearchbank.acu.edu.au/item/892q2/cardinal-patrick-moran-and-social-welfare-a-snapshot-1884-1911>
- 25 L Hughes, “Poor law principles, sectarianism and the state: the work of Catholic Sisters in nineteenth-century New South Wales Voluntary” *Action: the journal of the Institute for Volunteering Research* Vol 5 No 1 Winter 2002 p 90: <https://socialwelfare.bl.uk/artifacts/4159761/poor-law-principles-sectarianism-and-the-state/4967984/>

business with the commercial firms. A brief look at two will indicate laundries were not a uniquely Catholic solution to women's social problems.

The Sydney Female Refuge (1848–1925) was the Sisters' former neighbour in Pitt Street. Its organisation was similar and responded to the same problems. Originally established for women escaping prostitution and young unmarried girls who fell pregnant, it included women sent out as convicts and the victims of unscrupulous men or who suffered from ill health and disease due to lack of water and sanitation. Admission was voluntary, women were expected to abide by the rules and stay for one to two years. They worked in the laundry to earn money for the Refuge's upkeep. They were supervised by women's committees, with male oversight, paid staff who went home at night and were non-denominational.²⁶

Scholars have sometimes ignored the importance of religion in both Catholic and Protestant refuges though it had "a pivotal and essential role in the process of rehabilitation".²⁷ Like Catholic institutions there are misunderstandings and misinformation about the way the refuge was run.²⁸

Another was a home for "female inebriates" based at Paddington and run by the Church of England Temperance Society. Again, laundry work was carried out by the inmates and the home relied on the money earned as well as voluntary contributions – there was very little, if any, government aid.²⁹

Finance and Industry

The Retreat was given a sound foundation by Mother-General Magdalene Adamson and Mother Gertrude Byrne (first superior). Both had extensive experience in managing an institution, in financial and practical aspects as well as complying with Government regulations from the years in which they had charge of the Parramatta Children's Orphanage.

It was a huge financial undertaking. The Sisters had a debt of £6,000 to repair Tempe House, build the initial laundry and housing and import the latest steam laundry machinery from the UK and USA – equivalent in today's money to around \$1,012,615.³⁰ The Archdiocese gave £1,000 towards

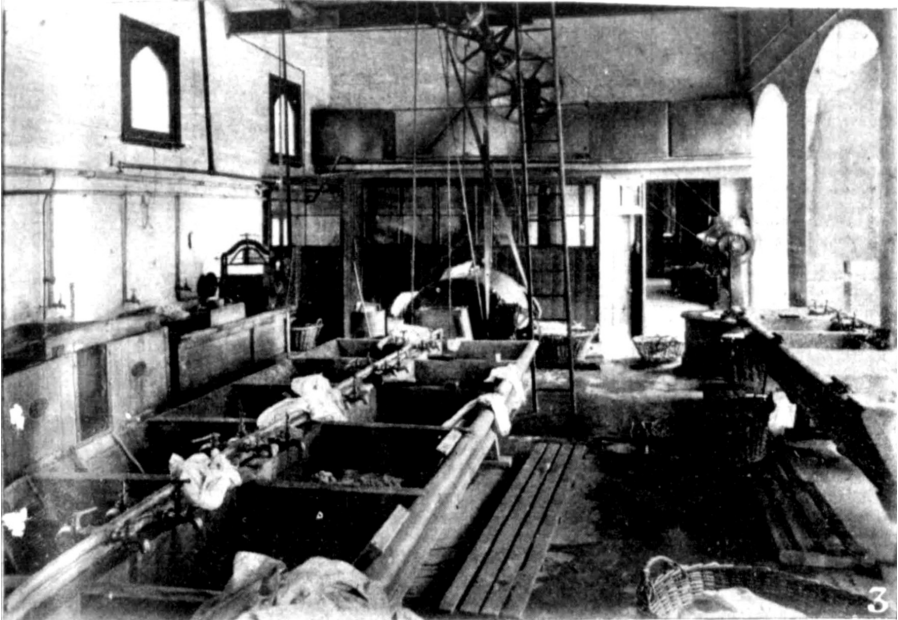
26 G Barker, *Sydney Women's Refuge Society 1848-1925* State Library of NSW: <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/stories/sydney-female-refuge-society-1848-1925>

27 P F Cooper, *The Sydney Female Refuge: some further reflections Philanthropy and Philanthropists in Australian Colonial History*. April 25, 2017. Available at <https://phinaucohi.wordpress.com/2017/04/25/the-sydney-female-refuge-some-further-reflections/>; P F Cooper, "Sectarianism and the formation of female refuges in nineteenth-century Sydney" *Lucas* 2.17 (June 2021), pp 105–123

28 Cooper, *The Sydney Female Refuge*.

29 "Female Inebriates. Visit to a Sydney 'Home'." *Illustrated Sydney News* 6 May 1893 p 14.

30 <https://www.thomblake.com.au/secondary/hisdata/calculate.php>



Laundry interior, "St Magdalen's Retreat, Tempe" 1899
Australian Town and Country Journal 10 June 1899.

the project. With a new wing, in 1894, the overall debt was close to £20,000. A substantial amount comprised a loan from the London Bank.³¹

No government funding supported the institution then or later. The successful operation of the laundry was vital to keeping the whole enterprise afloat including housing, clothing and feeding the inhabitants. (The Sisters invested in new equipment in the post-war years and men were employed in laundry work. By 1960 with changing conditions the girls were less engaged with the laundry and withdrawn completely by 1974 and management given over to employed staff.³²)

Dealing with banks and solicitors co-existed with managing day-to-day upkeep. Ledgers for 1887 and 1888 recorded expenditure for: fares for the penitents to Tempe, washing boards, man to drive the horse³³, Oatmeal

31 "St. Magdalene's Refuge. Opening of a New Wing" *Evening News* 5 April 1894 p 2

32 Sister M Gregory SGS, op. cit. p 10, p 14–15.

33 Francis Morley, 20, was admitted to hospital in January 1895 after driving one of the laundry's carts down King Street Newtown when it collided with another cart causing his horse to bolt. He was thrown out. "A Cart Accident" *Evening News* 7 January 1895 p 5.

Whiting 2 cows grass, repairing spring cart and, snuff for penitents (£1.0.0).³⁴

In general, besides relying on Providence, Religious Sisters had to be good business managers for their communities to survive and works to grow.³⁵ This certainly applies to the Sisters who had charge over the decades at St Magdalen's: "The Sisters were skilled in domestic management, charitable administration, property acquisition, business and finance they also dealt with men in various public capacities, as well as being involved in the day to day direct provision of services to the poor. This multiplicity of roles was not usual for women of the time ..."³⁶ Compared to non-Catholic organisations Religious Orders had institutional advantages.³⁷

Much has been made of the Victorian attitude to sexual morality, female propriety and how this impacted on the care given.³⁸

Little attention is given to another feature of the Victorian age – industry and industriousness.

The manner in which the Sisters embraced modern industry in the choice of suitable machinery and equipment, through to the details of the design and building of appropriate work spaces and accommodation, their commitment to the work, indicates they were very attuned to the industrial era. This is reflected in the many reports featuring the intricacies of the laundry's operations. St Magdalen's was among the small number of original subscribers to the Newtown Telephone Exchange opened in 1888. Engaging new technology aided business.³⁹ Women in religious habits and the move to a semi-rural area and a beautiful setting obscure this characteristic.

Inmates

Care and control are two concepts which co-exist in tension. This especially applies to institutions and social welfare. How that is managed, even resolved – if ever – is always an issue.⁴⁰

34 Sister M Gregory SGS, op. cit. p 8.

35 L P Hughes, op. cit. p 355.

36 L P Hughes, op. cit. pp 375–376.

37 L P Hughes, op. cit. p 357. Within the church they were financially autonomous. Because of a Religious Order's structure members were able to pass on skills and knowledge. The fact they were all-women organisations facilitated the exercise of 'masculine skills'.

38 See K L Toole, op. cit. And: there were some differences in attitude in the methods used by Sisters towards penitents "Such rescue work has been portrayed as enforcing Victorian standards of sexual morality for women (which it undoubtedly was). P Hughes, op. cit. p 292.

39 "Our Telephone Service. The Past and the Present." *The Propeller* 11 October 1934 p 7.

40 Recent headlines about the National Disability Insurance Scheme confirm this. "The Disability Royal Commission report detailed people with disabilities' experiences of violence, segregation, abuse, neglect and exploitation." *Special Broadcasting Service*, 29 September 2023.

After WWI numbers increased – inmates' reasons varied – destitution, alcoholism, moral danger, violent husbands.⁴¹ Apart from those placed there by the courts or by families – admittance was voluntary (as was leaving). The minimum entrance age for decades was 15. Over time entrants became younger – partly because the house in Buckingham Street⁴² was used for older women. Partly because an increasing intake came from girls who were sent there in preference to jail.

It has been argued that Religious Orders' response to poverty was different as it was not a moral issue.⁴³ By voluntarily applying to enter, applicants to St Magdalen's in effect entered into a contract to participate in the program, including a way of life intended to rehabilitate materially and spiritually.⁴⁴ Those who remained for two years would be provided with a certificate of good conduct.⁴⁵ Placement in a situation and new clothing were also offered.

Some of the biggest changes were due to changes in Government legislation particularly the Child Welfare Act of 1939.

In 1947 older women comprised 44% of the total number of admissions compared with 10% of the total in 1970.⁴⁶

The change to 'St Magdalene's Training Centre for Girls' after WWII indicated the new direction the centre was taking. Adding 'Arncliffe' further differentiated it from its previous purpose besides indicating the correct location. By 1951 the girls no longer performed heavy labour in the laundry as male labour was employed for this. Some £30,000 was spent on modernisation.⁴⁷

More new buildings, existing buildings adapted to a modern layout reflecting a focus on a program for education, greater responsibility and preparation for a career commenced in the 1950s. (A swimming pool was added in the early sixties.)⁴⁸

The Order decided in the early 1970s to no longer admit adult females.⁴⁹

41 Sister M Gregory SGS, op. cit. p 9.

42 The Pitt Street Refuge moved to Buckingham Street and remained there till 1946.

43 L P Hughes, op. cit. p 298

44 L P Hughes, op. cit. p 299

45 L P Hughes, op. cit. p 292

46 Sister M Gregory SGS, op. cit. p 13.

47 "'Problem' Girls, Women New Chance; Centre Reunion" *The Catholic Weekly* 25 October 1951 p 7.

48 "A helping hand for girls who fall from society's favor" *The Catholic Weekly* 2 November 1950 p 4. For detailed analysis of welfare legislation and methods of rehabilitation see B Lucas *The Good Shepherd Sisters and the Adolescent Girl in Need of Care* M. Gen. Stud. 1984 University of New South Wales. Though focused on the Good Shepherd Sisters' Ashfield institution (1913–1975) it also has application to St Magdalen's <https://unsworks.unsw.edu.au/entities/publication/16636ae6-0f5e-4db0-8ebb-4812e7e10414>

49 Sister M Gregory SGS, *ibid*.

Table 1 Residents

Year	Number			Court		Outcome		
1887-1894*			Returned Pitt Street		Returned to husbands &/or friends	Employment	Left ill health	Left own accord
	215		12		44 (9 - husbands)	60	13	11
1885-1899^	500				Two thirds reclaimed (no details)		3 (died)	89
1928 +	50	13 aged 14-19, 9 being 17 or younger (2 or 3 of the younger ones by families)	Half middle aged or older	Some of the teenagers from the Court – 1 girl for six months for stealing				
1938 +	60	46 - 18 years or younger						
1951 #			Others incl exposed to moral danger or not fitted to face stresses of modern life	Childrens court for training		Employment		
	34 entered		12	22		34		

* *Evening News* 5 April 1894 p 2. ^Commonwealth Fair report *Sunday Times* 26 November 1899 p 10 +Sister Mary Gregory op. cit. p 10. # *The Catholic Weekly* 21 August 1952 p 6.

The focus on the education or rather re-education of girls continued.⁵⁰ Social changes in this era also had an effect on the numbers seeking care and impacted the services offered at St Magdalen's.

Some young women experienced difficulties of many kinds in such institutions. It is possible that the critical and even angry accounts of experiences date from the period when larger numbers of younger girls were placed in restrictive care compared to the older women previously.⁵¹ Table 1 provides a snapshot over 60 years (1887–1951).

Even in 1893 there were women who made the Retreat their permanent

50 Sister M Gregory SGS, op. cit. p 12. Included a description of programs and activities in the 1950s and 1960s. Franklin noted many of these inmates were very difficult especially in a strictly disciplined setting. J Franklin, op. cit. pp 82–84.

51 Konstantinidis, Janice op. cit.

home.⁵² Various named penitents, children, girls, some stayed voluntarily and became a part of the community.

One was Mary Collins, an inmate for 19 years. She set out to collect her pension on July 10 1941 at about 8.30. On her return, during a heavy shower of rain about 7 pm, she was knocked down by a car on Princes Highway, Tempe. She died from her injuries the next day.⁵³

I was acquainted with three of them – by the late 1960s ‘Nellie’ must have been in her 80s. I remember her outside her flat, which the Sisters had built, as a very old lady with white hair.⁵⁴ ‘Sheila’ was another, much younger and quiet. ‘Rosie’, on the other hand, I knew well and would even see at the local shops. All three of them came there when they were young, I was told, and had decided to stay.

‘Cathy’ was married in the chapel in the late 1950s. My mother acted as her matron of honour. Many years later I met her when she visited my parents

(by then my father was no longer working there). I only recall her talking about the chapel and that the Sisters were no longer using it and, I suppose, other changes that had taken place.



Mother Gertrude Byrne SGS source:

<https://www.parragirls.org.au/roman-catholic-orphan-school>

Sisters

For many Religious the Retreat was home. Mother Gertrude Byrne (later Mother-General), who died in September 1898, referred to the inmates as “her poor dear children”. She was described as an example of fervour, industry and self-sacrifice; having the vigour of a man, tenderness of a woman and the simplicity and humility of a child.⁵⁵

Mother Walburga Byrne,⁵⁶ “passed peacefully away to her eternal reward” in

52 “The Tempe Refuge.” *Australian Town and Country Journal* 13 May 1893 p 35. K L Toole, op. cit. notes the case of Barbara who entered in 1890, left in 1897, returned, left and returned again in 1898 and 1899 p 96–97. This was not uncommon over the years. Indeed, May Gould seems to be one who requested entry, left, returned. All of which she left out of her account to Dr Macky – “A Shameless Slander Exposed” *Freeman's Journal* 14 July 1906 p 17.

53 “Aged Woman Killed” *Daily Mirror* 28 July 1941 p 7.

54 Casey & Lowe Pty Ltd op. cit. Figure 2.10 p 18. Recognisable but much deteriorated.

55 “Death of Rev. Mother Gertrude...Her Work for Forty Years in Convent, Orphanage, and Refuge.” *Freeman's Journal* 17 September 1898 p 16.

56 A granddaughter of Michael Dwyer. The 1798 Memorial Irish monument at Waverley erected in



St Magdalen's early 1960s. Extension on the left removed after renovation, laundry buildings to the rear right. The elderly Sisters liked to sit on the veranda seats. (© Mary Barthelemy, family archives)

1918. She joined the Order in 1859 and her early years were spent “in the service of the penitents”. She moved to education but returned to the Retreat where her last 18 years were spent.⁵⁷



John and Mary Barthelemy with elderly Sister and Mother Superior – summer 1959 (© Mary Barthelemy, family archives)

The Child Welfare Act of 1939 resulted in the Sisters having to adapt to a new type of female – delinquent girls (ie involuntary residents) – as well as a changing social environment.⁵⁸

To help the institution cope with the new administration and the needs of inmates, two Sisters, both teachers, were selected to train at the

his memory in 1898 was designed by the same architects as the chapel.

57 “Personal Notes” *Freeman's Journal* 24 October 1918 p 17. Many Sisters were ‘farewelled’ from the chapel. Some more grandly than others.

58 M Walsh, *The Good Sams: Sisters of the Good Samaritan 1857-1969*, John Garratt Publishing, Mulgrave, 2001 p 181.

University of Sydney as social workers – Sister Paula Cadusch (1947) and Sister Processus (Mary Gregory) 1963.⁵⁹ The Good Samaritans were at the forefront of transitioning to working with professional social workers.⁶⁰

There were other community members who had spent most of their lives in the Order's welfare homes.⁶¹ Inevitably there was tension between these new educated Sisters and their ideas and the experience and traditions of the others. Adjustment on all sides involved not just the Sisters but the girls also.⁶²

Sister Mercedes Logue appears to be one who bridged the gap. She arrived at Tempe in 1921 and remained there for the next 30 years. The Sisters were highly regarded by magistrates at the Children's Court. Sister Mercedes was the most popular person there and a born psychologist.⁶³

The post-war years must have been a challenge for the younger members of the community to care for the older ones now arriving and also live and work with the girls in their workplaces and sleeping quarters.

Mother Athanasius Fitzpatrick, one 'retiree', died at the convent in 1952 after 56 years of religious life as a teacher.⁶⁴ I recall older Sisters enjoying the morning sunshine on the convent veranda – reading, sewing, perhaps a quick chat.

Sister Philip (whom I remember though I was very young) was 80 when she came to St Magdalen's in 1952. She worked for 13 years in the Sewing Room until her death in 1965 aged 93. She was connected with the schools but made her profession in Pitt Street in 1897 in the presence of Mother Gertrude Byrne.⁶⁵

What would a convent be without a dog? As one visitor recorded in 1900: "Save for the noisy steam everything is very quiet – birds hop about on pine trees and the big St Bernard dog lies in untroubled slumber in the sunshine."⁶⁶

⁵⁹ M Walsh, op. cit. p 182.

⁶⁰ D J Gleeson, "Some Themes in Australian Catholic Social Welfare History" *Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol 28, 2007 pp 7–17. "Few religious orders were willing to explore new ideas for welfare delivery before the late 1960s. An exception was the Good Samaritan Sisters who encouraged several of their members to study social work in Sydney in the 1940s." p 12.

⁶¹ M Walsh, op. cit. p 182. Also LP Hughes, op. cit. p 262. Likely some in this group fit her analysis of 19th century religious women as neophyte professional social workers due to the written prescriptions of methods and techniques for managing their operations (among other aspects).

⁶² M Walsh, op. cit. p 183.

⁶³ M Walsh, op. cit. p 174.

⁶⁴ "Pioneer Nun Dies In Sydney" *The Catholic Weekly* 11 September 1952 p 8.

⁶⁵ M Walsh, op. cit. p 183.

⁶⁶ "Life in St. Magdalen Refuge, Tempe. A Home for Penitents." *Catholic Press* 1 September 1900 p 4.

Decades later its successor was a beautiful collie dog "... when parishioners would be over there for Good Friday, Easter and so on the Sisters would say 'Monday' and feed the dog meat. 'Friday' and he would never eat the meat. They always claimed he was a good Christian."⁶⁷

Wider Community

Members of local communities supported the Retreat from its beginning. Newspaper reports and local history provide us with glimpses.

In December 1886 Tom Malone, the champion athlete, arranged for a few hours' sport at his Gladstone Running Grounds in aid of the Retreat.⁶⁸ In February, a Country Fair, organised by the ladies of the district, was held. Opened by Sir Edward Strickland, guests included several priests and the local Mayor of St Peters (and Tempe) Mr Walmsley. Stalls were run by families long associated with the Cooks River Church – Gannon, Macauley, Garvan, Lenehan, Downey and Walz.⁶⁹

The Commonwealth Fair of 1899 at Sydney Town Hall is a prime example of Victorian efficiency in its planning and execution. Designed to support the Good Samaritans' welfare institutions it was several months in the making. Everyone participated – from school child to Cardinal – including St Brigid's Marrickville. The Order must have been in severe financial stress following the 1890s' depression to warrant such a large undertaking.⁷⁰ Over £3000 was raised.⁷¹

Sts Peter and Paul School, now run by the Sisters of Mercy, held its concert in December 1908. The program consisted of a play in three scenes, various songs, musical performances, dances and recitations. The children repeated the performances for St Magdalen's Retreat.⁷²

In December 1914, a few months after WWI began, a concert was given by Mr Jim O'Sullivan of Glebe Point. Held on a Sunday afternoon, before a large number of women inmates, it opened with a patriotic air, piano and violin solos as well as songs and recitations featured. It concluded with *It's a Long, Long, Way to Tipperary* in which the audience joined.⁷³

67 M Smith, M Barthelemy-Reason, op. cit. p 64.

68 *Freeman's Journal* 4 December 1886 p 15. Malone's Gladstone Hotel was located behind the convent where Woolworths, Wolli Creek, is today.

69 "Magdalene Refuge Bazaar at Tempe" *Freeman's Journal* 12 February 1887 p 15.

70 "The Grand Commonwealth Fair.... A Brilliant Opening Ceremony" *Freeman's Journal* 25 November 1899 p 1.

71 "The Commonwealth Fair" *Freeman's Journal* 17 March 1900 p 20. Special mention was made of the Jewish community.

72 "SS Peter and Paul's Convent School, Tempe" *The Catholic Press* 31 December 1908 p 30.

73 "Concert at St. Magdalen's Retreat, Tempe" *Catholic Press* 3 December 1914 p 33.

In 1939 and 1940 there are accounts of Catholic women's groups visiting St Magdalen's. These activities pre-date the later structured social education and exposure such as the programs initiated by social welfare workers and the Catholic Women's League.

In April 1939 members of the Catholic Women's Association organised a fancy-dress dance for the inmates – the first of its kind – “bringing joy to the inmates and pleasurable satisfaction to the Sisters and staff”.⁷⁴ The Grail Ladies⁷⁵ offered many programs to young women both in parishes and independently. In August, members of the dramatic art group visited and entertained the nuns and young women with dramatised versions of popular Catholic legends.⁷⁶

The Tempe Grail group visited St Magdalen's on 22 October 1940. The evening's guest was Miss Zena Faust who gave a talk on the missions and The Grail's mission group. Songs and folk-dancing formed part of the entertainment. The talk at the first visit was given by Miss Ethel Primer on ‘How to Spend Our Recreation Hours’.⁷⁷

A fete was held in November to raise money for building improvements. Music accompanied dances by The Grail Folk Dance group. Tempe Grail had a stall selling groceries; Marrickville's stall had children's items; there were stalls from other parishes as well as a Little Flower Stall the Sisters arranged. During the afternoon, plays were staged on the convent steps by The Grail Dramatic Group.⁷⁸

The men of the parish helped during WWII. Bernard Wood recalled how, as a warden and a Catholic, he had responsibility for looking after church property during a blackout. During planned blackouts, which tested people's readiness in the event of an air raid, he and other men would check on the Mercy convent in Tempe and also St Magdalen's. Once, after checking the place, a Sister produced bottles of beer. “I don't know how long she'd had it because it was cloudy. It wasn't much good,” he remembered.⁷⁹

In 1947 the Legion of Catholic Women launched an auxiliary to raise funds for the proposed girls' training centre. It was stressed that the world ‘delinquent’ not be used for the wayward, forlorn, girls for the whom the

⁷⁴ “The Social Whirl by Mollie Bawn” *The Catholic Press* 27 April 1939 p 15.

⁷⁵ A Dutch Catholic women's organisation formed after WWI. They arrived in Sydney in 1936.

⁷⁶ “The Grail” *The Catholic Press* 31 August 1939 p 19.

⁷⁷ “Grail Notes: Visit to St Magdalen's Retreat” *The Catholic Press* 7 November 1940 p 12.

⁷⁸ “Cosy Corner Chats” *Freemans Journal* 14 November 1940 p 14.

⁷⁹ A Phippen, and H Welsh, Editors, *Marrickville Remembers 1939-1945: Extracts from the oral and written histories of Marrickville residents* Marrickville Heritage Society Marrickville 1997 p 8.

centre was intended.⁸⁰ They were involved in programs to introduce social, sports and other skills.

Parish Catholic Youth Organisation basketball teams also played against the St Magdalen's girls. The Tempe CYO team competed in the early 1950s: "The court was at the centre of the laundry complex, enclosed on three sides by three storey buildings. The clanking of keys and locks as doors were opened and closed was intimidating."⁸¹

Spiritual Welfare

Father Berry was the first chaplain. The Passionist Fathers followed.⁸² The Carmelite community, small, cloistered, was different to the Retreat where

Table 2 Parish Statistics

Year	Number	Catholic	Non Catholic	Mass	Benediction	Confession	Sisters
1944 and 1947	115	113	2	Every day except Monday	Twice weekly		24
1950	73	70	3	(Probably same)	(Probably same)	8:45 Thursday	21

Monsignor Giles noted in 1950 the £100 stipend did not cover expenses.⁸⁹

the priests celebrated Mass for the Sisters and attended to the 60 inmates there in 1891. Instructions were preached, confessions heard and retreats given, plus "innumerable little duties to be performed in the interests of the poor Magdalens."⁸³

At some point the parish priest at Arncliffe⁸⁴ did not want to take on the responsibility for St Magdalen's and Tempe parish cared for it during Father James Smith's time (1923–1948) and Monsignor Joseph Giles (1948–1954). Thereafter Arncliffe had charge. There are several reports noting Father Smith and or one of his assistant priests attending Sisters who were ill, a funeral in the chapel or present for prayers at the graveside.

Evidently musical education had been successful as the golden jubilee celebrations in 1935 for the Retreat's Mother Alphonsus Souter rivalled the

⁸⁰ *The Catholic Weekly* 27 November 1947 p 18.

⁸¹ M Smith, M Barthelemy-Reason, op. cit. p 64. (The court and recreation hut were among the last remnants to be demolished. See Casey & Lowe op. cit.)

⁸² They were given Marrickville parish – St Brigid's and newly-established – in 1888 by the Cardinal.

⁸³ "Catholic. An Attack on the Passionist Fathers: A Cowardly Calumny" *Freeman's Journal* 7 March 1891 p 14.

⁸⁴ 1896–1911 the Tempe Catholic community was part of St Brigid's. In 1912 it was made independent. Arncliffe parish was created in 1917.

While the busy world passes by ...

The Sisters of the Good Samaritan, as they have done for over sixty years, still take from the highways the afflicted, the fallen, the bruised of soul, the "broken" girls. . . .
They lift up the rejected, those broken by the stress of life, bind up the torn mind and wounded heart, give consolation, refuge, hope. . . .
They take them in and comfort them and restore to society and to God. . . .
Because it is a privileged work, because the nuns desire all to share in it—

YOU are invited to attend the
ANNUAL REUNION AND GALA DAY
at St. Magdalen's
GOOD SAMARITAN TRAINING CENTRE
PRINCES HIGHWAY, ARNCLIFFE (Near Cook's River Bridge)
On Sunday, 26th September

CELEBRATIONS BEGIN 11 a.m.

His Lordship Bishop Lyons will preside at 2.30 p.m.
THE FREE BUSES LEAVE SYDENHAM STATION, CALLING AT TEMPE STATION, AT 11.40 a.m., 12.30 p.m., 1.30 p.m., 2.30 p.m. and 3 p.m. RETURN FROM 5 p.m.

If unable to attend please forward your donation to:
REV. MOTHER SUPERIOR,
St. Magdalen's Retreat, Princes Highway,
ARNCLIFFE.

★ **FREE BUSES**
★ **FREE PARKING**
★ **PICNIC LUNCH AVAILABLE**

★ **FREE HOT WATER**
★ **AMPLE SEATING**
★ **CHILDREN'S DAY, FRIDAY, SEPT. 17**

● **CATCH COOK'S RIVER TRAM** ● **ALIGHT TEMPE OR SYDENHAM STATION**



Advertisement in The Catholic Weekly 28 August 1952. The fetes were popular into the early 1970s.

ones produced by St Scholastica's school. A Missa Cantata was celebrated at 7 am – the choir composed of "St Magdalen's children who sang with expression and devotion". ("Children" denoting the girls and women.) In the afternoon, a very fine, spectacular, concert was given by the residents. Many guests, it was reported, were impressed by the high standard. Attendees included Fathers Smith and J Massey from Tempe.⁸⁵

Children from Sts Peter and Paul would take part in the Easter ceremonies, bringing a touch of normal parish life. During the 1930s and 1940s, in particular, they would go over to the convent and assist with the Holy Thursday and Easter Sunday ceremonies. This meant getting up for the 7 am Mass. The priest would hold the monstrance and the procession would circle around the garden and back to the chapel. The children would strew rose petals before the priest. There was never any lack of volunteers from among the altar boys as the Sisters always provided plenty of food.⁸⁶

85 "Sisters of the Good Samaritan. Golden Jubilee of Three Sisters" *Catholic Press* 2 May 1935 p 16. Despite its prolific use as SFX in the original broadcast to background the Sisters, the only detailed instance I have discovered of 'angelic singing' at St Magdalen's is in fact the 'magdalens' themselves!

86 M Smith, M Barthelemy-Reason, op. cit. p 64.

Government

The first major change resulted from the NSW Children's Welfare Act of 1905 and the introduction of courts. This was followed by the Acts of 1923 and 1939. This topic does raise some questions about the impact of Government legislation and the need to comply with these procedures which might not have matched the concept of ministry.⁸⁷

Paul Cooper noted the concern expressed by the Sydney Female Refuge that if they accepted admission of girls sent there by courts then the risk was one of changing the institution from a reformatory to a punitive one.⁸⁸ In the case of St Magdalen's one presumes this risk was weighed against the risk of rejecting such girls and leaving them exposed to greater harm in Government jails.

In 1952 an article highlighted the need for funds for a girls' hostel. The guest list is the best indicator of the great changes in society generally and the growth of Government and Church agencies.

Compared to the earlier glittering list of cardinal, governor, prominent society members, members of Parliament and leading Catholics – there was Bishop Lyons (an auxiliary), Senator Tate, Mr McGrath MLA, Mr Hicks, Director of the Child Welfare Department, Mr Macreadie, Special Magistrate the Children's Court, and Father (later Monsignor) J F McCosker, Director of the Catholic Welfare Bureau.⁸⁹

At this time the Sisters took in girls who would otherwise have been sent to prison. They attended the courts and liaised with magistrates, police and, increasingly, social workers including those with the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau.

While under the direction of the Sisters the Centre was subject to the supervision of Government welfare officers. Barriers were there to prevent "delinquent girls" from leaving after they had chosen to go there for a specified time instead of being committed to prison by the courts. The Sisters were answerable to the police for any girl who did not remain there for the appointed period. Those present voluntarily could still leave at will.⁹⁰ Interestingly, no window bars are visible in a 1935 photo of the complex.⁹¹

87 L P Hughes, op. cit. pp 295–296. Where admittance was voluntary the Sisters relied on persuasion and personal influence (not locked doors like the Sydney Female Refuge) to get women to remain.

88 Cooper, Paul F, *The Sydney Female Refuge*.

89 "Need for Girls' Hostel Stressed at Reunion" *The Catholic Weekly* 18 September 1952 p 8.

90 "Ill-informed views on nuns" *The Catholic Weekly* 25 March 1954 p 16.

91 M Walsh, op. cit. photos between pp 208–209.

Conclusion

While more emphasis on fact is commended,⁹² there is no acknowledgement *The Missing Magdalens* has been 'rehabilitated'. Ironical given the criticism of silence and provision of a new identity to penitents at St Magdalen's.

Some hidden, either overlooked or unknown, aspects of the history of St Magdalen's have been highlighted. This paper indicates the value of the missing stories of other women, those within and those without the institution, as well as perceptions a knowledge of local history offers.

Sister Mary Gregory SGS served at St Magdalen's on three occasions over 21 years. Quite a few of the young women had remained in contact with her and other members of staff. As someone who had written about the history of the institution and contributed much to it her words are insightful:

Our facilities were very poor ... we struggled financially ... but at least we had a plan of care and we tried. I'm not saying it was always successful. It wasn't...

It's the place that was remembered as much as the people in it. Some had sad memories of it and some had angry memories, and others had very warm, affectionate [memories].

For herself, it was her "most formative" ministry.

*It was the most challenging, it was the one where I probably suffered immensely, ... but it is something I cherish.*⁹³

92 St Magdalen's was a charitable laundry not a commercial one. The program switches at 21:26 min to correctly describing it as charitable.

93 "Change 'keeps you alive'" interview in *The Good Oil* August 2016. A Good Samaritan publication. She died in January 2019 in her 96th year and 75th year of Religious life.

‘THE MISSING MAGDALENS’: THE ABC RESURRECTS A ‘HIDDEN STORY’ DISCREDITED MORE THAN A CENTURY AGO

Jeff Kildea*

The first quarter of the twenty-first century has seen several exposés of institutional practices that occurred during the twentieth century. Institutions once considered sacrosanct, including the Catholic Church, have not escaped critical examination. Harsh judgments have often been made. While care must be taken in applying contemporary mores to actions done in the past, certain standards are universal and objective and we should not shrink from applying them when looking at the past. The exposure and condemnation of clerical sexual abuse in the Catholic Church and its cover up is an example of the appropriate application of those standards.

Nevertheless, a just assessment of practices of the past can only be made with knowledge of the facts and circumstances that shaped those practices. Many cases are not as black and white as some assessments make out, particularly those in the popular media. Often the black core of malpractice is surrounded by a grey penumbra. Therefore, an historian making a judgment of past practices must not only be well informed as to the facts of the case and its historical context but also discerning as to its nuances. A case in point is a recent program on ABC Radio National concerning Magdalen laundries.

On 8 August 2023 the ABC broadcast a program in its ‘The History Listen’ series entitled ‘The Missing Magdalens’ about St Magdalen’s Retreat, Tempe. The program is described on the ABC web site as follows:

Magdalene Laundries for “fallen women” date back to 12th century Europe. These were Catholic-run institutions to reform “wayward” women, known as Magdalens, through strict religious observance and hard work. Recently in Ireland, shocking revelations have come to light about the conditions these women endured. But this was somewhere else, not Australia. Until Donna Abela found that a Magdalene laundry once existed near her home in Sydney, at Tempe. Donna goes in search of Tempe’s Missing Magdalens. She stumbles across a hidden story and reveals a very personal one of her own.¹

Readers of this journal will not be as surprised as Donna Abela to learn that

¹ <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/the-history-listen/the-history-listen-magdalen-laundry-tempe-catholic/102620008>

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Magdalen laundries existed in Australia or that there was one at Tempe. In 2013 the journal carried a personal account of an inmate of a Magdalen laundry in Hobart and published a detailed article on the subject by James Franklin in which he discussed St Magdalen's, Tempe. More than a decade before those articles appeared, Margaret Walsh wrote a book on the Sisters of the Good Samaritan in which she discussed several laundries run by the order, including the one at Tempe. And in 1987 historian Judith Godden wrote about women's refuges run by Catholics and Protestants in the late nineteenth century that referred to St Magdalen's.²

What distinguishes Franklin's and Walsh's, and Godden's assessments from 'The Missing Magdalens' is that they describe not only the black core of malpractice but also the grey penumbra. They acknowledge the shortcomings and abuses that took place inside these institutions but do so considering the broader context and the nuances. In his article, Professor Franklin observed:

They [Magdalen laundries] began as refuges but turned into prisons. ... As the laundries came to be used as dumping grounds for girls picked up by the police, got rid of by their parents and stepparents, or sent on by jails and other institutions, they turned into penal institutions with locks, barred windows and walls. The attitudes of inmates followed suit.

In his conclusion, Franklin made the following points:

First, the sisters faced an immensely difficult task, and one that only they were prepared to take on. It was a task they performed without material benefit to themselves. ... Second, there is an issue about the perceptions of people from backgrounds as disturbed and deprived as many of the girls in the laundries. Put simply, those who do not receive love early have difficulty perceiving positive human interactions. ... Yet when all that is fully taken into account, the consistent story of former inmates includes a high level of gratuitous positive cruelty and emotional deprivation.

The story of Magdalen laundries in Australia is one that should be more widely known and it is right that the ABC should play a part in bringing that story to a wider audience. But 'The Missing Magdalens' fails to tell it well. Apart from the program's general lack of balance referred to below, the 'hidden story' across which Donna Abela stumbled and which forms the

2 Janice Konstantinidis, 'Life in "The Mag"', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 34, 2013, pp. 91–102; James Franklin, 'Convent Slave Laundries? Magdalen Asylums in Australia', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 34, 2013, pp. 70–90; Margaret Walsh, *The Good Sams: Sisters of the Good Samaritan 1857–1969*, John Garratt, Mulgrave, Vic., 2001; Judith Godden, 'Sectarianism and Purity Within the Woman's Sphere: Sydney Refuges During the Late Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1987, pp. 291–306.

basis of the program's judgments about conditions at Tempe, was exposed as fraudulent more than a century ago.

Set in 1906, the so-called 'hidden story' was not hidden at all but widely covered in the secular and religious press at the time. It started with a speech by Rev. William Dill Macky on 8 July 1906 to a Loyal Orange Institution function in the Sydney Town Hall in which he referred to 'a girl' who had escaped from a convent near Sydney.³ On 14 July 1906 the *Watchman* newspaper, the organ of Dill Macky's Australian Protestant Defence Association, gave further particulars in an article headlined 'Rome's "Industrial" Institutions/THE TEMPE LAUNDRY/Three Women Break Loose/ONE TELLS HER STORY'⁴

The 'one' was 25-year-old May Gould, who told the *Watchman* her tale of misery starting with her being a servant at the Catholic presbytery in Bathurst and ending with her 'escape' from St Magdalen's to the home of a Protestant family who took her in. The ABC's program quotes extensively from Ms Gould's statement as published in the *Watchman*. It is the program's sole source for the treatment of women inmates at St Magdalen's.

Relying on a single source, particularly a notoriously anti-Catholic one, for a sensitive story about a controversial Catholic institution is bad enough. But what is even worse is that the program failed to tell its listeners that three weeks later the *Watchman* admitted that May Gould had lied to them and that she had made a false statutory declaration about her circumstances:

'For some reason or other the woman has chosen to deceive the gentleman and his wife who took her into their home on the strength of her story, clothed and fed her and obtained for her a situation. She also, for the same reason presumably, chose to lie to us, to Dr Macky, to two justices of the peace, and several other persons in a most unblushing manner, and above all to make a declaration which is false in several particulars.'⁵

It turns out that Ms Gould, also known as Maud Harris, had never worked at the Bathurst presbytery but had gone straight to St Magdalen's after her release from Bathurst gaol where she had been serving a sentence of 18 months' hard labour following her convictions for larceny and 'stealing in a dwelling house'. Seriously embarrassed, the *Watchman* not only denounced its star witness as a liar, it also reported her to the police and forwarded the papers to the Minister for Justice.

Yet, none of this was mentioned in the program. Even worse, the narrator

3 *Sydney Morning Herald* 9 July 1906, p. 5 (<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article14784745>).

4 *Watchman* 14 July 1906, p. 8 (<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article111964380>).

5 *Watchman* 4 August 1906, p. 4 (<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article111964484>).

also failed to inform the program's listeners that Ms Gould's allegations of mistreatment at Tempe were refuted in many articles and letters published at the time in Bathurst's *National Advocate* and in Sydney's Catholic newspapers.⁶ In fact, on the same day as the original *Watchman* article was published, the *Freeman's Journal* contained a detailed point by point rebuttal of Macky's allegations, which prompted the *Watchman* to reinvestigate the matter.⁷



May Gould, 1903 (*Gaol Inmates/Prisoners Photos Index 1870-1930, State Archives NSW, Series NRS1998 Item [3/13074], p 252*)

An example of Ms Gould's mendacity is her claim there were children of 'about nine years of age' working in the laundry, a claim denied by the mother superior. In a 1984 thesis on St Magdalen's, Marion Fox gave the age ranges of inmates admitted each year to the retreat. In the period of Ms Gould's stay, the youngest was 13. Referring to another claim by Ms Gould, that she had been imprisoned and forced to work for 16 hours a day, Ms Fox wrote, 'this claim was discredited and shown to be a sectarian attack'.⁸

I can only assume that the program makers are not familiar with the sectarianism of those times. In describing the *Watchman* newspaper, Ms Abela stated it was established 'to defend the interests of Protestants against Roman Catholicism'. This, of course, is

a naïve and ill-informed characterisation of that particular journal. In his article on William Dill Macky in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*,

6 *National Advocate* 9 July 1906, p. 2; 10 July 1906, p. 4; 12 July 1906, p. 2; *Freeman's Journal* 14 July 1906, p. 14–15; 21 July 1906, p. 17; 28 July 1906, p. 13; *Catholic Press* 12 July 1906, p. 22; 19 July 1906, p. 23.

7 *Freeman's Journal* 14 July 1906, pp. 14–15; 21 July 1906, p. 17; 28 July 1906, p. 13

8 Marion Fox, 'From Penitence to pastoral care: the work of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan at St Magdalen's Retreat, Tempe (Arncliffe)', MEd thesis, University of New England, 1984, pp. 85, 96.

historian Richard Broome wrote, 'In 1902–04 [Dill Macky] edited the *Watchman*, which, **filled with anti-Catholic fanaticism**, sold 20,000 copies a week.' [Emphasis added].

Furthermore, relying on Ms Gould's account to provide evidence of what went on inside the Magdalen Retreat, the program repeated an anti-Catholic libel that was current in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As Judith Godden noted in her article on women's refuges:

Catholics had to counter constant stories of women being forcibly detained in convents. ... Militant Protestants were eager to countenance such claims and to believe that the refuge inmates were also forcibly kept under Catholic control. Sydney's leading Orangeman, Dr Dill Macky, championed the cause of one inmate [May Gould] who claimed that she had been forcibly detained by the nuns and forced to work in the refuge laundry from four (presumably a.m.) to eight p.m. When her claims were discredited, at least one paper concluded that the episode had been a plot by 'Rome' to discredit the Orangemen!⁹

According to the mother superior of the Tempe Retreat, who was interviewed by the *Freeman's Journal*, the gates to the Retreat were always open. She also said that May Gould had previously left the Retreat of her own volition in October/November 1905 only to return eight or ten days later. Thereafter, she remained at the Retreat until 3 July 1906 when she again freely walked out of the grounds, doing so without informing the convent authorities. The next day she again returned to the Retreat but was told she could not remain at Tempe but could go to the Buckingham Street refuge. It was then, after being refused re-entry to Tempe, that she told her story to the *Watchman*.¹⁰

This episode was not the first time that the *Watchman* had cried wolf concerning a Catholic institution. In 1903 the newspaper had run a series of articles critical of the Manly Industrial School and Orphanage run by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. The articles, later published in a pamphlet entitled, 'Convent Horrors', were based on the testimony of a former inmate.¹¹ When the allegations were raised in parliament the government set up an inquiry conducted by Mr Alfred W. Green, Chief Officer under the *Children's Protection Act 1902*, and Sub-Inspector William J. Tindall of the New South Wales Police, neither of whom was a Catholic. Their report dated 11 February 1904 found:

The closest investigation has failed to elicit any evidence in corroboration

9 Godden, op. cit., p. 296.

10 *Freeman's Journal* 14 July 1906, pp. 14–15 (<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article108030647>).

11 *Watchman* 20 June 1903, pp. 4, 5; 27 June 1903, p. 4; 4 July 1903, p. 5; 11 July 1903, p. 5; 19 March 1904, p. 8.

of the statements of ill-treatment or neglect of the children in any particular, either at the date (six years ago) when the cruelties were alleged to have been inflicted, or at the present time. Dr Watkins was visiting medical officer six years ago, and his evidence is typical of the unanimous testimony in support of the good care and kindly treatment bestowed on the children by the officers of the institution.¹²

The exoneration of the Manly Industrial School and Orphanage and the discrediting of May Gould regarding her criticism of St Madgalen's, Tempe should not lead us to conclude that problems did not exist in those institutions. But those facts are essential background information for historians passing judgment on them.

The failure of the makers of 'The Missing Magdalens' to inform the program's listeners that Ms Gould had been exposed as a liar and that her account was contested raises a question as to whether the program's makers were ignorant of these facts, which is bad enough for a history program on the national broadcaster, or whether they chose to present factual content in a way that was materially misleading to the program's audience.

But the program makers are guilty not only of sins of omission but also of commission. In informing listeners that Ms Gould had been in prison, Ms Abela presented that information in a manner critical of the mother superior: 'Her past should have been off limits. Rules are rules. But mother superior was in damage control. Mother superior published May Gould's prison record for petty theft, poured her good name down the drain.'

Ms Abela's gratuitous criticism is comprehensively wrong. The fact that May Gould had been in prison was disclosed in the *National Advocate* (Bathurst) on 12 July 1906 in a letter by Mgr M. Long (Vicar-General of the Diocese of Bathurst) in answer to Dill Macky's claim that Ms Gould had gone from working at the Catholic presbytery in Bathurst to the Tempe laundry. The purpose of his disclosure was not to pour Ms Gould's good name down the drain but to rebut the lie regarding the role of the Bathurst Catholic presbytery in the affair.

As well as relying heavily on May Gould's discredited statement, 'The Missing Magdalens' generally treats the subject superficially and lacks balance. The program fails to ask the big questions: why did these institutions exist in Australia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; how and why did women come into these institutions? It jumps from a twelfth-century explanation to the twentieth century and from Ireland to Australia as if the change in time and space was of no consequence. Moreover, we do not hear

¹² 'Roman Catholic Orphanage, Manly: report respecting management', NSW Legislative Assembly, V&P, 1904, Vol. 2, pp. 901–910.

from any of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan who ran the Tempe retreat from 1888 to 1980.

In informing its listeners about the Tempe institution, the program relates the complaints of one inmate, the discredited May Gould, as if she was typical of all. It provides no figures to indicate how many women passed through St Magdalen's, Tempe and how many managed to escape from their dysfunctional pasts to end up married with families. No good-news stories are told. It fails to appreciate that the nuns operated laundries not to punish 'fallen women' but to provide work and, in the absence of government funding, to earn an income to house and feed women who had been abandoned by their families and by the society at large and who would otherwise have been out on the street earning a living by whatever means possible. It ignores the fact that except for women sent to these institutions by the courts to serve their sentences, the inmates were free to leave if they wished.

More egregiously, it fails to tell the stories of the sisters who dedicated their lives to helping these women, preferring to paint the nuns uniformly as strict and uncaring disciplinarians. No doubt, many of them were, as Franklin pointed out in his article, but many others showed kindness and respect to the inmates and tried to improve their lives. The program rightly claims that women's stories are often not told in our histories, but nuns are women, too, and their stories should also be told. To understand how these institutions were run we need to know the facts from the point of view of both the inmates and those responsible for their care.

As Franklin and Walsh have pointed out in their writings on the Magdalen laundries, there were abuses and inappropriate practices that occurred in these institutions. But that is not the full story. As observed above, a just assessment of practices of the past can only be made with knowledge of the facts and circumstances that shaped those practices. Relying on discredited sources, failing to convey essential background information, and telling only the negative side of the story of Australia's Magdalen laundries is not an appropriate way for any historian, let alone the ABC's 'The History Listen' program, to address such a complex and controversial aspect of this country's past.

Dr Kildea lodged a complaint with the ABC concerning the program. His complaint was referred to the ABC Ombudsman. While declining to expressly uphold his complaint, the ABC Ombudsman stated, 'the program makers have agreed to revisions that are currently underway, to better contextualise the way in which the May Gould story was disputed' and 'the program makers have also agreed to make revisions that provide more of the story of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan'. While the revised program gives more background on Magdalen laundries in Australia and the role of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, it continues to rely on May Gould's story without informing listeners that she was denounced as a liar by those who initially promoted her story.

FEDERATION, SECTARIANISM, AND THE CATHOLIC MIDDLE CLASS IN AUSTRALIA

Scott Denis McCarthy*

Abstract: This article examines the engagement of middle-class Catholicism with the federal movement in Australia. It pays particular attention to the period between 1896 and 1901, thus tracking the involvement of politically active Catholics in federation's so-called Popular Movement. Parallel to an upswing in federal sentiment in the broader community throughout that period was a rise in sectarian tensions, as the Catholic élite strove to contribute to the federal debate against the current of age-old religious tensions in Australia's socio-political climate. Those tensions drew further strength from more general anxieties over federation, loyalty, and national identity. This article argues that, by examining the actions and attitudes of middle-class, politically engaged Catholics in the lead-up to Australian federation, we can get a clearer sense both of the nature of social divisions in colonial Australia and the liminality of lay Catholicism's upper order at the turn of the twentieth century: a class simultaneously characterised, by both Protestant and Catholic elements in the community, as the loyal religionists of a persecuted church and the affluent products of a persecuting, hegemonic cultural Protestantism.

I

Between the early 1890s and the enshrining of the Australian Commonwealth in January 1901, federal enthusiasm throughout the broader Australian community grew considerably. Often referred to as the 'Popular Movement', this period saw the relative elevation of the federal project above the realm of partisan politics.¹ To some extent, this drew the Australian people themselves into the debate over unification.² Middle-class Catholics contributed to this political process alongside their Protestant counterparts, both in support of and in opposition to the federal ideal. In so doing, they operated within spaces otherwise dominated by an Anglo-Protestant element that comprised the marked majority within Australia's social and political power structures.³

1 Usage of the term 'Popular Movement' owes itself largely to the Australian federalists John Quick and Robert Garran. See John Quick & Robert Garran, *Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth: Re-print of the 1901 Edition* (Sydney: Legal Books, 1995), Part IV – 'The Popular Movement', 150–165.

2 See John Hirst, "Federation and the People: A Response to Stuart Macintyre", *Papers on Parliament* No. 32 (Canberra: Department of the Senate, 1998), 80–82.

3 See Gregory Melleuish & Stephen A. Chavura, "Utilitarianism contra Sectarianism: The Official and Unauthorized Civic Religion of Australia", in *Only in Australia: The History, Politics, and Economics of Australian Exceptionalism*, ed. William Coleman (Melbourne: Oxford University

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Indeed, and in spite of contemporary politicians' evoking of 'the people' in public addresses, the debate over federation remained largely the preserve of the Australian middle classes.⁴ This remained the case even as the depression of the 1890s redefined individuals' economic footing: the social, educational, and moral markers of middle-class propriety tended to endure, even if financial and occupational markers did not. For Catholics of that stratum, the principle of a united Australia was a familiar one. Not only had prominent Irish-Catholic statesmen such as Charles Gavan Duffy and John O'Shannassy been active in the federal movement from its inception in the 1850s, but the church's leadership, too, had been among the most vocal of public authorities on the value and ultimate necessity of national unity. The latter's involvement in political mobilisation through the 1890s drew an inordinate amount of attention to the federal issue, which, though beneficial to the cause, tended to be detrimental to the state of Catholic-Protestant relations in the wider community. Catholic clerical engagement in the political sphere, at a seemingly foundational moment in Australian nationhood, aroused a dissenting cry heard loudest in the two rival colonies of Victoria and New South Wales. For many, and particularly for the vocal and reactionary element of Australian Protestantism, this redefined the federal debate on sectarian, and not secular, terms. By way of punctuating this shift, the Commonwealth celebrations on 1 January 1901 were boycotted by the Catholic Church.

The literature in which Catholicism and Australian federation intersects is relatively thin. Tony Cahill's work constitutes the primary contribution to this branch of Australian historiography.⁵ Cahill framed his investigation of Catholics and federation primarily in relation to his larger research interest, Sydney's Cardinal-Archbishop Patrick Moran. For Cahill, sectarianism during federation's Popular Movement was of interest primarily for its demonstrating the divisions between Australia's Catholic and Protestant communities, rather than its demonstrating those same divisions – and parallel fractures within the Catholic community itself – on class lines. Patrick O'Farrell similarly engaged with the sectarian tensions of the

Press, 2016), 62.

- 4 See Stuart Macintyre, "The Idea of the People", *Papers on Parliament* No. 32 (Canberra: Department of the Senate, 1998): 76–79; Stuart Macintyre, "Some Absentees from Adelaide", *The New Federalist* 1, (1998): 16–19.
- 5 See Anthony E. Cahill, "Cardinal Moran and Australian Federation", *The Australasian Catholic Record* 78, no.1 (2001): 3–15; Anthony E. Cahill, "Catholics and Australian Federation", *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* 22, (2001): 9–30; Anthony E. Cahill, "Cardinal Moran's Politics", *Journal of Religious History* 15, no. 4 (1989): 525–531.

nineteenth century's end in his history of the Catholic Church, but again tended to do so more in relation to Moran and the episcopal hierarchy than to the class concerns that featured along that same timeline amongst the laity.⁶ James Murtagh's 1951 pamphlet, *Catholics and the Commonwealth*, provided a detailed outline of the Catholic contribution to Australian federation, but functioned more as an honour-roll of Irish-Catholic names than an extensive piece of historical analysis.⁷ In Murtagh's larger study, *Australia: The Catholic Chapter*, there is a similar neglect of the middle-class question regarding Catholics' experience of sectarianism through the 1890s, due to the text's prioritising the rise of organised labour, and the church's involvement in such, in its analysis.⁸ These studies identified sectarianism and anti-Catholicism as a point of emphasis around the time of federation, but often from a church-centric perspective, and without adequate consideration for class factors in examining the nature and potency of sectarian tensions upon, and within, the Australian-Catholic community leading up to 1901. Indeed, as this article will argue, sectarian bouts were often navigated on subjective class bases which tended to jeopardise the oft-tenuous positioning of the Catholic middle classes within Australia's culturally Protestant power structures. Studies of federation outside the Australian-Catholic fold, such as those authored by John Hirst, Stuart Macintyre, and Robin McLachlan, have considered these class factors to a greater extent, often as a means of interrogating the extent to which the 'Popular' Movement was fuelled by the masses as opposed to being driven by bourgeois-colonial professionals and politicians.⁹ However, the research outputs of such historians have, perhaps naturally, failed to couple this emphasis upon class with the dual questions of Catholicism and sectarianism throughout the federal movement. The result of this scholarship examining other, parallel lines of historical inquiry is that it has left room for further research into the nature of Catholic involvement in the final push for Australian federation and, simultaneously, the nature of socio-religious divisions in pre-federated Australia.

6 See Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, New Revised Edition (NSWU Press, Sydney, 1985), 270–276.

7 James G. Murtagh, *Catholics and the Commonwealth* (Melbourne: Australian Catholic Truth Society, 1951).

8 See James G. Murtagh, *Australia: The Catholic Chapter* (Melbourne: The Polding Press, 1969), 134–139.

9 See Hirst, "Federation and the People", 80–82; S. Macintyre, "The Idea of the People", 76–79; S. Macintyre, "Some Absentees from Adelaide", 16–19; Robin McLachlan, "Dr. Thomas Machattie and the Bathurst Federation League: A Local Response to the Politics of Federation, 1897 and 1898", *The New Federalist* 4, (1999): 31–33. See also Rosemary Pringle, "The 1897 Convention Elections in New South Wales – a Milestone?" *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 58, no. 3 (1972): 217–225.

This article will show that the development in the nature of social and political discourse surrounding the final push for federation ensured that sectarianism, if not anti-Catholicism, remained at the forefront of the Australian public's consciousness as the new state came into being. The result was to affirm middle-class Catholics' positioning within a liminal space at a juncture in which group identities more generally were crystallising alongside Australia's unification. It is important at the outset, then, to characterise this collective – the Catholic middle class – as a socio-economic group defined only in part by their relation to the labour market. Such a group is defined also by their expression of, and adherence to, subjective class markers relating to Protestant-bourgeois morality and middle-class performativity, and by reflecting markers of Weberian status such as private virtue and public respectability.¹⁰ In the face of the pervasive sectarian issue, the Catholic middle class thus found itself simultaneously occupying the positions of loyal religionists of a persecuted church and the products of the morally conservative, persecuting culture of Anglo-Australian Protestantism. These positions, though not necessarily mutually exclusive, became increasingly difficult to reconcile at the turn of the twentieth century.

II

By the 1890s, pro-federal sentiment was generally strong throughout the wider Catholic community. This was particularly so in middle-class organisations in which Catholics had high proportional representation. In Victoria, nationalist organisations such as the Australian Natives' Association (A.N.A.) retained strong Catholic representation in both its membership and leadership. The first president of the Association's board of directors was a Catholic, Thomas O'Callaghan, and the barrister John Henry Keating, an old boy of St. Ignatius' College, Riverview – a primary site of middle-class Catholicism in N.S.W. – would preside over the 1895 Conference of Premiers in Hobart, as President of the Association's Tasmanian branch.¹¹ Father James Murtagh would later write in an *Australian Catholic Truth Society* pamphlet that Catholics constituted twenty to thirty percent of A.N.A. members throughout the 1890s.¹² The Melbourne lay-run *Austral Light* even grumbled that Catholic enthusiasm for the Association was greater than that displayed

10 See Max Weber, "Class, Status, Party", in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds. Hans H. Gerth & Charles Wright Mills (London: Routledge, 1991), 187–188: "In content, status honour is normally expressed by the fact that above all else a specific *style of life* can be expected from all those who wish to belong to the circle."

11 *Our Alma Mater*, Vol. I – No. III (December 1895), 110.

12 Murtagh, *Catholics and the Commonwealth*, 17.

for Irish-Catholic organisations.¹³ In New South Wales, the Church's laity expressed, if not wholehearted support, than at least a general awareness of the debate over federation. This owed much to the vocal clerical support for unification in Sydney, the most prominent of which came from Cardinal Moran.

Moran had been an enthusiastic and pragmatic supporter of the federal cause since departing Rome for Australia in 1884, often advocating for union on the grounds of national defence against European expansion into the Pacific region.¹⁴ The Catholic Church in Australia had been effectively federated at the First Plenary Council of 1885, partly to achieve a more united front against secular and anti-Catholic threats, and it was likely this same pursuit of insular defence that, to Moran, rendered federation a national imperative.¹⁵ The Cardinal-Archbishop enjoyed a larger platform to advocate federation as popular sentiment for the federal cause grew further after the Corowa Conference of 1893 – a convention of federalists co-ordinated by Edmund Barton and the Catholic barrister Richard O'Connor's Australasian Federation League (A.F.L.). In 1894, the Cardinal was interviewed by the Catholic journalist John Tighe Ryan with specific reference to the federation question, the discussion afterwards published and circulated in pamphlet form.¹⁶ Somewhat provocatively, Moran declared then: 'I consider that federation must come, and if not achieved by our political leaders, it will come as a matter of revolution'.¹⁷ While the threat of revolt was less likely in earnest than it was a populist ploy, the Cardinal's engagement with the issue did much to raise it above the quagmire of partisan politics and into the realm of public interest. For this reason, Tony Cahill has argued that Cardinal Moran did 'more to achieve federation [than] any other leader from church *or state*'.¹⁸ The Cardinal's advocacy sparked relative interest in federation amongst both Catholics loyal to the Church's leadership and the reactionary elements of the Protestant community that saw the encroachment of Catholicism upon Australian politics as endangering the secular autonomy of the state. In anticipation of the latter, Ryan prefaced his circular with the

13 *Austral Light*, Volume I – No. 1 (January 1892), 37. Hereafter referred to as *A.L.*

14 See Cahill, "Moran and Australian Federation", 11.

15 See *Pastoral Letter of the Archbishops of Australasia in Plenary Council Assembled to the Clergy and Laity of their Charge* (Sydney: F. Cunninghame & Co., 1886).

16 See John Tighe Ryan, *The Attitude of the Catholic Church: A Special Interview with His Eminence Cardinal Moran* (Sydney: GEO. Robertson & Co., 1894).

17 Ryan, *Attitude of the Catholic Church*, 47.

18 Cahill, "Moran and Australian Federation", 4. Emphasis in original.

words: 'I trust this booklet will be received without sectarian suspicion'.¹⁹

This evoking of 'the people' by public figures, from both press and pulpit, manifested itself most tangibly in the Bathurst People's Federal Convention of November 1896. The event was organised by the Bathurst branch of the A.F.L., for the purpose of debating the constitution drafted at the first National Australasian Convention in Sydney in 1891. The proceedings at the convention, along with the organisation of the event itself, were marked by a distinctly rural-bourgeois character. The Bathurst branch of the AFL was composed almost exclusively of middle-class professionals. The President, Dr. Thomas Alfred Machattie, was one of the 'principal medical men of the Western district'.²⁰ Machattie's leadership was flanked by John Meagher, a local Catholic merchant of renown in the south-western and central districts of New South Wales, amongst other men of local stature such as the Catholic bishop Dr. Joseph Byrne and Mayor of Bathurst Dr. W. Pritchard Bassett.²¹ Perhaps by corollary of this middle-class leadership, the list of delegates to the convention included minimal representation of unionists or organised Labor.²² The Cardinal was invited by the A.F.L. to speak on 20 November, the fifth day of proceedings, alongside Catholic politicians such as Patrick Jennings, Richard O'Connor, and John Gavan Duffy.

Thus there was a unifying line of socio-economic standing that connected delegates and A.F.L. leadership alike, one that seemed to transcend denominational frictions that often emerged within shared Catholic-Protestant spaces in the Australian colonies. In a setting dominated by a middle-class element, the marker of distinction was evidently socio-economic, rather than religious. Cardinal Moran himself, no stranger to criticising the Protestant churches, was here instructing his flock to 'Go hand-in-hand with your Protestant fellow-citizens in every measure that may have for its purpose to advance the interests, to develop the resources, or promote the welfare of Australia,' to the loud cheers of a largely non-Catholic crowd.²³ And this sense of class-cohesion extended to the post-Convention celebrations, hosted by John Meagher in his *Kilrush* residence after the concluding speeches were made on 20 November. In attendance were elite secular and Protestant figures such as the politicians George Reid, Edmund Barton, William Lyne,

19 Ryan, *Attitude of the Catholic Church*, introductory note.

20 *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser* (21 November 1896), 1093.

21 See *Proceedings – People's Federal Convention – Bathurst, November, 1896* (Sydney: William Andrews & Co., 1897), 3.

22 The report on proceedings details only one name, A.C. Hammond, as a representative of a Labour Electoral League. See *Proceedings – People's Federal Convention*, 7.

23 *Proceedings – People's Federal Convention*, 88.

and the Anglican Rev. Dean Marriott. At the same table were the Catholic men who had presided throughout the Convention, here including Meagher's four sons and Francis Bede Freehill, the acting consul for Spain.²⁴ Meagher's grand *Kilrush* property, the *Freeman's Journal* wrote

was the scene of one of the most effective banquets it is possible to imagine.

The *menu* being specially designed to meet the dietetic views of Friday entertained by the several creeds represented at the table, Catholic appetites

could be propitiated at the expense of no religious scruple.²⁵

Such a gathering was an apt conclusion to a week of debate that had been characterised by middle-class standards of normative politicking that placed the religious line of demarcation in the peripheral. Here, Catholics of that stratum had been able to engage with the federal issue without concern for what Michael Hogan has termed the 'sectarian strand' that ran through so much of Australia's social and political contests.²⁶

Ironically, then, it was the experience of Bathurst, almost entirely lacking in dissension and discord, that contributed to the invigoration of sectarian hostilities in the wider community soon afterwards. For as the push for federation took on a new, more popular form, the threat of interdenominational discord was amplified, aided in no small part by the Catholic Church's further involvement in political affairs.

III

The burgeoning support for federation at the local level, demonstrated at the Corowa and Bathurst conventions, was reflected in developments from 1897 onwards. The passing of Enabling Acts in Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania, and South Australia led to those states committing to a convention that would ultimately draft a federal constitution.²⁷ That convention, the first session of which would be held in Adelaide in March 1897, directly involved the Australian people by putting the election of delegates, ten from each participating colony, to the general public. It was within this broader mobilisation that Cardinal Moran accepted a nomination for election to the New South Wales ballot.

The Cardinal's candidature had been hinted at in mid-January, however no official entry occurred until February, after a deputation of men arrived

²⁴ See *National Advocate* (21 November 1896), 2.

²⁵ *Freeman's Journal* (28 November 1896), 14. Hereafter referred to as *F.J.*

²⁶ See Michael Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand: Religion in Australian History* (Melbourne: Penguin Books Australia, 1987).

²⁷ See the motion read by Dr. John Quick in *Official Report of the Federation Conference held in the Courthouse, Corowa 1893* (Sydney: University of Sydney Library, 2001), Statutory Convention Act, 37.

at St. Mary's Presbytery to plead for Moran's candidature.²⁸ That deputation reflected the class boundaries that had included Moran within its ranks at Bathurst, being composed entirely of local professionals and gentlemen. Though largely consisting of Jews and Anglicans, those gathered included Catholic laymen such as the solicitor and protectionist politician Thomas Slattery, and Michael Meagher, who had been present at his father's banquet in *Kilrush*.²⁹ The deputation's nomination was accepted, albeit tentatively so. The Cardinal determined to have no committee and would address no public meetings during the short campaign which would see its outcome in March. This suggests that, although brash enough to stand for the convention, Moran retained a sensibility to the realities of a culture in the colonies which, generally, stood for a Protestant hegemony often insecure and defensive against Catholic intrusion. It was also reflective of the implicit strangeness of a Catholic dignitary submitting themselves to the indignity of a popular vote that the Cardinal's campaign was conducted in a manner distinct from traditional and secular political norms. His policies were soon afterwards issued in a manifesto to the electors of New South Wales, in which he wrote:

When selecting those ten candidates, it will be well to bear in mind at the present momentous crisis, that there is no question of the religious denomination to which they belong, or of the nationality which they represent ...³⁰

In spite of his pleadings, and perhaps predictably, the question of religious denomination and nationality came to govern much of the discourse surrounding the electoral campaign.

It was not long after the Cardinal's entering the race that organised, extreme Protestantism began to mobilise against his return. At February's end, the United Protestant Conference had drafted a ticket of nine Protestants and a single Catholic, the protectionist and A.F.L. leader Richard O'Connor, for election to the convention.³¹ One present at the conference, however, reported that O'Connor's inclusion on the list was merely for appearance's sake, and that ultra-Protestant elements were 'as likely to vote for him as that a pack of hungry wolves would leave unmolested an unprotected flock of sheep when seeking their prey'.³² But it remained likely that the 'loud murmurs of disapproval' at the mention of O'Connor's name had been

28 See *F.J.* (13 February 1897), 16.

29 See *Cardinal Moran and the Federal Convention* (Sydney: F. Cunninghame & Co., Printers, 1897), 3.

30 *Moran and the Federal Convention*, 15.

31 *F.J.* (27 February 1897), 15.

32 *F.J.* (27 February 1897), 15.

provoked more by the Cardinal's politicking than by a rigid disdain for O'Connor, who was an inoffensive figure in his own right.³³ Alfred Deakin would later describe him as favourably conservative, with the moral markers of middle-class propriety.³⁴ Although such sectarian venom was coming mostly from fringe elements in colonial society, its prevalence remained a point of concern even in mainstream circles. The Anglican protectionist Sir George Dibbs, on attending the rowing regatta at St. Ignatius' College in March, stated that he did so primarily 'to cut down sectarianism'.³⁵

Though generally supportive of Moran's ambitions in public, it was surely becoming clear to Catholic politicians that the Cardinal's arousal of the sectarian issue had marked them for collateral damage. An anonymous letter to the *Daily Telegraph* in mid-February said as much, writing that the effect of Moran's campaign 'will be to strike the names of Roman Catholics from our voting lists, which will be unfortunate for several of them would make useful members'.³⁶ This was a process with which Catholic politicians were already familiar. Indeed, in the coming decades, that section of the Australian-Catholic laity would become even more familiar with it, often owing to the church's lobbying for state aid and capitation grants to Catholic schools.³⁷ In 1899, for example, the barrister and free-trade politician Patrick McMahon Glynn, a prominent Catholic in the overwhelmingly Protestant South Australian colony, recorded in his diary that his prospective return at a local election had been 'assured, until the Catholics, led by the Archbishop [John O'Reily], with fire minus force, pushed the capitation question into prominence, so the votes of many electors go the way of the world'.³⁸ When the results emerged, returning only marginally in Glynn's favour, he further wrote:

The capitation grant, to which out of loyalty to my co-religionists and the desire for consistency rather than depth of conviction of its expediency or belief in its probable success I stuck, lost me hundreds of votes; but the better class of voters overlooked it and secured my return. I fear the bitterness of religious or sectarian antagonisms arrested by the fervour of

33 *F.J.* (27 February 1897), 15.

34 Alfred Deakin, *The Federal Story: The Inner History of the Federal Cause* (Melbourne: Robertson & Mullens, 1944), 63–4.

35 *Our Alma Mater*, Vol. I – No. IV (June 1896), 192.

36 *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, 12 February 1897), 6.

37 See Jeff Kildea, *Tearing the Fabric: Sectarianism in Australia, 1910–1925* (Sydney: Citadel Books, 2002).

38 Patrick McMahon Glynn, diary entry, 15 April 1899, Patrick McMahon Glynn papers, National Library of Australia, MS4653, Series 3, Item 4, 182.

some of its clerical advocates will affect the voting for even the Federal Parliament.³⁹

Amidst the defensive elements of Australian Protestantism in early 1897, this 'blacklisting' extended even to Irish candidates of non-Catholic backgrounds. As the outcome of the convention election filtered in in early March, the Ulster-born Anglican barrister Henry Bournes Higgins wrote to Joseph Winter, the editor of Melbourne's *Advocate*, that 'the Orange boys have been active in the elections. I found that in Castlemaine, for instance, a number of them had been casting against me in the idea that I belonged to some anti-Orange secret society!'⁴⁰ The threat of ethnic and religious discrimination of Irish or Catholic politicians was not, by 1897, a new phenomenon. But it appeared that the energy with which that discrimination was being employed had heightened in the midst of the broader anti-Cardinal protest.

In the same process, the Catholic middle classes faced denunciation from their own co-religionists, the majority of whom resided within the Australian working classes. This was owed to an underlying perception that Catholics whose class and social status rendered them more comfortable within the borders of Anglo-Protestant propriety were inherently complicit in the bitterness being levelled at the wider Catholic community. Those perceptions, and the class borders they reinforced, reflected a continuing trend of distrust for Catholics who had succeeded in a colonial society largely defined by non-Catholic terms of engagement. The *Austral Light* wrote in 1892: 'Watch the careers of those of our co-religionists who succeed occasionally in [political] contests, and will you not discover that in too many instances their success has been achieved by some cowardly subversion of Catholic principles'.⁴¹ Amidst what the *Bulletin* labelled the 'good old sectarian shindy' surrounding the Cardinal's candidature, voices from the non-Catholic press similarly castigated the Catholic élite.⁴² A letter to Sydney's *Truth* warned readers that the 'Shoneen upstart Irish Catholics, or 'Cawtholics,' [are] the worst of the whole gang of national pirates and cut-throats ... the rich Catholic is invariably the most conservative to be found in any country'.⁴³ Later in the year, the paper's belligerent editor, John Norton, would accuse Richard O'Connor of having been 'practically an

39 Glynn, diary entry, 4 May 1899, Glynn papers, NLA, MS4653, Series 4, Item 4, 491–2.

40 Henry Bournes Higgins to Joseph Winter, letter, 8 March 1897, Joseph Winter papers, State Library of Victoria, MS 8622 FB 25, Box 1798/2.

41 *A.L.*, Volume I – No. 3 (March, 1892), 46–47.

42 *Bulletin* (March 13, 1897), 6.

43 *Truth* (21 February 1897), 4. 'Shoneen' here being a pejorative for Irishmen or Catholics who mimic the behaviours and values of the Anglo-Protestant ascendancy.

Orange nominee at the recent Federal Election'.⁴⁴ Norton further declared that O'Connor would 'never command the love and loyalty of the majority of Irishmen in this country; [he has] too much of the political lawyer – the Irish tool of English rule – about [him], to find acceptance in loyal Irish hearts this side the line'.⁴⁵ Thus it was at junctures in which sectarianism dominated public discourse that the liminality of the middle-class Catholic community, intersecting Catholic and Protestant group identities, became most readily apparent.

Morally conservative sentiment in the Catholic community, a prime marker of middle-class respectability, shaped a corresponding sense that the Cardinal's candidature was more trouble than it was worth. These anxieties were evidenced by the insularity and self-preservative tendencies of the Catholic body as the broader wave of anti-clerical rhetoric circulated in the press. Sydney's *Daily Telegraph*, on the eve of the elections on 4 March, ran a collection of letters written by dissenting laymen.⁴⁶ Under the pseudonym 'A Good Catholic', one contributor wrote that he 'does not question the Cardinal's right to enter the Convention, but doubts the expediency, more especially when it stirs up sectarian strife which must injure many dependent Catholics in places, where, hitherto, good fellowship existed'.⁴⁷ In referencing Catholics dependent upon 'good fellowship' with Protestants, it is likely the author was alluding to laymen within professional power structures otherwise defined by their non-Catholic constitution. Another letter, signed E. Donnily, wanted to know why Sydney's leading Catholics, who, in the past, had stood by the Cardinal, with their £50 and £100, took no part in the deputation cruelly asking him to become a politician. Is this due, [I wonder], to the fact that they think to encourage a vote for him to become a politician would be the most cruel act a Catholic elector could perform?⁴⁸

In spite of the fact that 'leading' Catholics in Slattery and Meagher actually had been part of the Cardinal's deputation, the perception that they hadn't spoke to the more pervasive belief that Catholic middle class figures, more so than their working-class co-religionists, regretted Moran's candidature. And there was likely an element of truth to that assumption. Presumably with controversies such as the election campaign in mind, Thomas Donovan,

⁴⁴ *Truth* (17 October 1897), 1.

⁴⁵ *Truth* (17 October 1897), 1.

⁴⁶ *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, 3 March 1897), 9-10. The elections for the 1897 Adelaide Convention were held on 4 March in Victoria, New South Wales, and Tasmania. They were held on 6 March in South Australia.

⁴⁷ *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, 3 March 1897), 10.

⁴⁸ *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, 3 March 1897), 10.

a wealthy Catholic benefactor, wrote upon Moran's funeral in 1911: 'Cardinal Moran is dead, and relief has come to many a sore heart'.⁴⁹ Reflecting such antipathies, the Cardinal's nomination paper in Bathurst was 'extensively signed' by a 'great number of prominent non-Catholics in the community'; the list of Catholic signatures, however, was 'comparatively small, because the majority refrained from annexing their names'.⁵⁰

The nature of these tensions and their expressions were further conflated with anxieties over national identity and defence that were circulating alongside the debate over federation. One of the key objections to the Cardinal's intrusion upon Australian political affairs – and, by proxy, to the intrusion of middle-class Catholic politicians – was his assumed loyalties to non-British, and non-Protestant, powers. In mid-February 1897, to an energetic gathering of dissenters in Sydney's Y.M.C.A. Hall, the Congregational Minister E.T. Dunstan declared that 'Cardinal Moran is, by virtue of his position, the sworn soldier and servant of a foreign Power ... in any conflict of obligation that might arise the Cardinal would owe primary allegiance to the Power which has invested him with the Cardinalate'.⁵¹ Middle-class Catholics tended to respond to such accusations, particularly as they assumed greater potency with federation on the horizon, by displaying an exalted Australian nationalism. In middle-class schools such as Melbourne's Xavier College, these reactionary trends were evident. Reflecting on his school years in the early 1880s, the Catholic solicitor Jeremiah Hassett wrote that

Australianism was not encouraged in those days. If we expressed any patriotic sentiment for Australia we were promptly snuffed out by our parents or teachers, who could not understand that anyone should desire to call Australia his country.⁵²

But by 1898, students such as Vasco Loureiro – who would go on to achieve recognition in the artistic world – could publish pro-federal sentiment in the college's yearbook, advocating federation predicated on each Australian citizen saying: 'I do love my country's good with a respect more tender, more holy, more profound than my own life'.⁵³ Similarly, at St. Ignatius' College, the college rector, Father Gartlan, could in late-1900 address his pupils as 'perfectly educated gentlemen' who, 'under this new Commonwealth ... [will] realize our hopes and expectations by taking a leading part in the

49 Thomas Donovan to Abbot Aidan Gasquet, letter, 28 August 1911. Cited in Cahill, "Cardinal Moran's Politics", 526.

50 *Freeman's Journal* (13 February 1897), 15.

51 *Sydney Morning Herald* (17 February 1897) 8.

52 *The Xaverian*, Volume 2 – No. 5 (December, 1912), 9, Xavier College Archives.

53 *The Xaverian*, Volume 1 – No. 5 (December, 1898), 37, XCA.

wider field now opening for young Australians'.⁵⁴

Parallel fears that Australian Catholics' loyalty to Ireland constituted an equivocal threat formed a similar rallying point for elements of middle-class Catholicism to express their loyalty to Australia and Empire. In February 1902, not long after the federation celebrations that ran through much of 1901, this was evidenced at the annual dinner of the Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society in Sydney. Here the protectionist politician Edward William O'Sullivan vocally endorsed an assimilative Australian nationalism over an Irish, separatist mentality. O'Sullivan argued for the strengthening of an 'Anglo-Celtic Empire,' adding that the duty of Catholic middle-class leadership 'is not to promote disintegration, but to strive for the perfect consolidation of the race from which we have sprung'.⁵⁵ Catholic professionals such as Charles Heydon agreed, writing to O'Sullivan afterwards that, 'In the sense of a citizenship so wide (call it Empire or Federation or what you will) the memories of old bitterness, and even the sense of existing injustice, will melt away'.⁵⁶ Such sentiment carried extra weight as the uncertainties surrounding national identity in Australia gained greater purchase in the years immediately preceding and following 1901.

The efforts of the Cardinal's detractors in 1897 were successful in thwarting that prelate's ambitions. In New South Wales, Moran placed fourteenth in the list of prospective delegates, with 42,584 total votes; Richard O'Connor was the sole Catholic elected, receiving 73,287 votes.⁵⁷ Whether as a direct result of the 'sectarian shindy' or not, several conceivable Catholic candidates such as Edward O'Sullivan, the Postmaster-General William Patrick Crick, and solicitor-politician Louis Francis Heydon were not returned in the ballot.⁵⁸ The Victorian electorate admitted no Catholics at all. The most likely candidate, the brewer Nicholas Fitzgerald, placed 14th with 32,210 votes. Only three Catholics – the South Australian Patrick Glynn, the Tasmanian Matthew Clarke, and New South Wales' Richard O'Connor – were selected amongst forty total delegates to represent the Australian people at the impending convention. They were, as Helen Irving has written of O'Connor's election, isolated 'in a sea of Protestants'.⁵⁹

54 *Our Alma Mater*, Vol. II – No. 2 (December 1900), 23.

55 *Bendigo Independent* (27 February 1902), 3.

56 Charles Gilbert Heydon to Edward William O'Sullivan, letter, 28 February 1902, O'Sullivan family papers, Mitchell Library, MLMSS 239, Box 2 (4).

57 *F.J.* (13 March 1897), 16.

58 *Maitland Weekly Mercury* (13 March 1897), 3.

59 Helen Irving, "'Old Familiar Hacks,' Just When They're Needed: The N.S.W. Delegation", *The New Federalist* 1, (1998): 40.

Collectively, these were paltry figures, and certainly nothing that confirmed the spectre of a Catholic block vote that had been conjured during the campaign. The 1901 census, undertaken by the Catholic statistician Timothy Augustine Coghlan, reported a Roman Catholic population in New South Wales of 347,286 of a total 1,375,244 citizens; in Victoria, that figure was 263,708 of 1,210,882.⁶⁰ These figures likely being higher than in 1897, it remained the case that a large number of Catholics, if bothering to vote at all, must have opted against casting a Catholic vote. While the explanation for such results are no doubt manifold, it is likely that the conservative tendencies in the Catholic body – particularly amongst the middle classes, whose education and political engagement rendered them the more likely to actually vote – informed a reluctance to support those candidates, notably the Cardinal. This was on the basis that their prospective returns would draw further negative attention towards Catholics in the public life and power structures that they shared with the Anglo-Protestant majority. This sensibility, coupled with the increased Protestant vote, was crucial in the determining of Catholic representation in Adelaide, and beyond, to be minimal.

IV

The Australasian Federal Convention of 1897-1898, with sessions held in Adelaide, Sydney, and Melbourne, was ultimately successful in drafting a federal constitution that would, in 1901, inaugurate the Australian Commonwealth. In spite of the relative speed with which that process was achieved, its conclusion had to overcome a number of impediments along the way. These were most explicit during the debates over the Constitution Bill referendums in 1898 and 1899, but evidenced also in smaller affairs such as the insertion of God into the constitution.

The question of divine reference in the federal bill was first raised at the National Australasian Conference in 1891, by the Bendigo native Dr. John Quick. That proposal had fallen on deaf ears.⁶¹ Between then and the Federal Convention, the issue had become appropriated by Protestant church groups who lobbied political representatives for a recognition of the Almighty in the constitution. It was, however, not a Protestant delegate but Patrick Glynn who articulated such sentiment at the Convention. In Adelaide, his movement that the words ‘invoking Divine providence’ be inserted into the constitution’s

60 See Timothy Augustine Coghlan, *Six States of Australia and New Zealand, 1861 to 1903* (Sydney: The Government of New South Wales, 1904), Table No. 8 – Religions of the People at Census, 1901, 6; Table No. 11 – Population of the Commonwealth, exclusive of Aborigines, 31 December, 7.

61 See Mark McKenna, “God”, in *Makers of Miracles: The Cast of the Federation Story*, eds. David Headon & John Williams (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000), 155–156.

preamble was met with little enthusiasm.⁶² This was owed predominantly to the strand of pragmatic secularism uniting most delegates. Edmund Barton, in response to Glynn's motion, reminded those gathered that '[Their] whole duty is to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's'.⁶³ Failure to win support for the insertion drew the ire of the Victorian clergyman Dr. Laurence Rentoul. In May's Presbyterian Assembly, Rentoul attributed the issue's remaining unaddressed to 'a young Roman Catholic barrister being entrusted with the motion. He had not gone about it in the proper way'.⁶⁴ In the time between the Adelaide and Melbourne sessions in January-March 1898, the debate drew strength from increased lobbying from Protestant groups and some isolated Catholic voices. Over fifty petitions were received during the sessions at Adelaide, Sydney, and Melbourne for a varying form of political recognition of God.⁶⁵ For Glynn, the debate offered a means of simultaneously mitigating his isolation as a Catholic delegate and harnessing the influence of the non-Catholic voting majority. He was apparently not well liked amongst Convention delegates, Deakin later writing that he was 'a favourite out of the Convention rather than in it'.⁶⁶ But by the final session, in Melbourne, Glynn could effectively manipulate popular Protestant sentiment. On 2 March 1898, he succeeded in moving that the words 'humbly relying upon the blessing of Almighty God' be inserted into the preamble, words that he insisted were 'simple and unsectarian'.⁶⁷ The South-Australian afterwards recorded that his efforts had been 'chiefly intended to secure greater support from a large number of voters'.⁶⁸

In March 1898, the Convention adopted a draft constitution of the Australian Commonwealth. Soon afterwards, the constitution bill was put forth to the people in two referendums. The split in public opinion that grew over the bill would largely pit the Australian middle classes against one another in debate. Catholics of that group participated in the contest as both supporters and dissenters. In New South Wales, the dissenting element was

62 1897 Australasian Federation Conference, First Session, Debates – 22 April, 1184.

63 1897 Australasian Federation Conference, First Session, Debates – 22 April, 1187.

64 *Argus* (7 May 1897), 6.

65 See National Archives of Australia, Series R216, for collection of petitions. Although overwhelmingly from Protestant factions, the collection includes one authored by Adelaide's Archbishop John O'Reily. See Petition No. 40, Undated, NAA: R216, 40. See also John Andrew La Nauze, *The Making of the Australian Constitution* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1972), 224–5.

66 Deakin, *The Federal Story*, 59.

67 1898 Australasian Federation Conference, Third Session, Debates – 2 March, 1732.

68 Glynn, diary entry, 2 March 1898, Glynn papers, NLA, MS4653, Series 3, Item 4, 384.

strong enough that the affirmative vote requirement for passing the Federal Bill had been set in the state's Enabling Act at 80,000. This contrasted with the other colonies, which required an affirmative majority only, and reflected the hesitancy of public leadership there to accept federation on the bases set out in the draft constitution. These further divergences in middle-class opinion contributed to a wider split not necessarily between federationists and anti-federationists but between pro- and anti-*'Billites'*.

Statistician and future Agent-General for New South Wales, Timothy Coghlan, was an outspoken anti-Billite, writing extensively on the financial ramifications of the bill for the mother colony.⁶⁹ For his efforts, Coghlan received letters of support from similarly hesitant colonists. One such – the Government surveyor Ernest Vautin, a non-Catholic – wrote that *'many colonists feel that they owe you a debt of gratitude for the straight and determined stand you have made'*.⁷⁰ Coghlan was similarly appreciated in Western Australia, where politicians read in his reports a similar threat to the western colony's finances. As the second referendum was nearing, the Western Australian Premier John Forrest began corresponding with Coghlan over the federal bill, often appearing quite desperate for Coghlan's counsel.⁷¹ It is likely that such support, particularly from elite non-Catholic voices in the colonies, emboldened an individual such as Coghlan. For, in spite of his socio-economic stature, Coghlan was known to be wary of his religion's loose footing within Australian power structures. His son Austin later recalled that, upon his appointment to the statistician role by George Dibbs in the Jennings ministry in the mid-1880s,

he became alarmed that it was an unwise political move to have appointed a Catholic to a position like this and as a sop to the Protestant element, he refused to buy any furniture or desks for the office or to pay the salaries of the clerks.⁷²

Now, however, and with the support of much middle-class conservative opinion, Coghlan's Catholicism was less of a deterrent to public visibility. Coghlan's rejection of the federal bill, and his indefatigable efforts to promulgate such objections, likely swung numerous voters during the two referendums. His efforts surely did so during the first referendum,

69 Timothy Augustine Coghlan, *Notes on the Financial Aspect of Australian Federation* (Sydney: William Applegate Gullick, Government Printer, 1898), 8.

70 Ernest S. Vautin to Timothy Augustine Coghlan, letter, 30 May 1898, Sir Timothy Augustine (T.A.) Coghlan papers, NLA, M807–M814, M828, Series: Correspondence, 1878–1926.

71 See John Forrest to Timothy Augustine Coghlan, telegram, 15–17 June 1899, Coghlan papers, NLA, M807–M814, M828.

72 Transcript of recollections of Sir Timothy Coghlan, recorded by his children Austin Coghlan and Eden Willats, Coghlan papers, NLA, M807–M814, M828.

which saw New South Wales reject the bill on the basis of not returning its minimum of 80,000 affirmative votes. Indeed, Coghlan's correspondence with Western Australia, and his subsequent relationship with Forrest, offers an explanation – at least in part – of the western colony's delay in joining the federal union.⁷³ In this sense, Coghlan acted as the antithesis to Glynn, who had concurrently performed as general adviser to the smaller group of federalists in the western colony.⁷⁴

Elsewhere in New South Wales, Catholic professionals had headed the formation of a Colonists' Anti-Convention Bill League prior to the 1898 referendum. Amongst the League's leadership were the Heydon brothers, solicitors Charles Gilbert and Louis Francis, the brewer John Thomas Toohey, and Thomas Slattery. The leadership of an individual such as Louis Heydon was here easily explainable, owing to his involvement in the 'patriotic' movement in Sydney. The patriotic movement considered New South Wales a country and a homeland separate from the Australia with which it was threatening to federate.⁷⁵ The League's meetings became more energetic in the aftermath of the first bill's rejection, and again as the colony approached the second vote on 28 June 1899.⁷⁶ Dissent of a similar nature, and from a similar crowd, was present in Melbourne too, though this garnered less support, given the general lack of anti-Bill sentiment and any formidable 'patriotic' movement in Victoria. The English-Catholic journalist Benjamin Hoare wrote from the bourgeois suburb of Kew after the first referendum that 'the true and sturdy Liberalism of [Victoria] is under a deep debt of gratitude to the Mother colony for standing out against [the] Bill'.⁷⁷ Prominent Melbourne Catholics such as the political journalist William Brennan publicly repudiated Hoare's alliance with the anti-Billites, and this would have generally reflected the stance of middle-class Catholic strongholds in areas such as St. Kilda, Kew, and Hawthorn. However, Hoare's position as a well-recognised leader of the Victorian-Catholic community made it likely that more than a few of his co-religionists would have taken

73 Western Australia accepted the bill as late as 31 July 1900, almost two years later than any other colony.

74 See Patrick McMahon Glynn to Ellen Glynn, letter, 5 October 1899, in *Patrick McMahon Glynn: Letters to his Family (1874–1927)*, ed. Gerald Glynn O'Collins (Melbourne: The Polding Press, 1974), 172–3.

75 See Louis Francis Heydon, *Prudence in Federation: A Public Lecture* (Sydney: Patriotic League of N.S.W., 1897).

76 The second referendum was held in South Australia on 29 April, in Victoria and Tasmania on 27 July, Queensland on 28 September, while Western Australia's only referendum was passed on 31 July 1900.

77 *A.L.*, Volume VII – No.8 (August 1898), 437.

heed of his warnings when it came to casting their votes for either of the two referendums.⁷⁸

Aspirations towards rejecting the federal bill in the two rival colonies proved of no avail once, by late July 1899, both states accepted the draft constitution. Owing to their marginal representation in the colonial population, it is perhaps surprising how vocal Catholic professionals had been in relation to the federal debate. More surprising was the general lack of significant sectarian discourse from the Adelaide convention onwards. That Catholic politicians and professionals tended to engage with the debate by both reflecting and harnessing the sentiment of the non-Catholic majority either side of the issue was surely a contributing, if not determining, factor to the relative absence of overt ethnic-religious hostilities. As delegates left for London to see the Constitution Bill through the Imperial Parliament, it would surely have seemed as though, by continuing to assimilate within power structures defined by a cultural Protestantism, the sectarian threat might be kept at bay for middle-class Catholics in the new century and the new Australia. Such hopes were to be discouraged as the new state came into being.

V

With federation seemingly achieved, the community's attention shifted towards one of the more outstanding scandals in New South Wales' history. Cardinal Moran's private secretary and Dean of St. Mary's Cathedral, Denis Francis O'Haran, was named co-respondent in a divorce case between the test cricketer Arthur Coningham and Alice Dowling. This, predictably, sparked a sectarian outburst of considerable force amongst even the community's moderate majority, otherwise detached from the overt hostilities of ultra-Protestantism.⁷⁹ The first trial, in December 1900, ended in a hung jury; the second, in March 1901, yielded O'Haran's vindication. The nature of the controversy, and the timing with which it unfolded, led Patrick O'Farrell to claim that public interest in it supplanted that for the approach of Australian federation.⁸⁰ That such sectarian tensions could dominate popular discourse at a time when national unity appeared to be the order of the day was revealing of the tenuous front of sectional harmony in Australia at the turn of the twentieth century.

These developments were punctuated by the Catholic Church boycotting the Commonwealth celebrations, an act which symbolised the enduring trope

78 See *A.L.*, Volume VII – No. 9 (September 1898), 539.

79 See "Zero", *The Secret History of the Coningham Case* (Sydney: Finn Brothers, 1901).

80 Patrick O'Farrell, "Double Jeopardy: Catholic and Irish", *Humanities Research Journal* XII, no. 1 (2005): 11.

of Catholics-as-outsiders in Australia. Whether just or unjust, such tropes retained the potential of further alienating the Catholic middle class from the church and its working-class majority following, allowing the cleavage between middle-class assimilation and church-sponsored separatism to grow wider. According to the terms of precedence in colonial celebrations, Cardinal-Archbishop Moran, as the sole recipient of a Cardinalate in Australia, was to lead the religious procession in Sydney's inauguration celebration, while the Anglican Archbishop William Saumarez Smith would follow. According to Moran, precedence wasn't changed until 9 p.m. on 31 December, with the result that Smith would lead the procession on 1 January.⁸¹ Constrained by the rules of precedence in Catholic canon law, as well as by diplomatic norms, the Cardinal thus refused to partake in the celebrations. The decision to boycott the federation parade was supported by the church's hierarchy, most vocally by Melbourne's Archbishop Thomas Carr, who had travelled from Melbourne for the occasion.⁸²

Catholic politicians and professionals attended the Commonwealth celebrations and, afterwards, the hangover of celebratory events that continued into mid-1901, regardless of the church's boycott. With the confusion over the precedence issue, coupled with the general excitement of the day, it is entirely possible that those Catholics were simply unaware of the church's absence. Glynn, for example, reflected on the celebrations from Sydney's Athenaeum Club without any reference to the church's stance on the proceedings.⁸³ Similarly, St. Ignatius' College ran articles in its school journal penned by the poet J.E.S. Henerie that ignored the boycott, instead boasting that they were the first scholastic institution to greet the new Governor-General, Lord John Hopetoun. Rather than lament the church's exclusion, such middle-class strongholds thought it more apt to emphasise their patriotism, which was 'imbued with the love of native land'.⁸⁴

Equally probable is that the church's boycotting the event was a disappointing, even embarrassing, turn of events for Catholic professionals who had been so heavily involved in the federal campaign, and in spite of that campaign being dominated by an oft-defensive Protestant element.⁸⁵ As Tony Cahill has written, the celebrations were 'overwhelmingly a celebration of Britishness,' and it was within such a setting that the church, otherwise

81 *Daily Telegraph* (19 January 1901), 17.

82 See *Catholic Press* (5 January 1901), 16.

83 See Patrick McMahon Glynn, diary entry, 4 January 1901, Glynn papers, NLA, MS4653, Series 3, Item 4, 613–621.

84 *Our Alma Mater*, Vol. III – No. II (December 1901), 9.

85 *Our Alma Mater*, Vol. III – No. II (December 1901), 9.

insistent on maintaining an insular and Irish basis of worship and community, had left its socio-economic leaders without support.⁸⁶ Thus the discourse enveloping 1 January – regarding the Coningham scandal and, now, the boycott – once again highlighted the liminality of middle-class Catholics residing in Australian power structures. This is central to an understanding of that class of lay Catholicism, as a socio-economic group at once entitled to the privileges of middle-class life in Australia and yet intermittently denied acceptance within the hegemonic culture of Protestantism that defined such privileges. This was articulated by Lord Hopetoun in a letter to Joseph Chamberlain, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, in 1902. In recommending a knighthood for Richard O'Connor, the only Catholic riding in the ministerial coaches during the Sydney parade, Hopetoun wrote that O'Connor was 'a loyal Catholic and a loyal Irishman ... [and] there are precious few of these in Australia'.⁸⁷

The awareness of such social and political barriers was a point of reflection for Catholic professionals in the immediate aftermath of the church boycott. O'Connor, soon-after named Vice-President of the Executive Council in Barton's federal ministry, was days after the celebrations decrying the 'grovelling sectarian spirit' that had marred so much of the road to federation. It was O'Connor's assertion that that spirit 'would never enter Federal politics. Sectarianism there would always be, but its home in future would be in the gutter, and public men could never afford to descend to that level'.⁸⁸ This was a foreboding statement, and one that would far from reflect the realities of twentieth-century politics in Australia. Elsewhere, pragmatic elements in the Catholic community were calling for further adherence to non-Catholic terms of engagement. As the dust settled from Commonwealth celebrations in Melbourne in May 1901, an anonymous 'Federal Member' reminded the Victorian-Catholic community:

In the professions, throughout the public service, in every avenue of trade, a Catholic, who is all that he should be, soon finds that he is not on the same plane of citizenship as his fellows ... Collectively and individually, therefore, Catholics need to walk warily, avoiding speech and action having the semblance of aggressiveness or intolerance.⁸⁹

This was, assumingly, the course that would yield assimilation and allow the Catholic middle class to maintain its footing in the cultural, social, and

86 Cahill, "Catholics and Australian Federation", 9.

87 Lord Hopetoun to Joseph Chamberlain, letter, 25 June 1902. Cited in Cahill, "Catholics and Australian Federation", 14.

88 See *Catholic Press* (12 January 1901), 16.

89 *A.L.*, Vol. II – No. 7 (July 1901), 476–477.

political establishment of a culturally Anglo-Protestant Australia in the early twentieth century.

To many Catholic onlookers, then, the tumultuous events that had straddled the federal movement from the mid-1890s to 1901 were merely the culmination and, perhaps, the climax of, the colonial experience for the church and its laity in Australia. The Catholic surgeon, Dr. Herbert Moran, later wrote that, in the late-nineteenth century, himself and his co-religionists had been 'a breed apart, firebranded like travelling stock in a strange country'.⁹⁰ In the same sense, the Catholic middle classes found themselves occupying a socio-cultural space simultaneously defined by an oft-defensive cultural Protestantism and their own Irish-Catholic 'otherness'. As questions of loyalty and identity arose alongside the federal debate, flanked by intermittent bursts of sectarian hostilities in the wider community, the strains either side of that position became increasingly difficult to reconcile. The result was that, as tensions from the nineteenth century's end carried over into the early twentieth, so too did the unstable footing of middle-class Catholicism within Australian power structures.

⁹⁰ Herbert Moran, *Viewless Winds: Being the Recollections and Digressions of an Australian Surgeon* (London: Peter Davies, 1939), 10.

CONFIDENTLY CATHOLIC: THE KNIGHTS OF THE SOUTHERN CROSS AND THE 29TH INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS OF 1928

Monica van Gend*

Introduction:

Australian Catholics entered World War I with a mind to show that they were good Australians: loyal, brave and upstanding, and to thereby win greater acceptance from, what they saw as, an often hostile, Protestant-dominated society. They also hoped that their participation would help to achieve specific pragmatic results for the Church:¹ an end to discrimination in employment and in taxation in regard to the lack of funding for Catholic schools. These aims were spoken about right from the beginning. In his sermon on the second Sunday after war was declared, Archbishop Kelly in Sydney supported the call to arms with the anticipation that

[i]f this war pleased God, the people of the various religions would have such esteem for one another that there would be no more disabilities put upon their schools, and the question would not be asked in connection with their public work whether a person was Catholic or not.²

If Australia's experience of the war had been limited to the experience of the men in the trenches, then this goal may have been at least partially achieved.³ Veterans attested that life in the trenches and serving together, was "breaking down the barriers of bigotry" between Catholics and Protestants,⁴ and they expressed a desire to see a greater cohesion between Protestants and Catholics in Australian life.⁵ The experience of Australians at home, however, served to deepen the sectarian divide, with the issue

1 This was certainly the opinion of the clergy, such as Archbishops Kelly, Carr & Duhig. It is difficult to determine, however, how much/whether such reasoning can also be attributed to the laity, those Catholics who did sign up. As this seemed to be the official line of the Catholic Church in Australia, and no particularly significant alternate visions were proposed by the laity, we can assume that if they were not consciously thinking in such a way, they at least had no strong objections to it.

2 "The Archbishop and the War," *The Catholic Press* 13 August 1914, 27.

3 For more on the religious experience of Australian men serving together and interdenominational relations see Daniel Reynaud, *Anzac Spirituality: The First AIF Soldiers Speak* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2018) and Michael McKernan, *Australian Churches at War: Attitudes and Activities of the Major Churches 1914–18* (Sydney: Canberra: Catholic Theological Faculty, Australian War Memorial, 1980).

4 Fr Fahey's letter, *Advocate*, 2 October 1915, 13.

5 See for example Chaplain Goodman's address, *Freeman's Journal* 22 Jun 1922, 22; also Thomas Henley's letter to the editor "Disloyalty," *The Daily Telegraph* 29 March 1925, 4.

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of compulsory military conscription adding fuel to the sectarian fire.⁶ In the two bitterly argued and heated conscription referenda of 1916 & 1917,⁷ the sectarian sword was wielded with force by those on both sides of the question. Leading Protestants accused Catholics who opposed conscription of plotting to “let Protestant boys die so that the sons of Rome could marry their sisters”.⁸ While Catholics were quick to claim that that “the trail of the sectarian serpent runs through the whole sorry business.”⁹ It was a sad conclusion to the optimistic hopes for unity between Christians expressed at the beginning of the war and would be one of the enduring legacies of the war in relation to the churches. At the end of his book on the churches during the war, Michael McKernan goes so far to claim that “the most obvious result of the war for the Australian churches” was a “significant increase in the level of sectarian hatred.”¹⁰ This was not all bad-news for Catholics, however, as the increased sectarianism had the effect of galvanising them in their mission for justice and solidarity. Daniel Mannix, then Archbishop of Melbourne, declared:

If it were a fact that the community generally was not giving fair play to Catholic young men and women, and if it were a fact that these Catholic young men and women were being kept out of employment, then that imposed on all the Catholic body...an obligation to look after their own friends, and to give help to members of their own creed.¹¹

This, largely, was the work of Catholics during the 1920s, supporting each other and working for “fair play”, which in turn helped to build a greater sense of confidence among Australian Catholics. In Sydney, there were two things that shaped and contributed to this nascent Catholic confidence: the establishment of the Knights of the Southern Cross and the 29th International Eucharistic Congress. This paper will look at how these two helped Catholics move forward from the bitter sectarianism of the war years and establish themselves more self-assuredly in broader Australian society.

6 Fr Fahey’s letter, *Advocate*, 2 October 1915, 13.

7 Although technically a plebiscite as the outcome had no constitutional binding force, sources from the time refer to it the two polls as referenda rather than plebiscites. Thus, in this article the term referenda will be used so as to be consistent with the sources.

8 Stuart Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986), 187.

9 “Marked Down for Slaughter Catholic Religious and the Bachelor Tax,” *Freeman’s Journal*. 11 October 1917, 24.

10 Michael McKernan, *Australian Churches at War: Attitudes and Activities of the Major Churches 1914–18* (Sydney: Canberra: Catholic Theological Faculty, Australian War Memorial, 1980), 177.

11 Archbishop Mannix Communion Breakfast Speech at Balaclava, 15 June 1922, in Patrick O’Farrell *Documents in Australian Catholic History Vol. II* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1969), 354.

The Knights of the Southern Cross

The years directly after the war, years of increased sectarianism resulting from the war, saw a flourishing of Catholic social life, with clubs, societies and associations proliferating across Sydney. One of the most important of these Catholic societies that sprang up at this time was the Knights of The Southern Cross,¹² which O'Farrell argues was to become "by far the most powerful and cohesive lay organisation in New South Wales".¹³ The aims of the Knights aligned with many of the interests of the wider Sydney Catholic community in the interwar years: Catholic solidarity, justice for Catholics in the public sphere, and the cultivation of well-formed Catholics who would take their place in public life and work towards the building up of Australia. As such, to examine their work is to understand in part the broader aims and work of Australian Catholics in the 1920s.

The Knights were an example of the kind of work that Bishop Dwyer, of Maitland, called for when he urged Catholics to take their place in public life, to "promote the true welfare of this country on the only lines along which true welfare lies", to "protest against injustice to what they believe the claims of God or of Religion".¹⁴ To fail to act for justice for the Church and for the true building up of the country, in his mind, amounted to "sinning by omission and neglect of duty".¹⁵

The kind of organisation that the Knights would become had been long talked of across Australia. While it was ultimately in Sydney that the organisation took root and spread, Victoria and South Australia had also seen agitation to begin such an organisation in the years prior to its foundation.¹⁶ Even in Sydney where the idea finally came to fruition, it was the result of

12 A note on the sources: obtaining sources on the Knights of the Southern Cross is difficult. First, because they are a secret society (or were particularly secret during the early years) there are very few sources from the time that mention them. Secondly, the KSC headquarters suffered a fire which also affected their archives, further restricting the available documents in the history of this organisation. Thirdly, although every effort was made, I was unable to access the KSC archives, and so had to rely solely on the documents in the Sydney Archdiocesan Archives and any other documents I could find in source books or online. The most useful secondary source is Cliff Baxter's book on the history of the KSC in NSW.

13 Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community*, (Melbourne: Griffin Press, 1977), 380.

14 Bishop Dwyer, Maitland, "Lenten Pastoral Letter," 1913, in O'Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 307.

15 Dwyer, "Lenten Pastoral Letter," 307.

16 In Melbourne, for example, prominent Catholic, Sir Michael Chamberlain, wrote a letter to the Catholic paper the *Advocate*, expressing his concern for the spread of Freemasonry among Catholic men, and opined that what was needed was a new Catholic organisation along the lines of the Knights of Columbus. See "Chamberlain, letter to the editor," *Advocate* 11 August 1917, 18; See also, Cliff Baxter, *Reach for the Stars 1919-2009 NSW Knights of the Southern Cross: Bold Men of Faith, Hope and Charity* (Ballan: Connor Court Publishing, 2009), 85.

many people's ideas and hard work coming together. Cliff Baxter, in the only history of the Knights in New South Wales, points to the early discussions of a Newcastle school inspector, Joseph Lynch, and a young Irish priest, Fr Bernard McKiernan as the conception point of the Knights. The two of them dreamed of an organisation that would address the threefold problem they saw in the Church in Australia and its relation with the world: the growth of rationalism, the spread and activity of Freemasonry, and the ignorance among young Catholics. These were not new concerns; for years Catholics had been talking about the dangers of rationalist literature,¹⁷ the influence of Freemasonry¹⁸ and the need for young men to be actively involved in the faith life,¹⁹ but they were repeated with greater frequency in the latter years of the war and after, in the face of the growing outspoken anti-Catholic position of the Freemasons in the Orange Lodge.²⁰ Lynch and McKiernan's idea was that the association would provide formation for young Catholic men to prevent "their philosophical seduction" by rationalism or freemasonry and that it would be an "antidote to ignorance."²¹ Although filled with enthusiasm for the project, and having a clear constitution and plan for its progress, Lynch had great trouble in establishing the association, and if not for a chance encounter with Patrick Minahan MLA, it is unlikely his ideas would have been actualised.²²

Minahan, a Labor politician and a prominent Catholic businessman had also been trying to establish a men's organisation with similar aims to Lynch and McKiernan. Minahan had even approached Archbishop Kelly with the idea, but Kelly encouraged him to devote himself to existent Catholic men's associations rather than starting a new organisation. Both Lynch and Minahan,

17 Convention of Victorian Catholic Societies and Sodalities, "An Australian Catholic Federation. A Personal Appeal to Every Catholic." in O'Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 302.

18 Sir Michael Chamberlain, "How to Counteract the Influence of Freemasonry," letter published in *The Advocate* 11 August 1917, 18.

19 Anon., "Our Catholic men and Church Attendance," *Australasian Catholic Record* October 1907, 467,469,471–3. in Turner, *Catholics in Australia* Vol II, (North Blackburn: Collins Dove, 1992), 12–13.

20 The history and influence of Freemasonry in Australia is a topic of its own. James Franklin writes that the story of "the influence of the Masons" is "one of the great untold narratives of Australian History." James Franklin, "Catholics Versus Masons," *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* 20, (1998): 6. Arguments have been made as to the reality and extent of anti-Catholic discrimination at the hands of Freemasons, particularly Freemason employers. For the purposes of this article, it is sufficient to note that it was certainly perceived as being a real problem by the Catholic community at large. There is very little concrete data to confirm or deny the extent of the issue; at the very least there is little to contradict the Catholic perception that the Masonic fraternity was a significant problem for Catholic workers.

21 McKiernan Memoir, in Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 49.

22 Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 79.

however, were convinced that the current Catholic men's associations were more social than active and that a new, proactive organisation was needed. An accidental meeting between Lynch and Minahan was all that was needed to finally establish the organisation they both envisaged. Although the first meeting took place in March of 1919, it was not until September that their constitution was approved, and they were thus officially formed as the Knights of the Southern Cross.²³

The constitution set out the three objects of the association: the fostering of the interests of the Church, Australia and the other members of the association. Their aims were both inward and outward focused, directed at building up the Church and thereby building up the world. It is important to note, however, that the interests of the Church were primary, and their goal of helping the country more broadly was intended to occur through their work for the Church; the thought was that in helping Catholics they were helping Australia. In detail, their constitution aimed at:

- (a) Fostering the spirit of mutual support among Catholics equal efficiency of service being attainable.
- (b) Securing redress of any injustice that may be imposed upon members or upon our fellow Catholics.
- (c) Assisting members where circumstances warrant such action.
- (d) Extending a benificent influence towards Catholic youth's [sic] with aview [sic] to their later efficiency as Catholic citizens
- (e) Defending Catholicity and Catholics against bigoted and ignorant attack wherever made and against insidious [sic] rationalist and materialistic propaganda.
- (f) Fostering a social spirit among Catholics.²⁴

Their intention to secure redress of injustice, however, was not to take the form of direct political action. In fact, the constitution specifically disavowed any particular political influence or platform; the Knights attempted to steer clear of political controversy, claiming that the association "knows no politics, and it knows no political parties...[it meets] on the common platform of Religion and Charity, and the disruptive forces that disturb us outside have no place amongst us here."²⁵ Given that at the time there was a dispute among Catholics as to whether the Democratic Party or the Labor Party should be given Catholic support,²⁶ partisan politics had to be

23 SAA, *KSC Constitution*, 11 August 1919, File A0977. See also, Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 81.

24 SAA, *KSC Constitution*, File A0977.

25 SAA, KSC Address to New Members, File A0977.

26 P.S. Cleary, *The Catholic Federation Explains Why it Set Up the Democratic Party*, February 1920, SAA, quoted in O'Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 313. There was a

eschewed for the organisation to be effective and to be able to draw in a large membership among Catholics. This was perhaps particularly important, and also interesting, given that Minahan was both a prominent member of the Labor Party — serving as a Minister for many years — and co-founder of the Knights. This disavowal was not an indication of disinterest in politics, but a rejection of becoming a lobby group, suggesting rather that educating and equipping Australian Catholics to fight back against bigotry and change public opinion on a grass-roots level would ultimately be more a more effective and lasting change. As the initial constitution stated, if membership was “enlarged to thousands prepared to stand together for our religious and civic rights we will have brought into existence a force for good, undreamt of, and which must be productive of immediate benefit” to Australian Catholics.²⁷

The enlargement they hoped for was swift in coming. Minahan told of its “astonishing progress”: a mere six months after its formation, the organisation had spread throughout NSW and the first Victorian branch was opened in the capital city.²⁸ More branches followed in NSW, Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania and South Australia over the course of the next 3 years. It was still strongest in its birthplace in Sydney, becoming by the end of the 20s “the most powerful behind-the-scenes force in lay Catholic community participation.”²⁹ Evidently, many Catholic men shared the founders’ vision and their opinion that such an organisation was needed in the Church at the time. Their initial actions addressed the issues they saw the Church having in the specific context of Australia.

One of the first actions of the association was to physically establish themselves, with a premises on Elizabeth Street in the city. The building was a place for meeting and discussing, with a well-stocked library aimed at character formation and learning. This was crucial for the Knights. They were anxious to cultivate an educated laity; how else, they asked, could the Church be defended against the attacks of the ignorant and prejudiced?³⁰ The legacy of Irish Catholicism was that for many years good education was

good deal of discussion about whether a specifically Catholic party (the Democratic Party) would be the best means of achieving justice for Catholics, or whether they should rather concentrate on getting good Catholics elected to positions within the Labor Party and use that party to gain justice. See also Jeff Kildea, *Tearing the Fabric: Sectarianism in Australia 1920–1925* (Sydney: Citadel Books, 2002) and O’Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community*, 347.

27 Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 83.

28 SAA, *Letter from P.J. Minahan to Archbishop Kelly* 13 February, 1920. File A0977.

29 O’Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community*, 380.

30 Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 93.

limited to the clergy and in Lynch's opinion this was "not good enough in Australia", an educated laity was a necessity.³¹ From their headquarters they began the work of building unity among Catholics and fighting for justice. Their initial work was varied, concerning themselves with many a different current problem and generally supporting the work of other Catholic organisations. In the early years, throughout the twenties, the Knights' work within the Church was primarily the latter work, assisting other Catholic associations in their endeavours. As the president of the North Sydney Branch of the Knights wrote to Archbishop Kelly, "the Knights are anxious to help the priests in any way they can, and especially in work like this — bringing the young fellows to the Sacraments".³² In particular, they worked to assist any current project aimed at the spiritual and intellectual formation of the laity. A key work that they were involved in was the debating clubs that proliferated in parishes. Speaking of this work, Baxter argues that the "rise of Catholics in public life, in trade unions and in politics can be attributed to these early efforts".³³ This kind of work made clear their desire to extend "a beneficent influence towards Catholic youth" with the goal of "their later efficiency as Catholic citizens" and to equip Catholics to defend "Catholicity and Catholics against bigoted and ignorant attack wherever made."³⁴

The other work that the Knights busied themselves with, and perhaps the work in those years for which they are most remembered, was counteracting and fighting to end the employment discrimination that Catholics faced at the hands of Freemason employers. As previously discussed, this discrimination against Catholics by Freemasons was an ongoing issue that Catholics frequently spoke out against.³⁵ Even a cursory look at Catholic newspapers from the time reveal significant references to the evils of Freemasonry and its role in oppressing Catholics.³⁶ The issue of possible

31 Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 94.

32 SAA, *Letter from J.C. Hartnelt to Archbishop Kelly*, 5th February 1921, File A0977.

33 Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 104.

34 SAA, *KSC Constitution*, File A0977.

35 It is certainly an enduring story, with many accounts of Catholics claiming they could not get work because of Freemason employers, and it is certainly the case that a number of businesses run by Freemasons put up signs saying "Catholics Need Not Apply". Further, some Freemasons accused Catholics of trying to become Freemasons to better their employment chances, which would support the Catholic claims that a Masonic fraternity, existing between many prominent businessmen, was responsible for much employment discrimination against Catholics. (See letter quoted in "Masonic Attitude. Catholics Not Wanted in the Lodges," *Freeman's Journal* 17 August 1922, 6.)

36 See for example, *Southern Cross*, 12 May 1916; "All About People: Tittle Tattle," *The Catholic Press* 5 August 1920, 22; "How Catholics are Defamed," *Freeman's Journal* 23 June 1921, 23; "Catholics and Heretics," *The Catholic Press* 24 November 1927, 21.

employment discrimination was given particular significance in the Knights' early years, as employment and unemployment were on many people's minds in the aftermath of the war and the lead up to the Great Depression. With "the conditions of life below standard for many thousands" owing to "unemployment [in] the aftermath of the war", any obstacle to finding employment was a serious matter.³⁷ To "redress any injustice that may be imposed upon members of fellow Catholics", the Knights pursued a policy of "mutual aid" and adopted a system of preference in employment, all other things being equal.³⁸ The Knights were eager to pursue any legitimate course of action that would result in an end to discrimination against Catholics in the workplace. The last two verses of the Knights of the Southern Cross Anthem reveal this mission:

We give our aid to a brother distressed

We take up the cause of a brother oppressed

For the cause of one is the cause of all

While he suffers the stings of adversity.

Then gird we on.

The feet of our youth are enmeshed in snares

Their progress barred and the world never cares

We'll free their feet and we'll clear their way

*To a Christian life of prosperity.*³⁹

It is for this work that the Knights are most remembered; perhaps it is remembered because this was their most visibly successful work other than their work on the International Eucharistic Congress, which will be discussed in detail later. In her history of Australian Catholics, Turner suggests that the decline in employment discrimination from the 1930s can be attributed to the success of the work of the Knights, coupled with the weakening of sectarianism.⁴⁰ While there seems to be no documented evidence to support Turner's claim, at the very least it is reasonable as the Knights clearly intended to "advance" the material and employment interests of their members against the discrimination of the Masons,⁴¹ and there was a noticeable improvement in Catholics' employment prospects in the years following the Knights' beginning.

The Knights of the Southern Cross were not the only Catholic society that

37 "Archbishop Kelly on Unemployment," in O'Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 294.

38 SAA, KSC Constitution, File A0977. Also Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 99.

39 SAA, KSC Anthem, File A0977.

40 Turner, *Catholics in Australia* Vol II, 57.

41 SAA, KSC Address to New Members, File A0977.



Crowds in Hyde Park outside St Mary's Cathedral following Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament procession 9 September 1928 (State Library of NSW).

began or flourished during the interwar years. In fact, Edmund Campion designates solidarity and the work and success of Catholic societies as a distinguishing feature of the Church during the interwar years.⁴² Many of the Catholic societies shared some aims with the Knights, namely Catholic solidarity and the formation and entertainment of the laity, particularly the youth, to ensure their active and informed participation in the life of the Church. As previously mentioned, the heightened sectarianism, a legacy of the bitter conscription debates and questions of loyalty between Protestants and Catholics during the war, added fervour to the Catholic effort to build up the Church. It was imperative against the attacks of the Protestants that the Church should attend primarily to strengthening and supporting their own. For the Church in Australia, the highpoint of the twenties and the triumph of the Catholic societies was the 29th International Eucharistic Congress that took place in Sydney at the end of 1928. In many ways the Congress was a visible representation of the many of the aims of the Knights: a spirit of mutual support among Catholics, a “beneficent influence” on young Catholics, a “defense against ignorant and bigoted attack”, and the fostering of a social spirit among Catholics.⁴³ Here was a moment of the “harmony” they “dreamed” could be possible in Australia.⁴⁴

42 Edmund Campion, *Australian Catholics*, (Ringwood: Viking Penguin, 1987), 121.

43 SAA, ‘Objects’ *KSC Constitution*, A0977.

44 SAA, *KSC Hymn*, A0977.

The International Eucharistic Congress

The 29th International Eucharistic Congress in Sydney was the most significant event for Australian Catholics to date. Opening on the 2nd September 1928, it was a week long celebration of the Catholic faith,⁴⁵ finishing with the blessing of the newly finished St Mary's Cathedral, itself a proud symbol of the confidence of Australian Catholics.⁴⁶ When the Blessed Sacrament was processed through the streets of Sydney on the closing day of the Congress, some 500,000, others estimated 750,000, spectators lined the streets.⁴⁷ It was a significant event not just for Catholics, it was significant for the whole of Australia. As the *Sydney Morning Herald*, a paper that was "usually no friend to Catholicism",⁴⁸ stated in its glowing editorial:

Never before has a religious celebration of such magnitude been held in Australia. Never before have the representatives of so many countries assembled here on the one errand. Never have so many eminent divines been in our midst. And those who are not members of the Roman Catholic Church deem it a privilege to offer their felicitations to the gathering. They appreciate the honour that has been conferred upon Sydney.⁴⁹

With over 200,000 international visitors expected,⁵⁰ in addition to the visitors from other parts of Australia, preparations for the event began two years before September 1928. All Catholic organisations in Sydney were expected to lend a hand, but the Knights in a particular way were involved in the preparations, beginning by giving their general secretary paid leave for two years to work on the organising committee, and later by acting as marshals throughout the Congress.⁵¹ The list of tasks to complete was daunting; the *Sydney Morning Herald* in January of 1928, expressed its concern at the preparations needed to cope with the sheer number of people who would converge on Sydney in September. Declaring its incomprehension at "Sydney" for being "unreasonably calm" about the coming Congress, the *Sydney Morning Herald* went on to point out that "the problems of transport, accommodation, and entertainment are at least a thousand times

45 Samantha Frappell, "International Eucharistic Congress 1928," *Dictionary of Sydney*, 2012, http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/international_eucharistic_congress_1928.

46 "Building St. Mary's Cathedral: The Work of a Century," *The Catholic Press* 6 September 1928, 30.

47 "The Spark that Fired a Continent," *The Catholic Press* 13 September 1928, 40.

48 Turner, *Catholics in Australia* Vol. II, 86.

49 "Eucharistic Congress," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 September 1928, 12.

50 Estimates were significantly different between different newspapers. While the *Sydney Morning Herald* put it at 200,000 the *Daily Telegraph* put it at 50,000, "Sydney Will Soon be Invaded Huge Army of Visitors for Eucharistic Congress," *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 August 1928, 5.

51 See Campion, *Australian Catholics*, 118; Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 106.

more complex than the arrangements for a Royal Agricultural Show” and that Sydney was “not used to such a colossal invasion”, where the expected international visitors would “augment the population of Sydney by one-fifth for several weeks”.⁵² It was not an idle concern: investigation revealed that only 8,000 hotel rooms existed within a 20 mile radius of Sydney.⁵³ Despite such warnings, the committee was undaunted, seeking broad assistance, including public appeals for accommodation that resulted in six cells at Manly police station being offered!⁵⁴ The Catholic Women’s Association also aided in finding appropriate accommodation, offering homes and hiring a building in the City to house the visitors.⁵⁵

The planning committee turned to the latest in technology to advertise the Congress, using the radio for the first time. There had been some discussion about the appropriateness of having sacred things broadcast on “secular waves”,⁵⁶ but after Pope Pius XI’s radio broadcast from St Peter’s Basilica in 1925, the argument was settled.⁵⁷ Thus, the committee engaged to broadcast progress reports of preparations for the Congress on Station 2UE, also broadcasting services from St Mary’s Cathedral each Sunday evening.⁵⁸ This proved to be an effective method of advertising, as the *Daily Telegraph* reported a significant increase in demand for listeners’ licenses, which they attributed, at least in part, to the Congress.⁵⁹ It was not only in the planning that the radio was to be used, however, for the first time in the history of Eucharistic Congresses, were to be “broadcast in every country of the world”.⁶⁰ The Sydney Congress was also the first time that a Congress made use of amplification, and it was used on a grand scale, with speakers lining the route for the procession to amplify the accompaniment music for hymns, and speakers used in all the halls in which speeches at the

52 “Eucharistic Congress. 200,000 Visitors are Expected. Accommodation Problem,” *Sydney Morning Herald* 19 January 1928, 11.

53 “Eucharistic Congress. 200,000 Visitors.”

54 “Mr Marlen’s Offer Not the Only One,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 August 1928, 11; Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 107.

55 SAA, *Biennial Report of the Catholic Women’s Association*, 1929, File A1047.

56 Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 107.

57 “A Very Modern Eucharistic Procession,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 20 September 1928, 17. Pope Pius XI was a great promoter of the use of modern technology in evangelisation, later founding Vatican Radio, in 1931.

58 “All About the Eucharistic Congress,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 2 May 1928, 9.

59 “Eucharistic Congress Broadcasts,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 7 July 1928, 7.

60 “50,000 Will be Able to Hear Elaborate Eucharistic Arrangements Millions Overseas,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 24 August 1928, 3.

conference took place.⁶¹ The use of amplification was not just significant in the history of Eucharistic Congresses, but significant too more generally as it was thought to be “the largest ever [use of amplification] attempted and successfully accomplished” at that time.⁶² The use of radio for the Congress was to have lasting effects on the Sydney Catholic community as it was the catalyst for the foundation of a permanent Catholic radio station, 2SM.⁶³ 2SM would later host the famous “Radio Replies” of the Rev. Dr Rumble and be a significant channel of Catholic outreach in the 1930s and beyond.⁶⁴

These aspects of the Congress, its publication on the radio and its appeal to the whole community, beg the question, how was the Congress received in the sectarian atmosphere of the post-war years? Perhaps surprisingly, the broader community response to the Congress taking place in Sydney was generally positive. The NSW Premier, a Protestant, was quick to express his support of the event, stating that he “fully appreciate[s] the importance of the International Eucharistic Congress which is to be held in Sydney... which will be an outstanding event in the religious history of Australia”, and expressed his belief that the Congress would “strengthen the conviction that the only sound foundation for a healthy national life is that of true religion.”⁶⁵ A non-Christian, calling himself “Thinker”, wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* to express his support of the Congress, seeing it as a boon both for Sydney and Australia, writing that “a quarter of a million people coming to Sydney on the lowest-possible reckoning”, would be beneficial not just “from the spending power of these people, [but also] the publicity given to Australia when they return home”, but also to the employment opportunities the influx of visitors created for “unemployed Australian workmen”.⁶⁶ The *Daily Telegraph* opined that “believers and unbelievers alike can find occasion for thought in a rite, or series of rites, that has survived the fall of dynasties and the wreck of empires.”⁶⁷

It did not go completely unchallenged, however. A number of Protestant groups all around Australia declared they could not support the Congress despite the benefits that it would bring the country because of their outrage at the “idolatry” of the Blessed Sacrament being processed through the streets of Sydney. One Presbyterian minister warned that if it went ahead

61 “A Very Modern Eucharistic Procession,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 20 September 1928, 17.

62 “A Very Modern Eucharistic Procession,” 17.

63 Campion, *Australian Catholics*, 135.

64 O’Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community*, 373

65 “Mr Bavin’s Message. Eucharistic Congress,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 December 1927, 6.

66 “Eucharistic Congress,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 May 1928, 6.

67 “Conference Visitors,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 August 1928, 6.

“there will probably be bloodshed”.⁶⁸ The Australian Protestant Defence Association,⁶⁹ the general assembly of the Free Presbyterian Church of Australia,⁷⁰ the Adelaide Presbyterian Assembly,⁷¹ the joint Victorian and Tasmanian Methodist Conference,⁷² the Churches of Christ,⁷³ and many other Protestant individuals wrote to the papers and to the Premier to express a “strong protest” over the procession of the Eucharist. All the protests were at this specific part of the Congress: they did not protest the holding of the gathering but of the procession of the Blessed Sacrament. As the Victorian and Tasmanian Methodist Conference said “the elevation of the Hosts in the streets of that city...[is] a direct challenge to the pith of Protestantism.”⁷⁴ The Loyal Orange Institution of Queensland opposed “our public thoroughfares being utilised for this idolatrous display [and] insult to our Reformation principles and our Protestant faith”.⁷⁵ The Adelaide Presbyterian Assembly made the protest that the procession was “a superstitious act” under the British Constitution and one that was “repugnant to the religious principles of the vast majority of the people of the Commonwealth, and likely to lead to a serious disturbance”; given those facts, the Assembly asked that the government prohibit the procession as the British government had done in 1908 when the International Eucharistic Congress was held in London.⁷⁶ Although the *Daily Telegraph* featured an article intimating that the government was divided over the question of allowing the Blessed Sacrament to be processed

68 “Procession May Mean Bloodshed” Presbyterian Minister on Congress,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 5 March 1928, 5.

69 “Eucharistic Congress,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 May 1928, 7.

70 “Eucharistic Congress Free Presbyterian’s Attitude,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 April 1928, 18.

71 “Eucharistic Congress. Presbyterian Protest,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 April 1928, 12.

72 “Eucharistic Congress. Victorian Methodists’ Protest,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 February 1928, 18.

73 “Churches of Christ Eucharistic Congress Procession. Strongly-Worded Protest,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 April 1928, 13.

74 “Eucharistic Congress. Victorian Methodists’ Protest,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 February 1928, 18.

75 “The Eucharistic Congress,” *Brisbane Courier*, 30 June 1928, 21.

76 “Eucharistic Congress. Presbyterian Protest,” The procession was not technically prohibited by the government, but there was a great furore over the issue, with many Protestant groups putting pressure on the government to ban it. In the end the Church agreed to abandon the procession of the Eucharist, but the handling of the affair led to a senior political figure, who was a Catholic, resigning from office. For further on this issue see Geraldine Vaughan, “‘Britishers and Protestants’: Protestantism and Imperial Identities in Britain, Canada and Australia from the 1880s to the 1920s”, *Studies in Church History* 54 (2018): 364. See also: Carol A. Devlin, “The Eucharistic Procession of 1908: The Dilemma of the Liberal Government,” *Church History* 63 (1994): 407–35.

through the streets,⁷⁷ the government ultimately concluded that there was “no reasonable ground upon which the Ministry could rightly interfere”, and suggested that “any further agitation in this direction would be detrimental to that broad spirit of tolerance which has always characterised the Protestant people.”⁷⁸ For Catholics this was a momentous occasion, it was a symbol of the how far the Church had come in finding its place in Australian society, in the “utmost cooperation of a Government that one hundred years ago had set its face against the Church and bidden its ministers begone.”⁷⁹

The protests from Protestants were not the only Protestant response, as many who protested supported the event. One Anglican cleric, reflecting on the Congress after it happened, asked “Could our own Church do the same thing? Could we in Sydney muster for a religious ceremony anything approaching this vast concourse?”⁸⁰ He thought not. Comparing his church to the Catholic Church, he opined that the elements of the Catholic Church that made such a demonstration possible were its unity — both intellectual and liturgical — its attention to teaching the faith to children, and the leadership of its hierarchy. To his mind, the procession put to rest any faint ideas that may have been lingering in the minds of non-Catholics that “the Roman Catholic acts in ignorant fear of his priest”, for to see the “long procession of returned soldiers and University graduates” was to disbelieve it.⁸¹ This unity between Protestants and Catholics, despite the fears of a serious disturbance suggested by some, was one of the most remarkable features of the Congress; that in a decade which had seen some of the worst sectarianism, a religious event took place with the support of both Catholics and Protestants and others. Even the Communist paper, the *Workers' Weekly* commented on this, observing bitterly that “the sectarian hatchet has been buried...and all sections of the master class participate in the proceedings.”⁸²

The Congress saw the arrival of thousands of international travellers: bishops, papal representatives, religious orders and Catholic laity, as well

77 “Govt. Divided Over Eucharistic Congress Problem,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 March 1928, 2.

78 “Eucharistic Congress. Permission to Carry the Host,” *Brisbane Courier*, 20 April 1928, 6.

79 “World Peace and the 1928 Eucharistic Congress,” *America* 39, 26 (6 October 1928): 610.

80 “The Eucharistic Congress,” *Freeman's Journal* 27 September 1928, 31, reprinting an extract from the *Church Standard*.

81 “The Eucharistic Congress,” *Freeman's Journal* 27 September 1928, 31, reprinting an extract from the *Church Standard*. The prominent place given to veterans in the procession, marching both near the front and holding the canopy over the Blessed Sacrament, suggests that impression was intended by the organisers. “Order of Procession,” *Freeman's Journal* 13 September 1928, 31.

82 “Spiritual Revival and Literature Ban,” *Workers' Weekly*, 7 September 1928, 2.

as various members of the European nobility.⁸³ This was of clear economic benefit and an increase in prestige for Australia. While the majority of the visitors came from Europe and the United States, clerics and laity also made their way from Africa, Asia and from the Middle East, representatives of the various Middle Eastern Catholic rites.⁸⁴ These visitors caused a stir in some quarters; the Indian Bishop Chulaparambil, described in most secular press accounts as speaking “admirable English”, was regarded by the *Sydney Morning Herald* as one of “the more notable” arrivals for the Congress and it was speculated that it was the first time a “native Indian bishop” had visited Australia.⁸⁵ Just as Australian soldiers had marvelled at the universality of Catholicism and the example of a Catholic nation when they were stationed in France,⁸⁶ so now for all Australians, in a country where Catholics were in the minority, the influx of 200,000 Catholics from all over the world was a reminder of the universality of the Church and its prominence in a great number of countries. Archbishop Duhig declared that “[t]he full significance of the congress is now dawning on...all Australia” as the vast numbers of international travellers illustrated “what a marvellous force for good in the world is the Catholic Church”, which brought together “so many people of different races and colour and customs” in a magnificent display of “the unity of the Church throughout the world.”⁸⁷

It certainly was a magnificent display. Apart from any spiritual significance, according to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, it was noteworthy purely from an aesthetic point of view: “it was wonderful with its pageantry and its glowing colour.”⁸⁸ An American journalist who attended described its “pomp and splendor”,⁸⁹ with the Blessed Sacrament being carried on a barge, while bi-planes flew overhead, and all the time the monstrance was carried under an ornate white and gold embroidered canopy.⁹⁰ All the events of the week long Congress were crowded and successful, with some particularly

83 “Film of Eucharistic Congress,” *Brisbane Courier*, 10 September 1928, 3; “Eucharistic Congress Overseas Delegates Arrive,” *Western Argus*, 28 August 1928, 6; “50,000 for Fares of Delegates,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 August 1928, 2; Frappell, “International Eucharistic Congress 1928”.

84 “Conference Visitors,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 August 1928, 6.; Work of Christian Orphans,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 September 1928, 9; *Western Argus*, 11 September 1928, 9; “People of Many Lands for Eucharistic Congress,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 July 1928, 5.

85 “Notable Arrivals Eucharistic Congress,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 August 1928, 14; *Daily Telegraph*, 21 August 1928, 2.

86 “Captain Chaplain Fahey, D.S.O., Tells His War Story,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 27 June 1918, 20.

87 “Tribute to Fallen Soldiers International Assembly,” *Western Argus*, 11 September, 1928, 9.

88 “Eucharistic Congress,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 September 1928, 12.

89 “World Peace and the 1928 Eucharistic Congress,” *America* 39, 26 (6 October 1928): 610.

90 “The Eucharistic Congress,” *Freeman’s Journal* 27 September 1928, 31.

poignant moments, such as the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at St Patrick's Churchhill.⁹¹ The high point of the Congress was, of course, the much campaigned against procession of the Eucharist through the streets of Sydney. Here was displayed the vitality of the Church, with its many societies and associations, with its school children from the Catholic schools that continued despite the discrimination against them in government funding, with the Catholic returned soldiers a visible answer to the charge of disloyalty so frequently levelled against them.⁹² Here at last was a moment for Australian Catholics to rejoice in being both Catholic and Australian, rejoicing in their Catholicism, in its universality, its beauty and tradition, and rejoicing in their Australianess in the freedom they enjoyed to practice their faith, in the "Australian spirit" that triumphed in letting the procession go ahead.⁹³ Over 20,000 formed the procession, made up of large contingents of the various Catholic societies and associations,⁹⁴ while hundreds of thousands lined the streets, removing hats and kneeling in reverence as their God passed by.⁹⁵ Who could forget '28?' asked the Knights of the Southern Cross,⁹⁶ for who indeed could forget the blessed, sacred occasion. It was a triumph for Catholics who had been fighting for justice and fair play. A symbol of the progress of Australia in distinction to the Empire, which had disallowed such a procession in England, the Congress was also a fleeting foretaste of the kind of acceptance that Catholics fought for. As the editor of the *Freeman's Journal* opined at the end of the Congress, "the rebuke they received on Sunday [the Congress] may produce a different spirit in the hearts of the people who have sown discord. We want good will and good fellowship to make Australia what it should be, and it ought to be the aim of [all] to live in the greatest harmony."⁹⁷ While the Congress did not bring about an immediate change within Australian society and Catholics' place in it, it was a moment of hope for Catholics as well as the foundation of many future Catholic endeavours, including a greater emphasis on outreach to those outside the Church.

91 In commemoration of the preservation of the Blessed Sacrament in that spot in 1818 by Father Jeremiah O'Flynn before he was deported. Eris O'Brien, "The Blessed Sacrament in Australian Catacombs," *Freeman's Journal* 6 September 1928, 37. Also: Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 114.

92 "The Eucharistic Congress," *Freeman's Journal* 27 September 1928, 31.

93 "The Real Australian Spirit," *Freeman's Journal* 13 September 1928, 24.

94 The Procession included mounted policemen, veterans, boy scouts, Children of Mary, University students, teaching orders, religious orders, priests and bishops. See "Order of Procession," *Freeman's Journal* 13 September 1928, 31.

95 "Order of Procession," *Freeman's Journal* 13 September 1928, 31.

96 "Who Could Forget '28?," *Advance Australia* 1970, quoted in Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 112.

97 "The Real Australian Spirit," *Freeman's Journal* 13 September 1928, 24.

Conclusion

In different ways, the Knights of the Southern Cross and the 29th International Eucharistic Congress changed the face of Catholic life in Sydney in the 20s. The Knights worked pragmatically, to form the future generations of the Church and fought to win greater acceptance in broader Australian society. The Congress showed what the Knights fought for: the unhindered expression of the faith, its universality transcending the divisions of prejudice. They were signs of hope that helped inspire and give rise to the energetic lay movements of the Church, particularly Catholic Action, that arose in the 1930s and afterwards.

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THE FREEHILL PHILANTHROPY: BENEFACTIONS TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH BY PATRICK, FRANK AND EILEEN FREEHILL

Anne-Maree Whitaker*

For nearly a century the Catholic institutions of Sydney received significant donations by two generations of the Freehill family. From the foundation of St John's College in 1857 to the completion of its tower in 1938, the largesse of Patrick, his son Frank and daughter-in-law Eileen was bestowed on the Cathedral building fund, Manly Seminary and many other Catholic establishments. Patrick Freehill arrived in Sydney as a 23-year-old immigrant from County Cavan, and won then lost a fortune. His sons Bernard and Frank founded one of Sydney's great legal firms, and after Frank's early death his widow Eileen continued the family's philanthropic tradition and became Australia's first Papal countess.

Patrick Freehill

Patrick Freehill was born around 1821 in Ballyconnell, County Cavan, the son of Bernard Freehill and Mary (née McKernan). He married Margaret Cosgrove around 1843 and they sailed for Sydney on one of the last bounty ships, arriving in 1844. Patrick worked as a baker and soon established his own business in George Street, near Circular Quay. In 1860 he built a three-storey stone house and shop, which still stands and has the inscription 'Patrick Freehill 1860' on the parapet.¹

In 1868 the Protestant Political Association condemned as disloyal 'the Celtic Association, the Irish League, St Patrick's Regatta



Patrick Freehill
(Catholic Press, 1900)

¹ City Plan Heritage, '107-109 George Street, The Rocks, Conservation Management Plan' (2022), 27, 57.

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Committee, and the association for raising funds for the Irish Patriots (save the mark).² Patrick Freehill was active in all four groups. The Celtic Association began as a cultural organisation but soon expanded into immigration, forming the Donegal Relief Committee which raised funds to sponsor over 1200 immigrants in the period 1859-64.³ The Irish National League, modelled on the body formed in Ireland, was formed in May 1864. Freehill was chair of the Lower George Street branch, and served on the NSW general committee which was chaired by English-born MP John Robertson.⁴

The St Patrick's Day regatta replaced the annual St Patrick's Day dinner in 1864, with the twofold reason that it would include ladies who were excluded from formal dinners, and that a regatta would be particularly suited to Sydney's fondness for harbour recreation. It also evaded the ban on processions which had been introduced in 1846.⁵ The 'association for raising funds for the Irish Patriots' was more formally the Fund for the Relief of the Wives and Families of the Irish State Prisoners. Freehill chaired the public meeting to set up the committee, which conspicuously did not include the usual list of clergy and members of parliament.⁶

Patrick Freehill was also involved in mainstream politics, and stood for election to the Sydney municipal council in Gipps ward in 1862, 1864 and 1867 but was defeated. He had more success with the committee of the Benevolent Asylum, to which he was elected in 1860, 1864 and 1868. In 1875 Freehill's career as a successful businessman and generous donor came to an abrupt halt when a creditor served him with a sequestration order, sending him into insolvency. Patrick only owed him £140, but the effect of the insolvency was to prevent him from trading until the estate was finalised. His George Street bakery and other property was mortgaged to the Bank of NSW who took possession. The final settlement gave creditors just six shillings and eight pence in the pound, and marked the end of 54-year-old Patrick's business career.⁷

After the insolvency Patrick and Margaret left the city and moved to Macdonaldtown with their son Bernard, a successful solicitor. Following the

2 'Protestant Political Association', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 July 1868, 4.

3 Richard Reid, 'Aspects of Irish Assisted Emigration to New South Wales, 1848-1870', PhD thesis, Australian National University (1992), 188-210.

4 'Irish National League', *Freeman's Journal*, 11 September 1864, 7; 'Lower George Street Branch', *Freeman's Journal*, 14 September 1864, 3; 'Monthly Summary', *Freeman's Journal*, 18 November 1864, 5.

5 Keith Amos, 'The Fenians and Australia c 1865-1880', PhD thesis, University of New England (1985), 83.

6 'Town News', *Freeman's Journal*, 5 May 1866, 282.

7 Patrick Freehill, Insolvency file 12296, NSW State Archives Collection.

death of 32-year-old Bernard in 1880 they moved to Burwood in Sydney's inner west. They were followed by their youngest son Frank and daughter Mary Josephine after her marriage in 1882 to Edward Hollingdale. Patrick fell ill on Christmas Day 1899 and died on New Year's Eve. His wife Margaret died less than six months later and joined him in the family vault in Rookwood Cemetery.

Patrick's Catholic Involvement and Philanthropy

The first report of Patrick Freehill's donations to the Catholic church was in 1850, when he was noted as contributing 2 shillings and 6 pence to the fund for the 'Propagation of the Faith'.⁸ His home in lower George St placed him within the catchment of St Patrick's on Church Hill, which was built in 1844 following a gift of the site from former 1798 rebel William Davis. Patrick was an officer of the Holy Guild of St Mary and St Joseph, and the Australasian Holy Catholic Guild, and took an active part in religious ceremonies and processions.⁹

In June 1855 Freehill was one of a number of men appointed to a committee to 'secure a residence' for the priest at St Patrick's, Father Peter O'Farrell. Freehill also donated £6 for this purpose.¹⁰ O'Farrell and his successors lived in rental accommodation in nearby Wynyard Square until Archdeacon John McEncroe was appointed to St Patrick's in 1861, and immediately set about organising the construction of a new presbytery next to the church.¹¹ The land title was vested in three trustees: McEncroe himself, Alderman Owen Caraher and Patrick Freehill.¹² Freehill remained a trustee after the death of McEncroe in 1868, finally relinquishing his position in 1879 when the title was transferred to the Marist Fathers.¹³

The immigration records show that both Patrick and his wife Margaret were able to read and write, placing them in the top quarter of the Irish population in terms of education. Their three eldest sons, John, Bernard and Thomas, attended St Mary's Seminary near the cathedral, where they are recorded winning prizes for history, catechism, English and geography.¹⁴

8 'Amount of Subscriptions', *Freeman's Journal*, 7 November 1850, 11.

9 'Funeral of his late Royal Highness Prince de Conde', *Freeman's Journal*, 2 June 1866, 345; 'Australasian Holy Catholic Guild', *Freeman's Journal*, 28 August 1869, 9.

10 'St Patrick's Hall', *Freeman's Journal*, 23 June 1855, 2.

11 Peter McMurrich, *The Harmonizing Influence of Religion: St Patrick's, Church Hill, 1840 to the present* (2011), 15–16.

12 NSW Land Registry Services, book 77 no 549; Owen Joseph Caraher <https://www.sydneyaldermen.com.au/alderman/owen-caraher/>.

13 NSW Land Registry Services, book 190 no 372.

14 'St Mary's Seminary', *Freeman's Journal*, 25 December 1858, 3.

St Mary's catered for both lay students and candidates for the priesthood, while the other Benedictine school, Lyndhurst College, was 'a school for the boys of the more affluent colonists' with emphasis on Greek and Latin.¹⁵ Later Thomas and the fourth son Frank attended Lyndhurst, where they won prizes for Latin, catechism, French, English, history, geography, arithmetic and writing.¹⁶

In 1857 a meeting was held at St Mary's Cathedral to begin the process of establishing a Catholic college within the University of Sydney, to be known as St John's. Chaired by Archbishop Polding it was also supported by other senior clergy including Archdeacon McEncroe, and by leading lay figures such as John Hubert Plunkett (President of the Legislative Council), and Supreme Court judge Roger Therry along with a number of members of parliament. At this meeting £12,000 was subscribed, including £100 from Patrick Freehill which was one of the highest individual donations.¹⁷

On the night of 29 June 1865 St Mary's Cathedral was engulfed by flames. Freehill was one of those who were 'most conspicuous in their exertions' to help fight the fire, and managed to rescue chalices, vestments, the Archbishop's papers and other important records. The Archbishop's residence was hastily stripped of its furniture, which was moved into the garden where it was guarded by the police. The next night Freehill attended the first meeting to organise the recovery and rebuilding, and was appointed to the committee.¹⁸ He donated £50 to the rebuilding appeal, and also became appeal treasurer for St Patrick's parish.¹⁹

In 1872 Archbishop Polding established the St Mary's Gold Mining Company to work a mine at Hill End, to provide immediate funds to continue rebuilding the cathedral. Freehill was appointed one of the directors, and 20,000 shares were issued at £1 each.²⁰ The venture was not a fund-raising success but his involvement is indicative of the trust which the hierarchy had in his business acumen and financial management. Following his insolvency Patrick Freehill's name appear less often in press reports of financial matters, but his sons Bernard and Francis followed his example in supporting both

15 Graham Pender, 'Early Catholic Education in Sydney: St Mary's Seminary', *Australasian Catholic Record*, 97 (2), (2020): 217; Graham Pender, 'Early Catholic Education in Sydney: Lyndhurst College', *Australasian Catholic Record*, 97 (3), (2020): 353.

16 'St Mary's College, Lyndhurst', *Empire*, 27 June 1865, 8.

17 'St John's College', *Freeman's Journal*, 15 August 1857, supplement, 1.

18 'Destruction of St Mary's Cathedral', *Freeman's Journal*, 1 July 1865, 410; 'St Marys Cathedral', *Empire*, 1 July 1865, 5.

19 'Subscriptions, for Re-Building St. Mary's Cathedral', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 August 1865, 6; 'Collected at St Patrick's Sydney', *Freeman's Journal*, 6 February 1869, 15.

20 'Prospectus of the St Mary's Gold Mining Company', *Freeman's Journal*, 27 July 1872, 15.

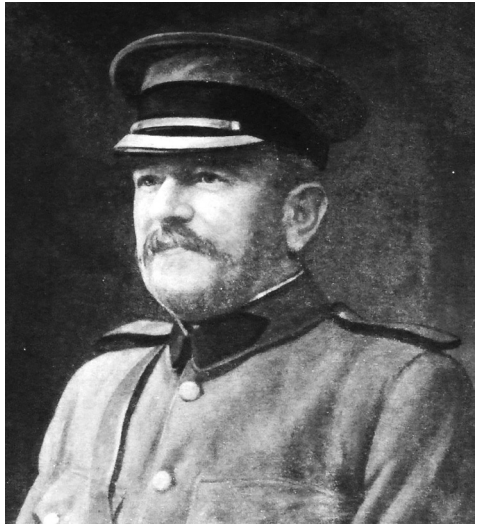
Irish causes and the Catholic church.

Francis Bede Freehill²¹

Francis Bede Freehill was born in 1854 in George Street, Sydney, the son of Patrick Freehill and Margaret (née Cosgrove). He was educated at Lyndhurst College and entered St John's College in 1871, graduating from Sydney University BA in 1874 and MA in 1876. After serving articles with his brother Bernard he was admitted as a solicitor in 1877. He practised in Cowra and Bathurst before returning to Sydney after Bernard's death in 1880. Thereafter he conducted a busy legal practice while also maintaining a strong involvement in Irish community affairs. He married Eileen Frances Molony in St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, on 14 April 1887.²²

Frank Freehill was first involved in colonial support of Ireland in 1875 as a 20-year-old, when he joined a committee to organise a procession to mark the centenary of the birth of Daniel O'Connell.²³ In 1883 he was prominent in the visit of two delegates from the Irish National League, on a speaking tour intended to set up branches of the League in Australia and New Zealand. The League's purpose was to raise finance for the Irish parliamentary party in an era when members of Parliament were not paid. John Redmond, the 26-year-old MP for New Ross, was accompanied by his 22-year-old brother William. Their visit lasted for nearly a year and culminated in the Irish National League convention in Melbourne which Frank Freehill attended as one of four delegates from Sydney.²⁴

In 1885 he became president of the Irish National League in New South



*Francis Bede Freehill by Giuseppe Bravi
(St John's College)*

21 This section is generally based on Ruth Teale, 'Freehill, Francis Bede (1854–1908)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/freehill-francis-bede-3574>.

22 Victoria marriage certificate 2666/1887.

23 'The O'Connell Centenary', *Freeman's Journal*, 3 July 1875, 12.

24 Malcolm Campbell, 'John Redmond and the Irish National League in Australia and New Zealand, 1883', *History*, 86 (283), (2001): 348–362; 'The Irish Australian National Convention', *Freeman's Journal*, 10 November 1883, 15.

Wales, organising further visits from Irish MPs including John Dillon, John Deasy and Sir Thomas Esmonde in 1889 and Michael Davitt in 1895. He also presided over the St Patrick's Day festivities at Botany from 1886 until they were taken over by Cardinal Moran in 1895 and moved to the Showground.²⁵ As well as his extensive community activism Freehill was prominent in the commercial world. In 1880 after his brother Bernard's death, Frank took over his role as solicitor for the City Mutual Life Assurance Society Ltd (later MLC), and also became a director. In 1887 he was one of the first directors of the Australian Newspaper Co. Ltd, which published the *Australian Star* and *Sunday Sun*, and in 1895 he was one of the founders of the *Catholic Press* newspaper. All these positions were retained until his death in 1908.

With the Depression of the 1890s and a large cut in military expenditure, there was strong public concern about the state of defence and reduction in artillery forces. A Royal Commission appointed to inquire into military service in 1892 reported that Sydney was particularly liable to surprise attack, with just 1,370 infantry available to defend the city.²⁶ As a result there was a movement to establish volunteer military regiments. In 1896 Freehill helped to establish the Irish Rifles, and was commissioned captain in May 1896, major in 1900, lieutenant-colonel in 1904 and retired in 1906.

In 1896 Queen Regent Maria Christina appointed Frank Freehill consul for Spain in Sydney. The *Freeman's Journal* commented:

You may present yourself, as of yore, with the University big guns, in academic gown and mortar-board, as a Fellow of St. John's; you may don war-paint as Captain of the N. S. Wales Irish Rifles; or you may shine in all the glitter and glory of a Spanish Consular grandee. All three costumes are picturesque and striking. My own opinion is that Mr. Freehill's heart will throb with the quickest pulse of pride when it is underneath the shamrock embroidered Captain's coat during the St. Patrick's Day parade.²⁷

In 1907 Frank and Eileen embarked on a trip to Europe, including his first visit to his father's homeland. In the space of eight months they travelled through Italy, France, Spain, England and Ireland. In London they were entertained to dinner in the Houses of Parliament; at a public meeting in Galway, Frank and Eileen were greeted with a lengthy ovation as friends

25 'St. Patrick's Day. Celebration of the Festival. Its History in New South Wales', *Australian Star*, 17 March 1896, 5.

26 Dean Boyce, *Invasion: colonial Sydney's fears of attacks*, Sydney, 2012.

27 'Snap Shots', *Freeman's Journal*, 15 August 1896, 9.

of the Irish cause.²⁸ They were away less than a year, and within a fortnight of their return Frank Freehill fell ill. He died at Lewisham Hospital on 12 March 1908 aged 54. He and Eileen had no children. After Frank's death his nephew Bernard Hollingdale became a partner of his law firm, which as Freehill Hollingdale & Page grew to be one of the top six legal practices in Australia.²⁹

Frank's Catholic Involvement and Philanthropy

From the time of their marriage Frank and Eileen Freehill lived in Burwood, where Frank was deeply involved in the parish and his brother-in-law Edward Hollingdale conducted the choir. In 1889 the growing congregation led to an expansion of the church to accommodate an extra 100 people, and at the laying of the foundation stone Frank paid a special tribute to the parish priest, Dean Callaghan McCarthy, stating that 'there was not a parish in the diocese in which the people were more thoroughly devoted to their pastor'.³⁰

In 1889 Frank Freehill became the honorary secretary of Lewisham Hospital which was a work of the Little Company of Mary, or Blue Sisters. The order was founded in 1877 by an Englishwoman, Mary Potter, to minister to the sick and dying. They were invited to Australia by Cardinal Moran, arriving in 1884 and initially based at Darlinghurst with the Sisters of Charity. Lewisham was founded as a children's hospital, expanding to treat women from 1892. Freehill remained honorary secretary until his death in 1908, overseeing the establishment of a mental hospital for women at Ryde in 1892 and the construction of new buildings at Lewisham in 1899 at a cost of £6,000.³¹

Francis Bede Freehill achieved a first for a Catholic when he was appointed as a notary public by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1894.³² The post, reserved for lawyers, enabled the holder to certify documents for international use. Press coverage claimed that he was the first Catholic appointee, outside the British Isles, since the Reformation. The oath of allegiance had apparently been waived in Freehill's case.³³

In September 1903 he was created a papal chamberlain, one of the highest

28 'Australians in Connemara', *Catholic Press*, 26 September 1907, 17.

29 'Big Six (law firms)', Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_Six_\(law_firms\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_Six_(law_firms)).

30 'Enlarging the Burwood Church', *Freeman's Journal*, 24 August 1889, 18.

31 Edward Gerard MacMahon, 'The Pioneers of Lewisham Hospital', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, 4 (2), (1973): 1–22; 'Mount St Margaret Hospital', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 November 1904, 3.

32 File F/III/11/2, pers comm Kayleigh Miller, Archives Assistant, Lambeth Palace Library. The formal date of appointment following approval by the British Government was 19 April 1894.

33 'Our London Letter', *Daily Telegraph*, 10 February 1894, 5.

honours that could be bestowed on a Catholic layman by the Pope. The role was chiefly ceremonial and came with an elaborate uniform with violet velvet cuffs, gold lace, and a cocked hat with ostrich plumes. During Frank and Eileen's visit to Europe in 1907 he spent 11 weeks in Rome including a week performing his duties as chamberlain. Each day a carriage drawn by a pair of black horses collected him from his hotel. At the Vatican his task was to check the credentials of visitors and direct them to the appropriate salon for either a private or public audience with Pope Pius X.³⁴

After his early death in 1908 plaudits came from all quarters. The *Sydney Morning Herald* described him as 'one of the most devoted adherents of the Roman Catholic Church amongst her laity'. The *Catholic Press*, of which he was a director, noted that 'His death is keenly felt by every Catholic in the country, from the Cardinal to the humblest member of the Church.' Cardinal Moran succinctly noted: 'By his eloquence and by his purse Mr Freehill sustained every matter connected with religion, education and charity.' Father Patrick Matthew Ryan expanded on the same theme: 'His brilliant genius and his eloquent voice was never missed from the platform when Catholic charity or Irish nationality were the theme; and, further (in this age of talking machines), his words were ever backed by his wide open purse.'³⁵

Frank Freehill left an estate of just under £50,000. Apart from £200 for masses he bequeathed £100 each to Lewisham Hospital, St Vincent's Boys' Home at Westmead, St. Martha's Industrial School for Girls at Leichhardt, and the Manly Industrial School. His major legacies were £1000 to St. John's College within the University of Sydney to found a bursary to be awarded as they thought fit; and £400 to Cardinal Moran to found a bursary for Catholic ecclesiastical students in the Archdiocese of Sydney.³⁶ Having no children of his own, Freehill noticeably selected charities for disadvantaged young people to receive bequests. Both the major legacies related to education, and as bursaries not scholarships they were awarded on the basis of financial need rather than academic attainment.

34 'Colonel Freehill back from Europe', *Catholic Press*, 13 February 1908, 21.

35 'The Late Colonel Freehill', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 March 1908, 6; 'Death of Colonel F B Freehill', *Catholic Press*, 19 March 1908, 16; 'The late Frank Freehill', *Catholic Press*, 16 April 1908, 19.

36 'Will of the Late Col. Freehill', *Freeman's Journal*, 9 April 1908, 21.

Countess Eileen Marie Freehill

Eileen Marie Freehill was born Ellen Molony in 1858 at Pleasant Creek near Stawell, Victoria, the daughter of Dr Thaddeus Leyden Molony and Mary (née McAuliffe).³⁷ Her parents originated respectively from Ennistymon and Colemanstown, County Clare, Ireland, and married in 1853 before emigrating.³⁸ Her father practised at Stawell and later Ballarat, before dying in 1868 at the age of 41 when Ellen was ten years of age.³⁹ She was taught languages by a former British army officer for about five years, and in 1876 at the age of 18 she sailed to Europe where she attended the Loreto convent at Rathfarnham in County Dublin.⁴⁰



Eileen Marie Freehill
(The Bulletin, 1929)

After returning to Victoria, Eileen's exact activities are unknown until she married Francis Bede Freehill at St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, on 14 April 1887.⁴¹ Frank and his 'amiable young wife' were greeted in Sydney on their return by a surprise party, when guests sang and danced in the garden decorated with Chinese lanterns.⁴² The Freehills made their home in the newly developed suburb of Burwood in Sydney's inner west, commissioning architects Sheerin and Hennessy to build a substantial brick home on a double block between Brooklyn and Wyalong Streets. They named the house 'Carmona' after the ancient Spanish city which was discovered in 1887 near Seville; Carmona's inhabitants were reputed to be the most civilised of the Iberian peninsula several centuries before the Christian era.⁴³

37 Victoria birth certificate 18703/1858.

38 Marriage 29 July 1853, parish Kilmurry McMahon, Co Clare, register 02485/11, National Library of Ireland.

39 Victoria death certificate 7916/1868.

40 'Gossip', *Freeman's Journal*, 21 February 1929, 18; pers comm Robin Scott, Province Archivist, Loreto Australia and South East Asia.

41 Victoria marriage certificate 2666/1887. Eileen is recorded as Eileen Frances Maloney, but changed her name as Eileen Marie after her marriage.

42 'Surprise Party', *Freeman's Journal*, 7 May 1887, 15.

43 'The Necropolis of Carmona', *The Times*, 13 August 1887, 10.

Eileen was soon enlisted as an organiser of a range of Irish and Catholic community events, including fundraising balls and bazaars.⁴⁴ She served as hostess and consort for her husband's official roles in the Irish Rifles and as Spanish Consul. After her husband's death Eileen put their home up for sale and moved to a house in Wolseley Road, Point Piper, which she renamed 'Carmona'.⁴⁵ In January 1911 she embarked for Europe and travelled in France, Italy, Austria, Germany, Switzerland and England. She returned to Sydney on the outbreak of war in 1914.⁴⁶

In 1925 Eileen Freehill left on another extended overseas trip, which began with joining the pilgrimage led by Archbishop Mannix to Rome and Lourdes before travelling on to Dublin where he received a hero's welcome.⁴⁷ She travelled around Italy, France, Germany and Austria spending several weeks in each centre and visiting museums and art galleries, cathedrals and chateaux. For seven months she and her niece Gwen Mann were driven on a 20,000-mile tour by an Italian chauffeur, collecting china, paintings and objets d'art. Wintering in Rome she renewed acquaintance with Cardinal Cerretti and Archbishop Michael Sheehan, and attended the Senate to hear a speech by Mussolini with whom she was 'greatly impressed'. She returned to Sydney in 1927.⁴⁸

In 1930 Eileen's love of Italy found an outlet when St Vincent's Hospital surgeon Herbert Moran donated £1000 to the University of Sydney for the establishment of a lectureship in Italian. The £1000 donation was matched by Eileen and the University quickly began to introduce Italian courses, which had not previously been offered. The donations meant that until at least 1955 Sydney had the only flourishing Italian department among Australia's six universities.⁴⁹ For the rest of her life Eileen continued close involvement with the church, which is detailed below. Eileen Freehill died at Lewisham Hospital on 12 June 1942 aged 83.⁵⁰

44 'Annual Charity Ball in aid of the Women's Refuge at Tempe', *Freeman's Journal*, 11 August 1888, 11; 'Social', *Daily Telegraph*, 20 October 1888, 9.

45 'Advertising', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 April 1908, 24; 'Social News and Gossip', *Catholic Press*, 21 May 1908, 18.

46 'Chili Sauce', *Freeman's Journal*, 26 January 1911, 29; 'Social News and Gossip', *Catholic Press*, 8 October 1914, 36; Rena Wallace, 'A Chat with Mrs Freehill', *Catholic Press*, 22 October 1914, 23.

47 'Social News and Gossip', *Catholic Press*, 16 July 1925, 12.

48 'An Untiring Motorist', *Catholic Press*, 3 February 1927, 12; 'Gossip from Sydney', *The Week*, 1 February 1929, 5.

49 Anne Thoeming, 'Morals, Medicine and Mussolini: Dr. Herbert Moran's public narratives in inter-war Australia', Master of Research thesis, Macquarie University (2016), 60-61.

50 NSW death certificate 21448/1942.

Eileen's Catholic Involvement and Philanthropy

The First World War saw the start of Eileen Freehill's sponsorship of major building projects in Sydney's Catholic institutions, with the installation of a marble mosaic sanctuary floor and stained glass window in the chapel at St John's College at a cost of £1000. The window, a memorial to her late husband, was made by the English firm of Hardman's. It was unveiled and blessed in 1917 by the Apostolic Delegate, Bishop Bonaventura Cerretti, just before his return to Rome.⁵¹

Eileen was a generous donor to many Catholic and Irish causes, and could always be relied on for a contribution of £10 or £20 at a fete. She was particularly devoted to the Loreto schools, supporting their old girls' union and fundraising endeavours. Other causes received even greater contributions, such as the appeal for relieving distress in Dublin following the 1916 Easter Rising to which she gave £200, and the Self-Determination for Ireland League in 1921 which received £100.⁵² She also continued her husband's patronage of the Westmead Boys' Home, presenting them with £500 for new musical instruments in 1924, followed in 1928 by a complete outfit of band uniforms, a 20-foot flagpole and rotunda.⁵³

The 29th International Eucharistic Congress was held in Sydney in September 1928, encompassing a week-long celebration of the Catholic faith. The Congress opened with the consecration of the newly completed St Mary's Cathedral and culminated in the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, with a procession witnessed by 500,000 Sydneysiders. The Papal Legate, Cardinal Bonaventura Cerretti, moved into Mrs Freehill's harbourside mansion at 6 Buckhurst Avenue, Point Piper, for the event, while she withdrew to a suite in the Hotel Australia. The cardinal also had use of her chauffeur-driven Cadillac, which had special violet parking lights to enable the police to wave it through checkpoints.⁵⁴

The following year Pope Pius XI created Eileen Freehill the first Papal countess in Australia, in recognition of her 'great generosity' to the Church and her 'great kindness' to Cardinal Cerretti. The hitherto exotic title was enthusiastically adopted by Sydney Catholics in referring to their

51 'St John's College Appeal', *Freeman's Journal*, 23 December 1915, 17; 'The Gossip of the Week', *Freeman's Journal*, 31 May 1917, 22.

52 'An Appeal for Ireland', *Freeman's Journal*, 31 August 1916, 20; 'Self-Determination for Ireland League in Australia', *Freeman's Journal*, 15 September 1921, 26.

53 'Westmead Boys' Home Band', *Catholic Press*, 12 June 1924, 16; 'A Woman's Letter', *The Bulletin*, 14 November 1928, 44;

54 "'Carmona': Headquarters of the Papal Legate', *Sunday Times*, 9 September 1928, 28.

'Lady Bountiful'.⁵⁵ Eileen's charitable works continued, with a new project combining her dedication to the Loreto sisters with her fondness for leadlight, when a spectacular stained-glass window by Hardman's was unveiled in the chapel of Loreto Kirribilli on the feast of All Saints 1931.⁵⁶

News of the death of Cardinal Cerretti in 1933 inspired the construction of a chapel named in his honour at St Patrick's seminary at Manly. The whole project was estimated to cost £60,000, of which Countess Freehill contributed £10,000.⁵⁷ The chapel was opened in 1935 in the presence of 'imposing array of Prelates, Monsignori, priests, representatives of the Religious Orders, and representative citizens, including the Prime Minister' (Joseph Lyons). Speaking at the ceremony the College president Monsignor John Joseph Nevin paid tribute to the Countess: 'Without her munificent gift of £10,000 we would never have had the courage to launch an appeal for the large sum of money which was necessary for the building of this beautiful chapel. I feel sure she is satisfied herself to-day that she has done a good work.'⁵⁸

In 1937 Countess Freehill's last major building project was the construction of a tower to complete the design of St John's College. She met the cost of £15,000, stipulating that Hennessy and Hennessy be the architects. The foundation stone is inscribed: 'This memorial tower was erected by Eileen Marie Countess Freehill in memory of her husband, Francis Bede Freehill, student and Fellow of this college'. At the laying of the foundation stone Sydney's Archbishop Michael Kelly stated: 'Thank God that Countess Freehill is now instrumental in perfecting the tower. God will reward her.' His sentiments were echoed by Archbishop Mannix of Melbourne, who attended at Eileen's invitation.⁵⁹

Eileen Freehill outdid both her father-in-law and husband in philanthropy, being described by the *Catholic Press* in 1936 as 'undoubtedly the most consistent and generous benefactor the Church has known in Sydney'.⁶⁰ Having expended substantial sums on her architectural projects, Eileen's estate still amounted to £73,276. Specific legacies included £1,000 each to St Martha's Home at Leichhardt and St Vincent's Home at Westmead; £500 to the St Vincent de Paul Society in Sydney and £300 to its counterpart in Dublin; £300 each to the Loreto Convents at Normanhurst and Kirribilli;

55 'Countess Freehill: Recipient of a Great Papal Honour', *Catholic Press*, 21 February 1929, 21.

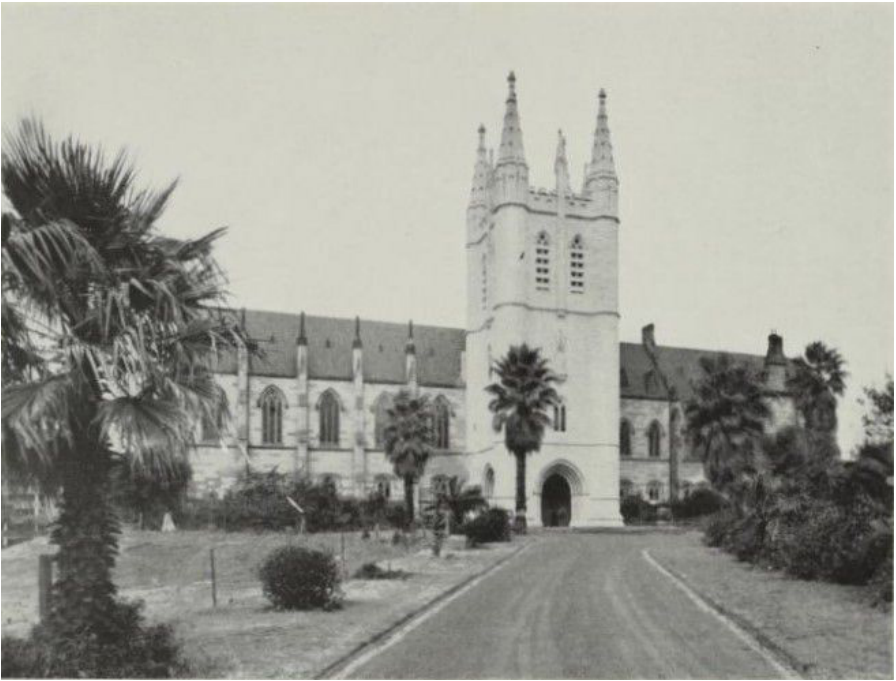
56 'Unveiling of Window', *Catholic Press*, 5 November 1931, 13.

57 'Memorial Chapel to cost £60,000', *The Sun*, 12 December 1933, 5.

58 'Cerretti Memorial Chapel, Manly', *Catholic Freeman's Journal*, 21 November 1935, 20.

59 'Freehill Memorial Tower', *Catholic Press*, 16 September 1937, 13.

60 'Francis Bede Freehill', *Catholic Press*, 1 October 1936, 18.



Freehill Tower (Building 1938)

another £300 to the Little Sisters of the Poor at Randwick; £200 each to Sacred Heart Hospice for the Dying and St Gabriel's School for Deaf Boys at Castle Hill; and £100 to the Deaf and Dumb Institute at Waratah near Newcastle.

Eileen also left £600 to the Archbishop of Sydney 'to be applied in conjunction with the £400 bequeathed by my late husband' for a bursary for seminarians, and £500 for prizes for the annual St Patrick's Day sports in Sydney. The sum of £250 was reserved for masses. Finally, before providing for her nieces and nephews, she left £1000 to Archbishop Mannix.⁶¹

Legacies

Many of the charities to which the Freehills donated are no longer operating, such as the Industrial School at Manly (closed 1910), St Martha's Industrial Home (closed 1969), and Westmead Boys' Home (closed 1985). Lewisham Hospital, where Frank served as secretary and where he and Eileen both died, was closed in 1988 and sold to the St Vincent de Paul Society for conversion

⁶¹ Eileen Marie Freehill, probate packet 4/269798, NSW State Archives collection.

to aged care. The bursary for students at Manly seminary survived until the closure of the college in 1996, when the buildings were converted into the International College of Management. The Cerretti Chapel is still used for weddings, such as that of Keith Urban and Nicole Kidman in 2006, and occasional music recitals.⁶²

The Freehill legacy remains alive at St John's College within the University of Sydney, where the Freehill tower completed the original design and the Francis Bede Freehill bursary is still awarded annually.⁶³ The Countess Eileen Freehill Medal for Academic Excellence also continues, as do the University's Countess EM Freehill Prizes for first and second year Italian.⁶⁴ The stained glass windows donated by Eileen can still be seen in the chapels of Loreto Kirribilli and St John's College.

⁶² For information on weddings see <https://www.cerrettichapel.com.au/>.

⁶³ St John's website <https://www.stjohnscollege.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Scholarships-By-law-2019-as-made-30-May-2019.pdf>

⁶⁴ Italian prizes <https://www.sydney.edu.au/arts/news-and-events/news/2023/04/11/community-celebration-of-student-excellence-in-languages-and-cultures.html>.

“THE MILK OF PARADISE”: REFLECTIONS ON FAMILY, CHURCH AND MEDIA, 1935–2023

Patrick Kirkwood*

The Holy Father Pope Francis has recently been dwelling on the importance of memory.¹ “Memory and hope”, he said, “go hand in hand. They complement each other”. “Each of us”, he said, “is invited to take a few moments to think back and remember the moments in which he or she met the Lord, to remember those who passed on their faith to us, and to brush up on the law.”

He continued: “Recounting the events of our life ... enables us to grasp important nuances and details, which can reveal themselves to be valuable aids, hitherto concealed.” He goes on: “Our life is the most precious ‘book’ that is given to us, a book that unfortunately many do not read, or rather they do so too late, before dying.”

“We are able”, he said, “to notice other things, making our life richer, more respectful of complexity, succeeding also in grasping the discreet ways in which God acts in our life.”

This talk is a venture into the genre of “Private Lives and Public History” – the title of a book by Australian Historian Anna Clark.²

So ...having worked in the Media for many years of my life I thought about what shape this talk should take. Should it be a documentary series, perhaps, in thirteen episodes? Or should it be a gripping Drama or even an endless Soap Opera?

But I thought simplicity is the key, so I’ll make it a Play in Four Acts: Act One “Childhood”. Act Two: “Twenty Five Years in the ABC”, Act Three



Patrick Kirkwood

1 Pope Francis speaks on Memory, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope-francis/mass-casa-santa-marta/2018-06/pope-homily-santa-marta.html>

2 Anna Clark, *Private Lives, Public History*, Melbourne University Press, 2016.

* Patrick Kirkwood was Head of Religious Programs (Radio and TV) and Director, Catholic Audio-Visual Centre, Homebush. He was awarded The Archbishop of Sydney’s Award “for outstanding contribution in helping to further Christian ideals in the Media” in 1983 and The Dr Percy Jones Award “in recognition of outstanding dedication and service given to Music for Worship” in 1996. This talk was given to ACHS on 21 May 2023.

“Fifteen Years in the Catholic Education System”, and Act Four “Now and Always”.

I must add to my Four Acts the fact of their being underpinned *at all times* by Family – and by Family, I mean where I have come from in family and my wonderful wife, Mary and our six children. They have defined my life in many ways. My life has also been underpinned by Church, and by that, I mean not just the Catholic Church But the whole body of Christ in all its variations.

And so, to Act One: “Childhood”

I was born on the 21st of March 1935 at home at 411 Beamish St Campsie in the parish of St Mel’s. My mother was Catherine Agnes Higgins and my father Victor Shaw Kirkwood. The Higgins family came from Ireland in 1841 on the ship “Albatross”, initially living in the Hunter Valley, but my grandparents Ellen and Patrick moved to Sydney and had a boarding house at Kirribilli. They continued to raise some of their thirteen children there.

My Father Victor had come to Australia on July 31st, 1908, on the ship “Thomas” from Durban, South Africa. He had spent five or six years in South Africa in the diamond mines as a tally clerk, and in the wool trade. On his shipping papers he was listed as an auctioneer. His work in Australia was entirely in the wool trade, particularly with a German firm called Pohl and Krech, but also with Pitt, Son and Badgery and Goldsbrough Mort. He had originally come from Belfast at the age of 18 and was a Presbyterian. As providence would have it, he became a boarder with my Grandmother Ellen at Kirribilli. Her family had been Salvation Army people. Later in life people said to him that he became a Catholic to marry the daughter Catherine. “No” he said. “It was her mother. She brought me into the Catholic Church.” He did join the Catholic Church four years before he married “Kit” as she was called.

I am the youngest of six children, the eldest being Joseph, then a sister Ursula, then a brother Reginald, another brother John, and a sister Maureen. I have a photograph of the eight of us in the lounge room of that house where I was born, and I think it was taken probably at the end of 1938 and I’ll tell you the reason why in a minute.

As we gather here today, I am the sole survivor of that group, although we did go on to produce thirty-two grandchildren. Unfortunately, my father did not get to meet any of them since he died of a sudden heart attack in 1945.

The reason that the photograph was probably taken at the end of 1938 is because of my eldest brother Joseph. He was a brilliant student at school

and won an exhibition to go to Sydney University to study Law. He did this for about two years then he decided to join the Order of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and study for the priesthood. One of the prerequisites for that was to spend a year in the school at St Mary's Towers, Douglas Park,³ and he began that year in 1938. He was about to start his novitiate in 1939 which meant that we wouldn't see much of him for quite some time, and I suspect that's why that photograph was taken. So off he went in 1939 and in the following year he would have gone to Croydon in Melbourne to the brand new (now heritage) building which housed the faculties of Philosophy and Theology. We certainly visited him at Douglas Park on a few occasions before he left for Melbourne, so I had a first-hand child's impression of what the place was like. It was an impression of welcome and friendship. (Of course, all this happened under the shadow of the start of World War II).

Not long after Joe had left home, in June 1939, my parents decided to sell up and move to Randwick, and there was a story in the *Catholic Press* telling of their attachment to Campsie parish and of a farewell gathering.⁴ I think they chose Randwick since it is a parish staffed by the MSCs. It gave them a closer connection with their eldest son's life.

Our house in Randwick was right opposite the main gates of the Little Sisters of the Poor home for the Aged in Market St. Their chapel was available for North Randwick locals on Sundays, and I eventually became an Altar Boy there. The priest said "Introibo ad altare Dei" and I would reply "Ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam". I had no idea what I was saying at that stage, nor did most of the people in the congregation. I was about 9 years old.

I had been at school at St Anthony's Clovelly from 1942, then at Marist Brothers' College at Randwick (later Marcellin College) for classes Three to Six until 1947.

My Father died suddenly whilst I was in Fourth Class, and I remember my teacher telling me to go home early, without giving a reason. This was a time of great stress, and to add to the grief, my brother Reg was on his way home from service with the RAAF in England and heard of his Father's passing when the ship docked in Fremantle.

And then to add to it all, brother Joseph became very ill at the Seminary at Croydon in Melbourne. Luckily, we had been able to visit him a few times in spite of wartime restrictions on travel. He had bone cancer and the MSC

3 John Franzmann MSC and Steve Dives MSC, *From Park Hall to St Mary's Towers: The story of an historical house of the Spirit*, MSC Publications, 2004.

4 'Send-off at Campsie', *Catholic Press*, 1 June 1939, p 9, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/106365025/11689868>

Order brought him back to Douglas Park where the climate and food were so much better, but he did not improve and he died in March 1947, the year that the rest of his class was ordained.

It is worth repeating here the words of Pope Francis, which I quoted earlier:

“Recounting the events of our life ... enables us to grasp important nuances and details, which can reveal themselves to be valuable aids, hitherto concealed.”

I was twelve years old at the time, a quiet philosophic young boy, attached to the graces and practices of the Church, and comfortable in its ways. I had been friendly with the nuns at the Little Sisters of the Poor where I had the run of the property and often played there in their extensive gardens and chatted to the old people in residence. So, when it was suggested to me that I might like to go to school at the Juniorate at Douglas Park, I was happy to do so. I had been there many times and enjoyed the surroundings. And so, off I went in 1948 to begin my Secondary Education. I had won a NSW State Bursary in 1947, so that was a help financially.

There is no room here to sing the praises of the Community and life at St Mary's Towers, Douglas Park. I was very happy there, learning English, Latin, Greek, French, History, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and of course, Religion and a good dose of liturgy and music. We were blessed with some very fine teachers at the school. The standout was probably Fr Tim Kelly who was a Cambridge Graduate of the Leavis-ite School (but not a fanatic). He taught English and Greek.⁵

The other features of life, at the Douglas Park 1000-acre property, were the hikes and picnics through the surrounding countryside, the taste of agricultural life in helping out around the farm and in eating its bountiful produce. It was in many ways idyllic. It was a happy community.

And so, after the Leaving Certificate (Fifth Form) and a good holiday, I returned to “The Park” as we called it, in 1953 to the Novitiate which was a year of intense formation, discernment and commitment. Then, at the beginning of 1954, I took the first vows and proceeded to the Seminary at Croydon in Melbourne, as my brother Joe had done, to begin Philosophy and Theology.

By this time my Mother had downsized to a new dwelling and my siblings had married and started families.

Dr Paul Collins, now well-known, was also a member of the MSC order

5 T.J. Kelly MSC MA, *The Focal Word: An Introduction to Poetry*, Jacaranda Press, Brisbane London, 1966.

for a time and has academic experience from many institutions around the world. He said to me in recent years that the faculty at the Croydon Seminary at that time was by far the best in Australia.

There were certainly some outstanding teachers. Fr John Savage MSC taught Philosophy. He was very open minded and sometimes brought in visiting lecturers such as Max Charlesworth, recently back in Australia from Louvain, and expert in contemporary English and French Philosophy. John Savage also encouraged us to read the articles by Bernard Lonergan SJ, whose thoughts and principles have dominated my life ever since.⁶

Fr EJ (Jim) Cuskelly had studied at the Gregorian University in Rome and was an ardent follower of Henri de Lubac, Jean Danielou, Yves Congar and other figures in the "Resourcement" movement or "Nouvelle Theologie" of the mid-20th century. He later went on to be the Superior General of the Order in Rome, and later still an auxiliary Bishop in Brisbane. He taught Dogmatic theology as it was then called.

And then Fr Denis Murphy, newly arrived back from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome and the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem. Denis was the most inspiring teacher I have ever had in any discipline, but of course he had a great advantage in the subject matter (Scripture) which he was teaching. In recent years I met the international Australian Biblical Scholar Fr Frank Moloney SDB at Strathfield at the ACU. As we were chatting, I mentioned that I had studied Scripture with Fr Denis Murphy. "Ah", he said, "The Father of Modern Biblical Studies in Australia!"

Our teacher in Liturgy was Fr Bernie Power who had studied in Rome with Cipriano Vagaggini, later one of the authors of the Vatican Two document on Liturgy.⁷ Bernie was also Choir Master until illness caused him to ask me to take over.

And so, Vatican Two was no surprise for me. Rather it was a confirmation of everything which I had learned at Croydon in the 1950s. As well as all this I was Choir Master for a time, assistant Librarian, started an in-house magazine called "Theologian" which later, I think, morphed into the widely read magazine "Compass". I also arranged for a group of volunteer students to index all of the substantial collection of journals in the library into a card system allowing students to access the treasures of the collection. The collection went back many years, and it took days and weeks of volunteer labour! These days of course we have Google!

But the exciting intellectual life was not the main game. To repeat what

6 See footnote 20.

7 Cf Wikipedia article about Vagaggini.

the Pope has said: “We begin to notice other things, making our life richer, more respectful of complexity, succeeding also in grasping the discreet ways in which God acts in our life.” As I matured, I began to question what was called my “vocation”, and Fr Jim Cuskelly was my saviour. As well as teaching theology he was, more importantly, Director of Students. The previous Director had been a man who quoted Luke Ch 9 v 62: “No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” So, his motto was “Don’t look back”. But Fr Cuskelly was trained in psychology, a more subtle character, and a good listener. And together we tried to discern what was my true life’s path.

Eventually it became clearer to me that I was not in the right place. The Provincial of the Order came down from Sydney for a talk. They didn’t particularly want to lose me, so he suggested that I teach for a year in one of their Colleges. Get out and meet people and change perspective. So, I did.

In 1960 I went to Monivae College at Hamilton in western Victoria. I taught a variety of subjects at different levels, especially English Literature. But there was also dormitory and dining room supervision, sport training, endless preparation and marking, training the school choir ... it was the hardest I have ever worked in one year, before or since.

But at the end of it all, it was even clearer to me that my life with the MSCs and the prospect of ordination was not for me. I was fitted out with a new suit, and returned on the train to Sydney where I was welcomed by my mother and family members, to a new phase of life.

Act Two: Twenty-Five Years with the ABC

You might be wondering why the whole of Act One was called “*Childhood*”. In the play of life childhood ends when one becomes truly responsible and independent. And that happened to me at the age of 25! It is worth noting here the book *Mystical Journey*⁸ by the Jesuit William Johnston who lived most of his priestly life in Japan and was an expert in Eastern mysticism. He discussed the idea of “vocation” and where it comes from. He says “...the true self is at first undiscovered or dormant. It comes to birth only as one grows up. ... in my case (he says) the influence of my mother was very great: she wanted me to be celibate; she wanted me to be a Jesuit; she wanted me to be a writer. In short, she wanted me to do all things that she could not do because she was a woman. I can well understand the priests who wake up at the age of 40 and realise that their vocation was their mother’s vocation, coming from the ego that was formed in early childhood and then they felt

⁸ William Johnston SJ, *Mystical Journey: An Autobiography*, Orbis Books, New York, 2006.

obliged to ask if their true self wants to jettison celibacy and marry. ...The influence of my mother was very great, but the root of my vocation went much deeper than that." (*Mystical Journey*, p.26).

But with me ... I was back at home in Randwick, and my second sister Maureen, and her husband were both in the tertiary education sector. They assumed that, having enjoyed a year's teaching, I would probably like to continue in that profession.

But I surprised them all by stating quite firmly that I wanted to join the ABC. I had been listening to their programs over the years and thought "I could do that!" I had also seen an ABC crew film a short documentary at the Seminary at Croydon. And I set my heart on it. Luckily the same sister had a schoolfriend who had married Bernie Kerr, the Head of ABC Sport. So, I made an appointment to see him. His welcoming advice was brief and to the point "Good on you Pat", he said. "They quite often advertise jobs inside the ABC and not in the press. So the best idea is to get a job in the ABC doing whatever you can – licking stamps or delivering mail or whatever." And so, he set me up with an appointment at the Personnel Department. I went to see the man in personnel, who had a little wooden box on his desk with cards in it, and he flicked through them. He said, "Did you say are you had library experience"? I said yes, I was assistant librarian at the college. "There's a job going in the film library at Gore Hill Studios." I said that's good, I'll take it.

The start of 25 years in the ABC!

Television in Australia was just over four years old. It was transmitted at that stage just in the State capital cities and Canberra. There were no coaxial cables, no microwave dishes, no satellites. So, all the programs had to be sent by plane to the respective cities. This included films of movies and overseas programs, but more importantly recordings of local programs. Videotape didn't exist at that time, so all the programs were recorded and processed on site on film. About halfway through my six months at the Gore Hill studios I was promoted to Telerecording Clerk. I had to make sure that all the programs were recorded properly and copied to be sent to the respective cities. I learned a lot in these six months about how television works in terms of staffing and planning and technology. I was free to wander the studios and watch from the control room programs like "*Six O'clock Rock*" being produced, and I got to know many people in the staff.

In the middle of that year two vacancies came up in the Religious Department, one in Sydney and one in Melbourne. I applied for both of them, not knowing that the one in Sydney was already earmarked. But I was given the job in Melbourne, much to my mother's disappointment.

The religious department in Melbourne at the time was part of the Talks Department and it was situated in “Waverley Court” an old three storey house next to the radio studios in William Street. The staff consisted of two ordained Anglican clergy, an assistant producer and a secretary. I was taking up the position of assistant producer, which had been temporarily occupied by Gillian Waite who very kindly showed me the studios next door and the skills needed to produce radio programs. This was my first experience of working with women and I think they found me rather intriguing. And that was when I remembered the lines from Kubla Khan by Coleridge.

*Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honeydew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.*

There was a certain remoteness about me. I had been living an isolated life in a male community. But we gradually got to know one another quite well. I was the next Catholic to join the Department after Richard Connolly. One evening after work we were sitting having a drink and discussing our beliefs. After about an hour or so we all ended up agreeing that we believed exactly the same thing about the Eucharist. This was an early experience of practical ecumenism, which was later confirmed by ARCIC.⁹

The programs on ABC radio at that time were quite comprehensive. On radio we had about thirty separate slots in the radio schedules each week. They took quite a lot of work but there was a guaranteed output which was shared between Sydney and Melbourne and later with the other states.

At the seminary our studies about the church (Ecclesiology) relied largely on a book issued by the World Council of Churches in which each member church described its beliefs about the church. And now as I met many people from other Christian denominations, I began to get a concrete appreciation of the body of Christ in all its human variations.

I worked happily in Melbourne for about two years and then I was promoted to a higher position in Sydney. Over time I gradually assumed the position of Executive Producer of television programs but before that I had produced many radio programs including fifteen years scripting and presenting ‘Sacred Music’, visiting many churches for services transmitted on radio or television, many documentaries, providing the TV commentary for the first papal visit by Pope Paul VI with Martin Royal at the Randwick racecourse, and with Brian Bury of Channel 10 at the Town Hall for the

⁹ On ARCIC see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglican-Roman_Catholic_International_Commission

Ecumenical Service. I also initiated the radio program featuring the Reverend Roger Bush. He was quite a character and when he went into commercial media I devised and presented a replacement program called "Saturday Saints" with my co-producer Ross Saunders.

I might just tell one story about a particular program that we did for the radio 'Divine Service' slot after Vatican II. I wanted to broadcast a recording of an exemplary beautiful Eucharistic Liturgy. I approached Father Julian Miller and together we worked out a format. We decided to record it not in a church but in a studio. We gathered some extremely good readers and singers and there was a small pipe organ in the ABC studio at Chatswood. As the idea developed Julian and I realised that it would be difficult to record in one piece and so the decision was made to make it a "dry mass". We really didn't celebrate a Mass at all, but all the words and music were there. After the program was broadcast on the Sunday morning, my Boss came in on Monday and said "...that was the most beautiful Mass I have ever heard." I didn't enlighten him as to how it had been done.

The biggest development in television happened when Whitlam came to power. The ABC's budget was considerably improved and our Department's television budget went up by 700%. Perhaps the powers that be in TV Land had realised that we were trying to do adventurous things. I asked my boss if I could spend some of the money on research and he agreed.

And so, I rang Hugh McKay¹⁰ who is an old friend. He had started his career in the ABC, and I asked him to research what program formats and religious ideas would be likely to be successful. The research came back saying that what I was proposing was largely attractive and workable. Interestingly enough, other departments in ABC TV including Four Corners heard about this and wanted a copy of the research, because it described the way people relate to television and how they react to new ideas.

When I eventually became Director of the Department, I had on my office wall a plaque which said, "Comfort the Disturbed and Disturb the Comfortable" (Cesar Cruz and the Jesuit Berrigan.¹¹) I set up several staff development sessions and I asked a management expert from Melbourne to come to lead the sessions. His name was John Little¹² and I chose him because of his appreciation of religion and also because he was a fan of Bernard Lonergan's philosophy of communication.

My television staff, led by Executive Producer Maureen McInerney and

10 See "Hugh Mackay" in Wikipedia

11 See "Daniel Berrigan" in Wikipedia

12 See <https://lonergan.org.au/john-little/>

Producer Ken Dyer, agreed that we would work on a five-year plan to get programs into prime time. That might sound a long lead time, but television does take a lot of effort to gather together research staff and production facilities. We actually did it in three years and the series that achieved prime time was called “*Healers Quacks or Mystics?*” We also did an influential series called “*The Sunburnt Soul*” on Australian spirituality and quite a number of interviews under the heading of “*Man in Question*” and “*Woman in Question*”. These programs chose well known figures in public life and explored what made them tick, generally filming them in their place of work. The current Chair of the ABC, Ita Buttrose, was one of them.

Our work in radio has been told in detail by Alison Healey in her PhD thesis¹³ and in a talk which she gave to ACHS some years ago. In her thesis she refers to me as a “reluctant bureaucrat” and a “diffident director”. I have no argument with being a ‘reluctant bureaucrat’ and I think the epithet of ‘diffident director’ was partly true within the bounds of radio. But, looking back at it all now, I realise that as Director of the Department, most of my time and effort went into television. Alison’s thesis described only our work in radio. In one sense radio ran itself quite well because it had well defined slots in the schedules, and it was well managed by Executive Producer, Ronald Nichols. But in television one had to fight first to get the *resources* to make programs. And then you would get the slots depending on the *excellence* of your results. But in radio I did initiate a significant popular new program, a five-week strand teaching the art of meditation. It was presented by an English Jesuit, Bill Hewett. ABC Marketing said that, in cassette form, it was one of their most successful long-lasting resources.¹⁴

But here I’ll take a break to tell one specific story in relation to the history of the Catholic Church and it’s a story which has not been told anywhere else, as far as I know.

We decided to make a documentary about Monsignor Patrick Hartigan, well known as John O’Brien the poet, and his collection of poems *Around the Boree Log*. From 1917 till 1944 Hartigan was the pastor of Saint Mel’s parish in Narrandera and his reputation there was very high. He had ministered to many people in the ‘flu outbreak after World War 1 regardless of his own safety and it didn’t matter whether people believed or not. We spoke to many people who knew him including his former housekeeper.

13 Alison Healey, A Critical Alliance: ABC Religious Programs and the Churches, *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* 26 (2005), 15–28; Dr Healey’s full thesis, Spirit and substance: religious broadcasting on ABC Radio, 1941–91 (Sydney University, 1994) is available at <https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/9307>.

14 See <https://www.theway.org.uk/back/s057Hewett.pdf> page 94.

We were intrigued that she seemed quite sad about his departure from Narrandera, but this sadness seemed to go deeper than the fact that he had retired. This impression was reinforced by a few people and eventually somebody said, "Why don't you talk to old Mr Gammage". He had been the editor of the local paper, 'The Narrandera Argus', and by the way, his son Bill Gammage is a very well-known Australian historian.¹⁵ And so, we went to his house in one of the back streets of Narrandera. A little man came to the door with a hearing aid about the size of a small mobile phone, and it had a wire going to his ear, and he would hold it out for us to talk into.

We went inside and sat down, and we had this strange conversation talking into his hearing aid and when he replied he would talk into it himself so that he could see hear his own voice. Many of the questions we had, we also wrote down on paper for him to read. When we spoke about Fr Hartigan's departure from Narrandera, and this pervading unusual sense of sadness, he said "Oh, don't you know that story?!" Well, our antennas quickly went up!

He went on to tell us that the Bishop wanted Father Hartigan to have a Curate. But Hartigan didn't want one, and every one that came wasn't suitable. And so, they were sent back to the Bishop.

Just by the way, Hartigan was a supreme car aficionado, one of the first country priests to have a car. And not just any car. He even went to England to bring back an 'Aluminium Alvis'. one of the fastest cars built at that time. He once drove between Narrandera and Grong Grong, about 23 kms, in a very short time. We tried to do the same trip in our ABC vehicle on the later bitumen and we couldn't match it. On one occasion one of the curates wanted to drive Hartigan's car. Hartigan said "No you can't". But he persisted "Father Father can I drive your car". Eventually Hartigan said "Alright you can just back it out of the garage for me". He did so and backed into a pole. Hartigan was furious. He screamed out "If it wasn't Friday, I'd eat you!"

And so, the curates came and went... but eventually one came whom Hartigan liked. "They got on well", old Mr Gammage said. "They were like father and son."

But then one day the Curate came to Hartigan and said that he had fallen in love with one of the ladies in the parish, and he was going to leave the priesthood to marry her.

At that time, this was quite a scandal. So Hartigan arranged a Send-off for this young priest and the story was that he was going to work at another parish in Victoria, and everyone said farewell. Now you can bet your bottom dollar that Fr Hartigan would have gone to the editor of the local newspaper and asked him to keep a lid on the true story.

15 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Gammage

I did some research before we actually filmed the program, and I discovered that the curate had died but his wife and children were still alive in Victoria. So, we didn't include the story in the program and as far as I know it's never been told anywhere else.

So it was that at the age of 66, Father Patrick Joseph Hartigan retired to the Convent of the Sacred Heart at Rose Bay with a broken heart.

I once asked an American public relations priest from Los Angeles what was his main principle, and he said, "Tell the truth, with Charity".

Eventually the ABC became a Corporation¹⁶ instead of a Commission, with a new Board under the direction of Ken Myer and Wendy McCarthy. They began to make new appointments and arrangements. The new general manager or 'managing director' as he was called, who, by the way, only lasted a couple of years, began the revolution and lots of new ideas and structures were being touted.

Most senior positions were renamed and readvertised. The Controller of Television, Jim Fitzmaurice, was replaced by a new person and in my mind that was a disaster. Fitzmaurice was one of the best managers I ever worked with. We had disagreements but they were quickly forgotten. When he announced that he was leaving the ABC I think I was the first one to speak with regret. He went on to become the Managing Director of PBL, Publishing and Broadcasting Limited which was Packer's company. They snapped him up. As the changes went on, I became more disillusioned with the new management structures and I remember writing to my former boss that perhaps I could sit around and wait for the phoenix to arise from the ashes, but I didn't think I would.

And so, I drew up a flow chart of possible scenarios and to trigger it off I applied for redundancy. After a month or so I got a telephone call saying "No ... we don't consider the position of Head of Religion to be redundant." I said, "could you put that on paper please", and they did, and I photocopied the memorandum and send it to all my staff around Australia and then I resigned.

I was indebted to the many staff and colleagues whom I have not mentioned, and I left them with regret. But I was 50 years old. It was now or never.

Act Three: Fifteen Years in the Catholic Education System

I had already put out feelers to various organisations about possible employment and one day I got a phone call from Brother Walter Simmons

¹⁶ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Australian_Broadcasting_Corporation

who was the head of the Catholic Education Office at Leichhardt. As I parked my car at the Office, someone was getting out of the car next to me and it was Father John O'Donnell who was the Director of the Catholic Audio-Visual Centre at Homebush. I knew all about that place because I had been invited to the Board which was keeping an eye on it. Actually, there were more people on the Board than there were staff at the Centre. I said to John. "I'm going in to see Brother Simmons" and he said, "Oh so am I". So, a penny started to drop as we went in. Brother Simmons said to me "John O'Donnell is leaving his position at Homebush; would you like to take it on?". That was quite a surprise and so I said I would think about it. And after a couple of meetings and phone calls about the fine details I accepted the position. Having been on the Board which oversaw the Audio-Visual centre, I had a pretty good idea of what they did. But I was also interested in what are called "Group Media" as opposed to "Mass Media". I knew that many educational outfits were using this concept. The media that you produce are not meant for television or radio, but they are to be used in groups. They tend to provide information and pose questions, but not provide answers. The answers are supposed to come from the group.

And so, I began my fifteen years under the wing of the Catholic Education Office. Someone said to me that I must be happy to be leaving a bureaucracy. I said that I was going to work for the Mother of all Bureaucracies!

As I did in the ABC, I asked John Little, the management consultant, to come up from Melbourne to help us get a feel for and to plan how we might develop. I remember one staff member describing his current state of mind as being like a "beached whale". It was a successful staff gathering and we managed to plan for the future. As the years went on, we won a number of prizes for some of our videos. It was a good team, and we had state of the art facilities.

The Centre was financed by income from sales to the tune of about 60% and the remaining 40% came from the Education Office. Around the time that I took up my position Brother Kelvin Canavan took over the directorship of the Catholic Education Office. He had returned from overseas with qualifications in Business Administration. His re-organising of the Catholic Education Office was outstanding, and I had many good meetings with him about the CAVC as it was called.

But the big problem came when Sydney Archdiocese split into three and we had Broken Bay and Parramatta. To cut a long story short, neither of those Dioceses kept supporting CAVC long term. And so, I drafted a letter which was sent to every Diocese in Australia saying that if they put in

\$0.65 per student per year based on their school populations, we could keep going. Most of the small country Dioceses said yes because they knew what value they were getting from our work. But the large Dioceses particularly Brisbane and Melbourne did not agree and so regretfully the operations of the Centre were wound up. We continued to make fewer video programs using outside resources and we moved into premises at Leichhardt.

There I became much more involved in print publication and in public relations for the system and the schools and in the creation of the website. Luckily, I had friends in the ABC who were also developing the new media and they came out and gave us very valuable advice on how to structure a corporate website not only the content but the technical and management skills.

In 1988 the National Bishops Conference advertised a job called “National Executive Officer Communications for the Australian Catholic Bishops Committee for Social Communications.” Quite a mouthful. Perhaps bureaucracy?? I thought I would apply for the job.

The person arranging applications for this vacancy was none other than my old mate John Little the Melbourne Management Consultant. Time went by and eventually I got a phone call from John saying, “the Bishops have withdrawn that job”. If you heard or read Fr Brian Lucas’ talk which he gave to this Society in 2015¹⁷ you’ll see that there was a lot of internal dissent amongst the various groups in the Bishops Conference. They eventually appointed Mary Newport as a National Communications Officer and that job was said to be morphed from the original advertised position. Brian Lucas rather wryly says that all the people that have held that job since that time, have been women. I doubt whether he is implying any sense of women’s empowerment. I mentioned this because of the ongoing tensions between the Church and the media. Brian Lucas’s talk was subtitled “missed opportunities”. I retired from the Catholic Education Office in 2002.

One of the last things that happened just before I retired from the Catholic Education Office was the appointment of the Most Reverend George Pell as Archbishop of Sydney. The people in Religious Education at the Catholic Education Office had been working for years on a comprehensive new syllabus from K to 12 which integrated faith and practice across the whole curriculum. In other words, every subject was taught with an underlying Catholic religious perspective. It was based on research by Fr Cyril Hally.

17 Brian Lucas, ‘The Australian Bishops and National Media: Conflicts and Missed Opportunities’, *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* 36 (2015), 202–218.

Unfortunately, Archbishop Pell didn't seem to like this effort and he decreed that Sydney should use the books from Melbourne. I was asked to go through the Melbourne books and replace the names of various towns and suburbs with equivalent names from NSW and Sydney, but I politely avoided the task. Again, I pay tribute to the team at the Homebush studios and the Leichhardt Office.

Act 4: Life "Now" - Since Retirement

This "now" is quite a long. I retired in 2002 so that leaves about 20 years to account for.

But the word "now" is a moving target and perhaps I should go back through Acts One and Two and Three and add some detail about my interests and activities which have been mostly related to the church, and they are ongoing.

Mary and I were married in 1967 and we have six wonderful children who have all gone on to follow their interests and have fulfilling lives. This life with her has of course been the strong foundation for everything that I've done. Mary and I met through music. We were both singers in the Saint Gregory Chorale, which was founded and conducted by Doctor David Branagan, and later in "The Singers of David" with Sister Gabrielle Healey SGS and the conductor/composer Br Colin Smith CFC. When I came home to Sydney from my seminary life in Melbourne an old friend Stephen Pegum introduced me to the music scene in Sydney and I joined the St Gregory Chorale. I also joined the Guild of Saint Pius X in which David Branagan was also involved. They were a group of people who were enthusiastic about the liturgy and its music, and we worked to find the best resources for like-minded people. Even before Vatican II the Guild was very influential in promoting good liturgy and sacred music. When the Mass was made available in English, we organised many sessions of training for Cantors and Lectors at Saint Mary's cathedral in cooperation with Father Ron Harden who was very closely associated with the Guild. Father John De Luca has written a thesis on the liturgy of the Archdiocese of Sydney. Again, he uses the idea of "opportunities missed".¹⁸ He praises the work of the Guild and says that the Guild was a victim of its own success. At its best it reached into every part of Australia through providing courses, seminars and resources and also through its magazine called "Hosanna". But as time went on similar

18 John de Luca, *A Vision Found and Lost: The promotion and evolving interpretation of the movement for liturgical musical reform within the Sydney Catholic Church during the twentieth century*, PhD thesis, UNSW, 2001, available at <https://unsworks.unsw.edu.au/bitstreams/7c14d9ca-bd57-4dd7-8c15-f1a1088069c9/download>

departments were set up in each Diocese as the impetus of Vatican II reached into liturgy reform across the world. And so, the Guild ceased to exist, but its work left a permanent mark on the Catholic Church in Australia.

I was also privileged to be a member of the Liturgy Commission of the Archdiocese of Sydney and a Music Consultant to the National Liturgical Commission in Canberra for fifteen years.

In the 1970s (still in the ABC) with my interest in church music I was excited to hear that as the Uniting Church was being formed from the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches, they were planning to produce a new hymn book. The Anglican church was also interested and had joined in the venture. I had a great friend at Saint Andrew's Cathedral in the city, the Reverend Laurence Bartlett who was the Precentor at the cathedral, and one day when we were talking, I said to him I wonder if it would be possible for the Catholic Church to join in this venture. He was quite stunned by that idea saying that surely the Catholic Church was so monolithic it would be difficult to achieve. I said "Laurie, all we need is the imprimatur of one Bishop and I think I could get one!" So, I went to see Cardinal Freeman whom I knew quite well and told him about this. And in his usual laconic voice he said, "Go for it, Pat!"

And so, the essential paperwork was done, and I was appointed with Father John Walsh to be on the Editorial Committee of the Australian Hymn Book. My main motive in doing this was to get access for Catholic people to this new book's treasury of hymnody. But also, it was an opportunity for the Editors of the book to include music by Richard Connolly and James McAuley and other Catholic composers and also the Gelineau Psalms. The book was eventually published with a Catholic supplement with which I wasn't very happy but it needed to be done to include certain hymns to Our Lady and other hymns which had a different eucharistic perspective. I also got an approach from the Melbourne liturgy people to try to include Mass Settings but I told them that that would not be the purpose of the book and not possible.

Along the way I was choirmaster at Normanhurst Parish for about thirty years and we managed to enhance the liturgy through active participation as Vatican II had recommended.

My other main interest in recent years has been with the parish of Wahroonga. I was on the Parish Pastoral Council about six or seven years ago and we put out a survey. Some people said that they would like something to read during the week. At the time we were issuing a Mass sheet each weekend, which was blank on the other side, because the parish paper was a

separate enterprise. I said to the parish priest Dr David Ranson that I could fill in the reverse side of that sheet every week with readable material. And now I'm up to issue #329!

I'm also a great believer in groups for what might be called adult faith formation. Around about the same time that I was on the parish council we set up a group called "Come as You Are". It is still going very well. I also arranged ecumenical gatherings and occasional talks by Hugh Mackay, Paul Collins and John Cleary. And Mary and I joined "Catalyst for Renewal". Most things that I've done have been to do with communication, especially communication between the church and the world.

There is another angle to this relationship between the church and the world, which is "what the media are doing to us and to the church?" Some years ago, I came across some books which changed my appreciation of the links between culture, religion and the media, especially television. They were by William Kuhns, an American writer, influenced by William Stevenson, a British author, and Ms Gregor Goethals, Yale Divinity School. Stevenson's book was in turn inspired by Dutch historian Johan Huizinga.¹⁹

The underlying theme of these books is that we human beings need a sense of play and entertainment and ritual and symbols which convey meaning. Benard Lonergan says that we live in a "world mediated by meaning". The concern of these authors is that these needs used to be met by activities such as church ritual but now they're being satisfied by the rituals of Radio and Television and the Internet and so there is an underlying almost unconscious dissatisfaction with what goes on in church. I have mentioned the name of Bernard Lonergan a few times. His best-known books are *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* and *Method in Theology*.²⁰ Lonergan has described the method of our intellect and our feelings, and in the latter book he has applied this method to the study of theology. But this method is equally applicable to other human activities especially in a world of specializations in so many fields where cooperation and sharing become crucial.

The Second Vatican Council came to its conclusion in December 1965. About the middle of that year Bernard Lonergan SJ gave a lecture on the idea

19 William Kuhns, *The Electronic Gospel: Religion and Media*, Herder and Herder, New York, 1969; William Stephenson, *The Play Theory of Mass Communication*, Transaction Publishers, 1964; Gregor Goethals, *The TV Ritual: Worship at the Video Altar*, Beacon Press, MA 1981; Gregor Goethals, *The Electronic Golden Calf: Images, Religion, and the Making of Meaning*, Cowley Publications, 1990; Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A study of the play element in culture*, Random House, 1938.

20 Lonergan B. S.J. *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, University of Toronto Press, 1957, contd.. *Collection* University of Toronto Press, 1967 and 1988; *Method in Theology*, University of Toronto Press, 1972 and 2017.

of “meaning” as a crucial dimension of our lives. What would our lives be if they were meaningless? Where do we get our meaning from?

We get it from the culture in which we live, and from the religion that we practise. (He defines theology as a bridge between a religion and a culture.) We get meaning from our families, from our friends, from our teachers. Lonergan spells out the fact that the old Classical culture has gone, and it has been replaced by modern scientific culture.

He often quotes the words of historian Herbert Butterfield²¹ that the modern notion of science since the end of the 17th century is a development “which outshines everything since the rise of Christianity and reduces the Renaissance and the Reformation to the rank of mere episodes, mere internal displacements, within the system of medieval Christendom.”

Pope Francis said recently “We are not living in an era of change but in a change of era”. And this is precisely what Lonergan was saying in that lecture back in 1965 before the end of Vatican II.

He said this and I quote: (with my line divisions)

“Classical culture cannot be jettisoned without being replaced;

and what replaces it cannot but run counter to classical expectations.

There is bound to be formed a solid right

that is determined to live in a world that no longer exists.

There is bound to be formed a scattered left,

captivated by now this, now that new development,

exploring this and now that new possibility.

But what will count is a perhaps not numerous centre,

big enough to be at home in both the old and the new,

painstaking enough to work out one by one the transitions to be made,

strong enough to refuse half measures

and insist on complete solutions even though it has to wait.”

(Lonergan “Collection” 1967)

I put it to you that this “Centre” is very much what Pope Francis is trying to do with ‘Synodality’.

He is trying to get us to stop and pray and think carefully, to move into the centre group which will do what Lonergan calls “the Herculean Labours” in revivifying the message of the gospel which we all pass on to the new world in which we live.

21 Herbert Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science, 1300-1800*, Simon & Schuster, 1949.

Jesus says “No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins and will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins.” Luke 5:37

This is a long on-going task. Let us aim to share the new wine of love, the “honeydew” of faith, and together drink “The Milk of Paradise”.

Other books which have moulded my approach to religious, cultural and media history:

C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (A book describing the end of the geocentric universe!) Cambridge University Press, 1964

Meriol Trevor, *Prophets and Guardians: ‘Renewal’ and ‘Tradition’ in the Church*, Hollis & Carter, London Sydney Toronto, 1969

Gerard Whelan SJ, *A Discerning Church: Pope Francis, Lonergan, and a Theological Method for the Future*, Paulist Press, New York, 2019

CAN THE CHURCH CHANGE ITS MIND? AN AUSTRALIAN STORY

Edmund Campion*

Leicester Webb was an Anglican lay preacher and professor of political science at the ANU who, in 1959, led a seminar on religious tolerance at the University of Melbourne. He told members of the seminar that Catholics, if they got to power, might disadvantage even persecute Protestants and others – they would do what their church told them to do, he said.

Where did he get that idea? He was probably a reader of the *New Statesman*, where Paul Johnson wrote on the death of Monsignor Ronald Knox, in 1957, that Knox had come clean about the persecutive principle being part of Catholic doctrine. In the first edition (1927) of his *The Belief of Catholics* Knox wrote:

‘A body of Catholic patriots, entrusted with the government of a Catholic state, will not shrink even from repressive measures in order to perpetuate the secure domination of Catholic principles among their fellow countrymen.’ Knox was wrong, of course, and when he was told he was wrong, he removed that sentence from subsequent editions of his book. But his error about religious intolerance being part of Catholic doctrine is understandable. This, after all was the church of the Holy Office, of the Inquisition, of *autos da fe*, of the Index, of the ‘Song of Roland’ which celebrated the burning of mosques and synagogues. Thomas Aquinas had said, we execute forgers of money [which was seen as treasonable], so we should execute forgers of belief too.

Such was common knowledge, shared by many who knew their church history. They had a print of the Massacre of St Bartholomew’s Day (1572) on their walls; and Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* was favourite reading. Ask them and they would tell you that the Catholic church had a bad record on freedom of religion. In Australia, revelations in the 1950s about the Santamaria Movement seemed to add to that bad record. Was this further evidence – a papist plot to take over political power to advantage Catholicism or to disadvantage the others?

So in the decade of the 1950s the news that the Church was planning an ecumenical council made freedom of religion a hot topic of discussion. Publishers became aware that there was a market for books about it; and

* Edmund Campion is a Sydney priest. His *Then and Now: Australian Catholic Experiences* was published in 2021. This is the text of a talk given to the ACHS on 19 Feb 2023

editors of magazines sought articles on the topic.¹

One of the local books was *Catholics and the Free Society*, published in 1961 and edited by Henry Mayer of the University of Sydney, a symposium of thinkers on both sides of the question. It carried an essay by Max Charlesworth, lecturer in philosophy at the University of Melbourne. Later he would include it in a collection of his political essays, *Church, State and Conscience* (1973), having deleted the introductory throat-clearing often a feature of academic prose.

Charlesworth quoted Canon 1351 of the Code of Canon Law. 'No one can be constrained to embrace the Catholic faith against his will', which implied that no one should act against his conscience². He went on to assert that the liberalism condemned by various popes was 'continental liberalism' (Lessing, Goethe, Mill) which taught that there was no true religion (i.e. one that could be proved to be 'true'), so everyone was free to believe what they wished. Coupled with this was the fact that liberals in power were willing to impose their views on others, especially Catholics.

In 1903, for instance, the French government had expelled thousands of members of religious orders because they belonged to a religious order. In Sweden, 'an advanced democratic state' Charlesworth said, Catholics had been impeded from freely practising their religion up to 1952. No Catholic could be a school teacher or a government minister; no convent or monastery could be established; and the ban on Jesuits was in place until 1959.

A year after Henry Mayer's symposium, *Catholics and the Free Society*, was published, a long review article on it appeared in the November 1962 number of *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, the trade journal of academic historians.

It was written by Austin Gough, who is now remembered principally as an engaging university teacher, particularly of modern French history. Born a Catholic, nephew of a bishop, he was a schoolboy at the Jesuits' Xavier College in Melbourne, where his obituarist recorded 'he simultaneously embraced reading and rejected Catholicism'. After war service, he edited a newspaper in rural New South Wales and learned to write by writing. Then... the history school at universities at Melbourne and Oxford and afterwards

1 Carrillo de Albornoz: *Roman Catholicism and Religious Liberty* (Geneva, 1959); T L Suttor, 'Catholicism and the Open Society' (in *Arna*, 1961); ed Henry Mayer: *Catholics and the Free Society* (Melbourne, 1961); Eric D'Arcy: *Conscience and its Right to Freedom* (London, 1961); Tom Truman: *Catholic Action and Politics* (Melbourne, 1954).

2 A footnote to Charlesworth's essay traced the Church's teaching on freedom of conscience from patristic times (Origen, Tertullian, Ambrose, Cyprian, Augustine) to 19th century encyclicals. At the time he was writing, Catholic thinkers were moving to a position which defended the rights of conscience, as evidenced in Eric D'Arcy's *Conscience and its Right to Freedom* (1961)

Professor of History at Adelaide University, 1970-1991.

Austin Gough wrote only one book, *Paris and Rome* (1986), on tensions between ultramontane and liberal Catholics in the lead-up to the first Vatican Council. *Paris and Rome* is a literary delight, its style, particularly the chapter on journalist Louis Veuillot, making one regret that other books he thought about writing were never written. Instead, on retirement he went to Tasmania to play golf and write columns for the daily press. He died in 1997. Eighteen months ago, his biography by a former student, Don Longo, was published.³

It is hard to summarise the 6,000 words of Gough's *Historical Studies* review article. He seemed to be arguing from the evidence of its past that the Catholic Church was necessarily opposed to political liberalism and a free society. Catholics who thought otherwise must be suspect. Max Charlesworth and others like him were 'hopelessly unrepresentative'. They and their favourite theologians – Congar, Kung, Courtney Murray – were 'exact counterparts' of 19th century French liberal Catholics condemned by the Church. The *Syllabus of Errors* (1864) showed that the Church still held to its ideal of a confessional state where freedom of thought and religion would not be tolerated. Contemporary liberal Catholics, such as Charlesworth, were 'athletes of obedience' in their acceptance of Church condemnations of similar figures in the past. They were 'irrelevant as a guide to the future' – that is, the papal Church would not change its mind.

The Syllabus of Errors was a Roman list of 80 errors that believers were warned against. It was a papal guide to 19th century errors – pantheism, rationalism, materialism and the like. It began with the error that God did not exist. (Well, no Christian would hold this, perhaps.) Next, an error that God did not act upon mankind – again, no Christian would maintain this. Nor would Christians maintain that belief in Christ was opposed to reason. And so on.

The Syllabus of Errors then moved through contested areas of church/state policy, like the separation of church and state, democracies, the Papal States, religious orders, public schools and matrimony. Finally it warned of the errors of what it called 'modern liberalism' – religious pluralism, freedom of worship and religious toleration. The thunderclap 'error' No 80 is often quoted, 'The Roman Pontiff can, and should, reconcile himself and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilisation'. 'Progress, liberalism and modern civilisation' – that's what the official Church was

3 Don Longo. *A Historian Against the Current: The Life and Work of Austin Gough*. (Adelaide, 2021). This is a well-researched, honest, fair and non-adulatory biography.

against in the 19th century.

The appearance of Austin Gough's article in *Historical Studies* attracted the attention of A J M Sayre, who quickly wrote a rebuttal that appeared in the first number for 1963 of *Prospect*, a quarterly magazine run by the circle around Vincent Buckley at the University of Melbourne. Begun in 1958, *Prospect* was a vehicle for new thinking about the Church in Australia. It was an unclerical, academic, cultural voice of the laity who might be considered 'liberal Catholics'.

Sayre thought that Gough's fundamental error was to consider intolerance, even persecution, a doctrinal cornerstone of Catholic faith. Gough imagined that Catholics would accept holus-bolus whatever a pope said. Yet people who lived in democracies were happy to be in a free society: they ignored or explained away *ancien regime* pronouncements of 19th century popes, such as the *Syllabus of Errors*. Contemporary theologians were working towards an acknowledgement of the rights of conscience which could support a belief in the free society rather than the 'error has no rights' principle underpinning papal texts.

The second number of *Prospect* in 1963 carried a response to Austin Gough by Max Charlesworth. He defended his claim that the 'liberalism' condemned by popes was anti-religious in theory and practice. Others, such as Catholics who called themselves 'liberals', were not included in this. It was a theological question, not, in the end, a historical one. As for the debate on freedom of conscience, the second Vatican Council might be left to decide this.

Prospect no 2, 1965, also carried Gough's reply to Sayre's article. He showed that J H Newman, who famously said he would toast conscience before the pope, had explained away the reactionary *Syllabus of Errors* from ignorance of its actual process of production, its history. Sayre, who followed Newman's *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* in this, was dismissed for his ignorance of history.⁴

Readers had to wait for some months, until *Prospect* no 4, for Sayre's reply. Then he conceded that Gough knew more history than he did. Gough had called his bluff. Yet he still argued that Catholics were not doctrinally committed to civil intolerance. They were still able to work towards a free society, whatever 19th century popes had said. At such talk of the doctrinal

4 In his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, Newman acted on the ethical rule of *odiosa restringenda* ('odious things are to be tightly interpreted'), writing that the clauses of the *Syllabus* applied only to the situations they had originally addressed. Newman opposed theological liberalism, not, in his Catholic years, societal liberalism, such as a free press. He sided with Montalembert and Lacordaire and, in the UK, with Acton and Blennerhassett.

content of encyclicals, Gough, conscious of his victory, said he would leave 'doctrinal content' to the theologians.

Meanwhile theologians were already talking and writing about it. Footnotes to the Mayer symposium had shown that Australian intellectuals were alert to the writings of an American, John Courtney Murray SJ (1904-1967). At the age of 41, he had become the lifelong editor of *Theological Studies*, which became a central theological journal in the English-speaking world. He used it to explore Church-State questions, aware that the first amendment of the United States Constitution – 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof' – seemed to sit uneasily with proclamations of 19th century popes.

Murray's attitude to antique documents such as the *Syllabus of Errors* was to historicise them, to show that when the world changed, our teaching might need to change with it. He had his enemies, US theologians who had the ear of Cardinal Ottaviani of the 'Holy Office' and other powerful Roman cardinals. These were 'error has no rights' men who used their positions to enforce their theology and to annul John Courtney Murray. In 1955, Jesuit head office in Rome told him to cease publishing on Church-State issues. He obeyed.⁵

When Vatican II opened, in 1962, he was invited there as a *peritus*. Then he was 'disinvited', until Cardinal Spellman of New York cleared a pathway for Murray to become the principal author of the Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*, which over four years battled its way to acceptance in the final days of the Council. Consider some of its teachings, so novel to anyone who has read church history:

- 'In matters religious no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs. Nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his own beliefs.' [Catholic doctrine]
- Someone 'is not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience; nor is he to be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience, especially in matters religious.' [Catholic doctrine]
- 'The usages of society are to be the usages of freedom in their full range [Catholic doctrine]

⁵ Donald E Pelotte: *John Courtney Murray: Theologian in Conflict*. (New York, 1976); Joseph A Komonchak: 'Catholic Principle and the American Experiment: The Silencing of John Courtney Murray' in *US Catholic Historian*, Winter 1999; Eric D'Arcy: 'Freedom of Religion' in *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967); James Hennessy SJ: 'John Courtney Murray (1904-1967)' in *Modern Catholic Encyclopedia* (1994); James Tunstead Burtchaell CSC: 'Religious Freedom (*Dignitatis Humanae*)' in ed. Adrian Hastings: *Modern Catholicism* (London, 1991); Edmund Campion: 'Turn or Burn?' *Religious Liberty and Vatican II*. (CSAC Working Paper, Macquarie University, 1994); John W O'Malley: *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, Mass, 2008)

What did Austin Gough make of such overturning of antique intellectual positions? After intense debate bishops at the Vatican Council had voted in favour of liberalism, the rights of conscience, freedom of religion and the free society, 2308 for, 70 against. Gough was wrong: the Church could and did change its mind. In other words, Australia's liberal Catholics were right and their critic was wrong. In the face of this astounding reversal Gough chose silence. His biographer reports that he never mentioned his foray against Charlesworth and the *Prospect* set again, except a brief passing reference to it in a long interview for the National Library.⁶

Austin Gough died in 1997 and his funeral service was held at Xavier College chapel, with its celebrant a Jesuit priest whom he had taught at university. That's a puzzle. Why would someone who scorned Catholicism want this? The priest was instructed not to mention God or Jesus or heaven. No incense – although the Lord's Prayer and Bible readings were allowed. It's a puzzle. Don Longo suggested that a donation to the school's sports centre had given Gough access to the chapel for his funeral service. Perhaps one may suggest the chapel was wanted because it is acoustically resonant and music was to be a high point of the funeral service. Like so much in the history of the Church, however, this final puzzle remains unsolved.

Can the Church change its mind? Oh, yes! As John Henry Newman said, 'change is the sign of life'.

⁶ When Austin Gough completed his Oxford D. Phil thesis on mid-19th century France, in November 1966, it was so good that Oxford University Press wanted to publish it but Gough refused. Why? He later said he had been 'a smart Alec', for which he now felt 'ashamed', 'unworthy' to be a historian of the Church. Don Longo (biography, p 67) has suggested an explanation for his reversal: Perhaps the outcomes of Vatican II may have demonstrated that the Church could indeed be reconciled with modernity and the liberal ideas championed by Lacordaire and Lamennais in the nineteenth century, and those of Melbourne's progressive Catholics around Max Charlesworth and *Prospect* about which he'd been so scathing at the beginning of the decade. It may be so. Don Longo also suggests that he may have come to regret his bellicose sarcasm.

THE PELL-BRENNAN EXCHANGE ON THE PRIMACY OF CONSCIENCE

GEORGE PELL AND GERARD BRENNAN

Introduction

Sir Gerard Brennan retired as Chief Justice of Australia in May 1998. In July 2000, he delivered the annual address for the St Thomas More Society in Sydney at the Society's Patronal Feast Day Meeting. His address was entitled 'The Sky is Red' in reference to the exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16:1-3): 'When it is evening, you say, "It will be fair weather; for the sky is red."...You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.' In the address, Brennan said, 'How sad it is to hear Archbishop Pell declare here in Sydney that "Catholics should stop talking about the primacy of conscience"'.¹

Upon delivery, Brennan sent a copy of his address to Archbishop Pell who was then Archbishop of Melbourne. In January 2001, Pell wrote to Brennan joining issue with his remarks on conscience. He said, 'In all honesty, even after nearly six months, it still remains strange to me that a judge, after a lifetime properly enforcing the law, should espouse the primacy of conscience, whatever might be said of your objection to "an authoritarian demand for conformity".'

In his retirement, Brennan was a parishioner at St Canice's, Elizabeth Bay. Having been appointed archbishop of Sydney, Pell said mass in the parish in January 2002. This prompted Brennan to recall that he had not responded to Pell's letter. Concluding his response, Brennan wrote: 'I suggest that, properly understood, there can be little difference between the views in your letter and what I said in "The Sky is Red". The difference, I fear, lies in our understanding of the meaning of teaching authority. For me, the Church has authority to teach what is true and, as she proposes truth for my acceptance, I love and trust her. But that is an authority over religious truth, not an authority to compel belief or action. I fear that the distinction is being missed in the ecclesiastical bureaucracy of today.'

With the death of His Eminence on 10 January 2023 following upon the death of Sir Gerard on 1 June 2022, I thought it appropriate that the correspondence be published posthumously as an exemplar of respectful, robust dialogue in the Church on the vexed question of conscience.

Fr Frank Brennan SJ

¹ The address is available in "The sky is red", *Utopia, the Journal of the St Thomas More Society*, Sydney, Volume 2, Issue 1, May 2001, pp. 3–7, <https://stms.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Utopia2001vol2no1.pdf>.



St Patrick's Cathedral
Melbourne Vic 3002

9th January, 2001.

The Hon. Sir Gerard Brennan, A.C., K.B.E.,
Suite 2604, Piccadilly Tower,
133 Castlereagh Street,
SYDNEY, N.S.W., 2000.

Dear Sir Gerard,

Early in July last year you very kindly made available to me a copy of your lecture "The Sky is Red", delivered to the Society of St Thomas More in Sydney on the occasion of the Patronal Feast Day Dinner. Through my secretary I promised you a response and with apologies for the delay I would now like to offer these few thoughts.

Let me begin by saying how much I enjoyed reading your paper, particularly your account of St Thomas More's life and his response to the crisis that would eventually claim his life, among many others. I too remember those two magnificent portraits in New York, either side of Saint Jerome(?). Rarely has an artist captured so well the cynicism and evil of one and the integrity, goodness and self-sacrificing devotion to truth of the other. At another level, your vigorous defence of appropriate legal protection for marriage and the family was inspiring. I also appreciate the gracious way in which you express your disagreement with me — more in the form of regret than direct criticism. In your covering letter you suggest that the difference in our respective approaches may be a matter of emphasis rather than substance. Certainly your paper encourages me in the hope that the disparity between us may not be quite as insuperable as it sometimes appears, but I am afraid that ultimately our disagreement is much more fundamental than a matter of emphasis and is a matter of considerable moment.

I stand by the words of mine you quote in your paper — "Catholics should stop talking about the primacy of conscience". The alternatives are not the "ipse dixit" of bishops and institutional loyalty on the one hand and conscience on the other. I am well aware that individual bishops are as fallible as judges, perhaps even as fallible as politicians. "What God wants" has the primacy and I fully recognize and defend the role of individual conscience, as well as authority, in the struggle to identify

this correctly. Over a long period, I have consistently argued for *the primacy of truth*, or of the Word of God, to which a conscience must conform if it is to be a reliable instrument; I have said that this is the *ultimate* rule of action and that the Church only speaks of conscience as a *proximate* norm, not some sort of supreme tribunal.

The most thorough and authoritative treatment of these matters to date is Pope John Paul's encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (1993). No doctrine of "the primacy of conscience" is to be found in that document. On the contrary, the Holy Father criticizes the view that "in the sphere of morality a pluralism of opinions and of kinds of behaviour could be tolerated, these being left to the judgement of the individual subjective conscience" (§4). The Pope is surely right when he complains that certain currents of modern thought — both outside and even inside the Church — absolutize "freedom of conscience" to the extent that:

the individual conscience is accorded the status of a supreme tribunal of moral judgement which hands down categorical and infallible decisions about good and evil. To the affirmation that one has a duty to follow one's conscience is unduly added the affirmation that one's moral judgement is true merely by the fact that it has its origin in the conscience.

But in this way the inescapable claims of truth disappear, yielding their place to a criterion of sincerity, authenticity and "being at peace with oneself", so much so that some have come to adopt a radically subjectivistic conception of moral judgement. (§32)

John Paul goes on to criticize the "tendency to grant to the individual conscience the prerogative of independently determining the criteria of good and evil" and the quasi-idolatry of freedom and sincerity in much contemporary talk of conscience. In accordance with the Catholic tradition, he proposes that it is only because it can mediate and apply the universal and permanent moral law that we take conscience so seriously; it is *truth* which has primacy. (Cf. §§32, 35, 52, 54–64).

Before quoting me, you quote from the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Liberty (*Dignitatis Humanae*) to support the argument for the primacy of conscience. It is doubtful whether the Declaration can be used in this way. The *peritus* who had most influence in its drafting, John Courtney Murray S.J., observed: "The Declaration nowhere lends its authority to the theory for which the phrase ['freedom of conscience'] frequently stands, namely, that I have the right to do what my conscience tells me to do, simply because my conscience tells me to do it. This is a perilous theory. Its particular peril is subjectivism — the notion that, in the end, it is my conscience, and not the objective truth, which determines what is right or wrong, true or false." If you do not wish to take Fr. Murray's word for this, consider the passage in §14

of the Declaration on the relationship between conscience and the magisterium.

It is of course true (by definition) that one ought to follow one's best judgement of what is right and wrong; but what constitutes one's "best judgement" and what kind of formation and application of conscience this requires, is little appreciated by those who use "the primacy of conscience" slogan to excuse ill informed preferences and arbitrary choices. Hence Vatican II's important distinction between a true or correct and a false or erroneous or blind conscience (*Gaudium et Spes* §16; see also *Veritatis Splendor* §62), and its insistence on the duty to inform conscience well, in accord with Church teaching. In this the Council followed John Henry Newman, too often misunderstood as an advocate of conscience free of truth or authority, who in fact pronounced "counterfeit" the arbitrary and subjectivist "conscience" of modernity.

You rightly pay close attention to the care that Thomas More took in forming his conscience. I think you will agree that few of us, either then or now, work as assiduously at this task as More did. But even with a formation as rigorous as that which More imposed upon himself, conscience can still be mistaken. Following one's conscience alone does not ensure that one's acts are morally good. At best, a person whose mistake of conscience leads to an objectively wrong act may be guiltless — depending on how seriously the person sought first to inform their conscience and then to apply it. But where conscience is in error due to our own fault — and in this, we must not underestimate the power of rationalization and self-deception, or, as you point out, of a lazy or self-serving failure to criticize the prejudices of an unreliable culture — then we may very well be guilty even when following our conscience. If there is one thing that the twentieth century has taught us, it is that a clear conscience is no guarantee that good will follow (cf. *Veritatis Splendor* §63). Sincerity cannot make an intrinsically evil act good.

It is in this context that the role of the Church and the magisterium must be understood, that is, to teach the truth. "Regimentation" or "an authoritarian demand for conformity" have only a limited ancillary function on rare occasions, usually to protect other believers. You are quite mistaken if you think this is the primary object of the Pope or Cardinal Ratzinger or myself. In a profound passage in *Veritatis Splendor*, John Paul II reminds us that when the Church "pronounces on moral questions, [she] in no way undermines the freedom of conscience of Christians."

This is so not only because freedom of conscience is never freedom from the truth but always and only freedom in the truth, but also because the Magisterium does not bring to the Christian conscience truths which are extraneous to it; rather it brings to light the truths which it ought already to possess, developing them from the starting point of the primordial act of faith.

The Church puts herself always and only at the service of conscience, helping it to avoid being tossed to and for by every wind of doctrine proposed by human deceit (cf. Eph 4:14), and helping it not to swerve from the truth about the good of man, but rather, especially in more difficult questions, to attain the truth with certainty and to abide in it (§64; cf. §§85,110,117).

It is this understanding of the relationship between the magisterium and conscience that I seek to follow in my own life both as a Christian on “the great journey of conscience” and as a bishop charged with the pastoral care of others on that journey. It is also, I believe, More’s understanding of the matter. More was not a martyr for the primacy of conscience. He died for the primacy of truth – and not just the truth as he saw it. As the Holy Father observed in his recent Apostolic Letter proclaiming Thomas the Patron of Politicians, More’s “passion for truth ... enlightened his conscience” and taught him the truths for which he died: that man cannot be sundered from God, and that politics cannot be sundered from morality. His conscience was not formed privately by his self and it was not ultimately answerable to his self. On the contrary. More’s life and death demonstrated that “conscience is the witness of God himself, whose voice and judgement penetrate the depths of man’s soul” (cf. *Veritatis Splendor* §58). It is not the witness of human autonomy.

There is one aspect of More’s life in particular which is impossible to square with enlisting him in a twentieth century position supporting the primacy of individual conscience, i.e. his active persecution and punishment of Protestants during his time as Chancellor. His hatred of seditiosa dogmata is well documented as is his putting into practice his determination to be as active against the new men as lay in his power. The point here is not whether More’s conscience was right or wrong on this (although this is of prime importance), but how to square this with the claim he was a lawyer and public officer who upheld the primacy of conscience. As More said to William Roper, “were it my father stood on the one side and the devil on the other, his cause being good, the devil should have right”. Cf: Peter Ackroyd’s *The Life of Thomas More* (1998) pp 289 sq.

A couple of other details merit comment, primarily because they might not be simply details. In all honesty, even after nearly six months, it still remains strange to me that a judge, after a lifetime properly enforcing the law, should espouse the primacy of conscience, whatever might be said of your objection to “an authoritarian demand for conformity”. While the world of religion is different (certainly our church penalties are different now), your apparent endorsement of an antinomian position religiously still seems strange. Any church leader has to have sanctions available to deal with those who break or deny boundaries, even, or especially, for

those who honestly disagree. Some years ago I had to point out the error, and limit the activity, of a good priest who felt entitled to teach regularly that Christ was not the eternal Son of God. As a church leader vowed to teach and defend the apostolic tradition, it was my duty not to respect the primacy of his conscience, but to oppose him publicly.

Equally disturbing is your assertion of “the right to dissent from religious or political orthodoxy”. Certainly the state has no right to impose religious views or hinder them, except when they are dangerous to the common good. However, no Catholic has a right to dissent from the teachings of Christ or the solemn and central teachings of the magisterium; rather all Catholics have a responsibility and obligation to accept them in faith. This is part of what it means to become or remain Catholic.


I am sure you are aware that Hans Küng is one of our better known dissidents, who lost the capacity to teach officially as a Catholic theologian, as long ago as 1979. Few priests over the years have been so publicly opposed to the Papacy and so abusive towards the Holy Father. More would have put him in the stocks if he had spoken like this in England.

The primacy of conscience is a virus introduced into the church at the time of the *Humanae Vitae* debate, not simply that conscience might be exercised in times of dispute among authorities, but as a general principle to be exercised everywhere, untrammelled too much even by Scripture (unlike the Protestant endorsement of private judgement). This virus has severely weakened our resistance to the hostile currents in Western life and has destroyed and is destroying religious orders. I feel bound to oppose its baleful influence.

I enclose with this letter for your interest the text of an article on More written by the Pope’s American biographer, George Weigel, and a copy of the Apostolic Letter referred to above. Thank you for continuing the discussion of this matter with me.

With prayerful good wishes to you and your family for the New Year,

Yours in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "George Pell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'G'.

ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE

Encs.

9th January, 2001.

The Hon Sir Gerard Brennan AC KBE

*Suite 2604, Piccadilly Tower
133 Castlereagh Street
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia*

29 January 2002

Most Rev Dr George Pell
Archbishop of Sydney
Polding House
276 Pitt Street
SYDNEY, N.S.W. 2000

Your Grace,

Our recent meeting reminded me that I had not written to acknowledge and reply to your letter of 9 January 2001. And I have been prompted by the recent readings from the letter of St John. However, the year that has passed, your translation from Melbourne to Sydney and the many responsibilities of your See may have dimmed your recall of the letter which I greatly appreciated. So I enclose a copy of your letter for ease of reference.

The letter is most helpful in defining the points of difference between us. I hope that the points of difference are not "fundamental" but perhaps arise from attributing a different connotation to the word "conscience". We are in complete agreement about the source of moral truth. "What God wants" defines what is good; "what God does not want" defines what is bad. Being creatures of God, made in His image and responding to His love, men and women must seek to discover the truth of what He wants and what He does not want. Then, having discovered the truth, each is obliged to act or to refrain from acting in accordance with the truth. *Personal* belief in what is morally good or evil does not – axiomatically cannot – define objectively what is morally true. It is false to hold (as *Veritatis Splendor* points out) that "one's moral judgment is true merely by the fact that it has its origin in the conscience" or to suggest that conscience alone can "ensure that one's acts are morally good" (as you clearly state). The objective validity of a moral judgment or the objective character of an act or omission can be determined only by reference to an objective standard – and that standard is "what God wants". But that argument is pushing at a door that is already open. All of this is both obvious and cannot rationally be doubted.

If you were concerned that I was commending More for following his conscience because conscience is always the sure guide to moral truth, be assured that that was not my intention. Nor, with respect, do I think a fair reading

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of what I said would lead to that conclusion. To quote the key sentence: "It was a conscience *that sought to understand the Divine will* and, having understood it, to be obedient to the truth he saw." Your concern that I endorse "an antinomian position religiously" is, I suggest, misplaced.

The problem is not whether conscience can determine authoritatively the objective moral quality of particular acts or omissions; rather, the problem is about the way in which the individual man or woman forms his or her conscience in order to make a moral judgment about an act or omission and the obligation of that man or woman to act or refrain from acting in accordance with that judgment.

If we focus first on the obligation to act or to refrain from acting in accordance with one's moral judgment, we can more clearly understand the problem of forming the conscience which makes the judgment.

The "primacy of conscience" is a term which I would use to acknowledge the role of conscience which you describe as the "proximate norm". The passage you quote from *Veritatis Splendor* makes it clear that there is a duty – that is, a valid moral duty – "to follow one's conscience". In "*The Primacy of Conscience in the Roman Catholic Tradition*" (Pacifica 13, October 2000 p 299 at p307) Brian Lewis says that "the Primacy of Conscience" is the "traditional expression [that] has formed part of Roman Catholic teaching for many centuries. It cannot be lightly put aside or considered to be mistaken." He explains that conscience has never been regarded as "a law unto itself", but he does quote (at p 304) "startling" illustrations from St Thomas Aquinas, followed by St Alphonsus Liguori, showing the moral obligation to follow conscience, even though the conscience be erroneous. The term "primacy of conscience", properly understood, is far from being "a virus introduced into the Church" but is at the heart of Catholic moral teaching. It is clearly stated in *Dignitatis Humanae* (Chapter 1):

"On his part, man perceives and acknowledges the imperatives of the divine law through the mediation of conscience. In all his activity a man is bound to follow his conscience faithfully, in order that he may come to God, for whom he was created. It follows that he is not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience. Nor, on the other hand, is he to be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience, especially in matters religious.

"For, of its very nature, the exercise of religion consists before all else in those internal, voluntary, and free acts whereby man sets the course of his life directly toward God. No merely human power can either command or prohibit acts of this kind."

In reference to the limitation on the power of the State, the term "primacy of conscience" is used by the Holy Father himself in the *motu proprio* proclaiming More to be the patron of statesmen and politicians:

"The defence of the Church's freedom from unwarranted interference by the State is at the same time a defence in the name of the *primacy of conscience*, of the individual's freedom vis-à-vis political power."

What I was concerned to show was that More's conscience, though contrary to the view then expressed by both the King's court and the ecclesiastical establishment of England, bound him to the course which he followed and that he would not have been either saint or hero had he submitted to those contrary views. The "ipse dixit" of Bishops was no sufficient guarantee of moral truth. Again, I see no difference between what I have said and your observation that "it is of course true (by definition) that one ought to follow one's best judgment of what is right and wrong".

The next, and more difficult, question is the manner in which the conscience is to be formed and the sources of guidance available to ascertain what God wants. It is in this context that we are inspired by John's First Letter (3:21-24):

"My dear people, if we cannot be condemned by our own conscience, we need not be afraid in God's presence, and whatever we ask him, we shall receive because we keep his commandments and live the kind of life that he wants. His commandments are these: that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and that we love one another as he told us to."

So conscience must be formed in faith and faith is a divine gift. It has not been given to all and sometimes the gift of faith is lost or diminished. What then of a person's obligation to act in accordance with conscience, if the conscience be ill-formed? If I understand correctly what St Thomas and St Alphonsus Liguori were saying, the obligation to act in accordance with conscience is unchanged. If that be right, was I in error in saying that "Conscience is unique to each person and what is done in obedience to conscience by one may differ from what is done in obedience to conscience by another"? In any event, as consciences do differ, the external expression of consciences will – as a matter of fact – be variable. And in a pluralist society, social order demands a degree of tolerance of those variations. That is of the nature of a free society. It does not follow, however, that those whose consciences are formed in accordance with the Divine will must, or even can, approve of actions done contrary to the Divine will. Tolerance of the conduct of others is not to be equated with moral approval. I live in a society in which the law (however strictly interpreted) permits abortion in certain circumstances, though I find abortion a terrible moral evil.

Members of the Church have the guidance of the Church's teaching on moral issues. It is the scope of that authority and the manner of its exercise which concern me and other Catholics in the present day. Again there is no questioning here of the infallibility of Papal or Conciliar teaching when doctrines are defined solemnly as indicated in Ch III par 25 of *Lumen Gentium*. But when officers of the Church – even the Roman dicasteries – or individual Bishops assert the power to prescribe what individuals or groups must do or refrain from doing, submission must surely depend on whether the individual consciences accept the prescription. As you say, "individual bishops are as fallible as judges" – a view which ecclesiastical history and the law reports strongly confirm. And a distinction must be drawn between the teaching of universal truths of faith and

morals and the promulgation of edicts which are really no more than disciplinary demands.

In past years, we were instructed not to attend ceremonies in non-Catholic churches. As "good Catholics", we complied. Thereby we offended unjustly and (understandably) lost our relationship with good friends who had invited us to their weddings. The disciplinary edicts of the ghetto did enormous damage to the Church in Australia. So did the policy of some Bishops to enlist Catholics in the Movement and to isolate clergy who opposed that policy.

The teaching of universal moral truths raises other questions. The awful responsibility of the Magisterium which the Pope describes in Part II of Chapter 2 of *Veritatis Splendor* demands that the utmost caution be observed and the clearest exposition of the relevant principles be manifested in the exercise of this teaching authority.

First, a clear distinction must be drawn between the teaching of doctrine by the Magisterium and an individual Bishop's declaration of what he believes when that belief is not otherwise binding on the faithful. As you say, individual Bishops are fallible and it is not possible that the Magisterium might teach with different tongues. So a proclamation of the truth with the authority of the Magisterium should demonstrably be not the mere belief of individual Bishops but the expression of tradition or of collegial consensus.

Secondly, to bind the conscience of the faithful, the teaching should warrant its acceptance. "The faith must always be presented in a rationally coherent way." (*Ecclesia in Oceania* par 20) Minds which are accustomed to the evaluation of concepts cannot (perhaps, should not) be asked to suspend their critical capacities when the teaching is proclaimed for interior acceptance (see *Gaudium et Spes*, Ch II par 62, Ch V par 92). So the foundation of the teaching must be clearly exposed. This does not mean that truth consists only in what can be deductively proven. Clearly the truths of the faith will oftentimes depend on Divine revelation and its interpretation and the faithful must examine the teaching in love and humility. But there can be no conflict between truth and reason, nor should there be any fear of discussion of the truth. I confess that the Pope's prohibition of discussion on his teaching about women's ordination seems to suggest that discussion is the enemy of truth. Far from leading to acceptance of the teaching, the prohibition casts doubt upon what is taught. It is counter-productive. The teaching authority of the Church is one thing; the power to compel belief is another.

Thirdly, proclamation of the truth is an exercise in charity to assist men and women in their search for God and their quest for eternal life. It is not a demand for conformity to be visited with penalties for non-belief. Regrettably, many recent emanations from the Curia have been portrayed, either accurately or otherwise, as demands for conformity. Thus the "Statement of Conclusions" of the meeting before the Oceania Synod was dismissive of the Australian characteristic of tolerance although "it has many positive elements". Note the

shift in language adopted by the prelates to make their point: "tolerance of *and openness* to all opinions... can lead to indifference...." What are the Australian faithful to make of this? That tolerance should be suspect as subversive of truth? That a closed mind is needed to sustain faith? *The Tablet* said the Statement was to guide the Australian Bishops so that they may "affirm, admonish and correct" their people. The Statement is again in the language of the ghetto, fearful of exposing and expounding the truth in the public forum.

You express some surprise about an ex-Judge's espousal of the primacy of conscience, but that view reflects (with some modifications) the familiar distinction between the definition of crime (the objective norm) and the criminal responsibility of an alleged offender (who must be acquitted unless the criminal act is done with *mens rea*). So if I translate that approach, *mutatis mutandis*, to the case of your good priest who was preaching heresy, I distinguish between his action (which must be opposed) and his conscience which, if formed in good faith, must be respected. You write: "it was my duty not to respect the primacy of his conscience, but to oppose him publicly". That, I respectfully suggest, is a false dichotomy. Given that it was your episcopal duty to oppose publicly the proclamation of what was unarguably false doctrine, would it not be right "to respect the primacy of his conscience" and then to endeavour to lead him away from error?

This long epistle started from my lament about the proposition that "*Catholics should stop talking about the primacy of conscience*". I find some confirmation of my lament in the Pope's New Year message (*The Tablet* 22/29 December, p 1859):

"... even when the truth has been reached-and this can happen only in a limited and imperfect way- it can never be imposed. Respect for a person's conscience, where the image of God himself is reflected (cf Gen 1:26-27) means that we can only propose the truth to others, who are then responsible for accepting it."

I respectfully and humbly accept every word in that statement. I suggest that, properly understood, there can be little difference between the views in your letter and what I said in "The Sky is Red". The difference, I fear, lies in our understanding of the meaning of teaching authority. For me, the Church has authority to teach what is true and, as she proposes truth for my acceptance, I love and trust her. But that is an authority over religious truth, not an authority to compel belief or action. I fear that the distinction is being missed in the ecclesiastical bureaucracy of today.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Gerard Brennan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

FROM TAPROOT TO RHIZOME: WHAT YOU NEVER KNEW ABOUT THE SECRET LIVES OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS POST VATICAN II

Catherine Thom*

‘Johnny double X111’ (used by the girls in *Brides of Christ*¹) called Vatican II to open up the windows of the Church and let in some fresh air. ‘Fresh it was and depending on where one stood it felt like a hurricane bringing devastation and destruction or a gentle breeze ushering in renewal and reform and a freeing of the human spirit’.² This series (particularly episode 3) brilliantly captured the agony and ecstasy of the effects of Vatican II on the lives of women religious in Sydney and probably throughout Australia. It had varying effects on the Institution (of the church) and the People of God (the ‘real’ church). Much has been written about the documents, discussions and implementation of the wisdom of Vatican II. What will be attempted in this brief article is a discussion of how the global event influenced the lives and experiences of a group of Josephites in New South Wales over a period of forty years.

The second volume of NSW Province story, called *From Taproot to Rhizome* has many instances where individual sisters comment on their lives, particularly in relation to the changes spearheaded by Vatican II. So I will let you into some of the ‘secrets’ of Religious Women’s lives. However, the emphasis will be on what the Commissioning Provincial, Sr Judy Sippel (2002-2008) suggested. She gave me two points of focus: Firstly, what differentiated NSW from all other Provinces of the Congregation. Secondly to chart the changes spearheaded by Vatican II and analyse the effect these had on our lives.

Kathleen Burford’s early History of NSW Province, *Unfurrowed Fields 1872–1972* concentrated on these 100 years. However, she did not do much analysis of the effect of Vatican II. With this book, *From Taproot to Rhizome: A Study of Post Vatican II Changes in the Lives and Experiences of a Group of Women Religious 1968–2008*, I was in the midst of all the challenges, sharing in the anguish, pain, excitement and our eventual re-emergence as Post Vatican II women religious. In the Josephite story a Province was

1 A six hour ABC drama series, directed by Ken Cameron; produced by Sue Masters in 1991. Some of the episodes were filmed at Santa Sabina College and ACU Strathfield.

2 C. Thom, *From Taproot to Rhizome: A Study of Post Vatican II Changes in the Lives and Experiences of a Group of Women Religious 1968-2008* (Homebush: Paulist Press, 2022) p.X11.

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equivalent to the different States in Australia. To follow Judy's suggestion I chose about eight significant differences between NSW and all other Provinces and divided them between two sections of the book.

Section One

Has three Chapters :

- 1 Evolution and understanding of notion of provinces. As early as the foundation years, Mary MacKillop's notion of province had a nuance that needs to be emphasized: 'provincials, would require more powers than those provincials who remained in the Mother Colony [Adelaide].'³
- 2 Multicultural Josephites (both these topics were deliberately placed by the writer in Section One). Reason: to me they are fundamental to how we Josephites understand ourselves.
- 3 St Margaret's Hospital.

Section Two

Chapters 5-9, address the changes initiated by Vatican II as evident in the records of our Provincial and Congregational Chapters⁴ (1969-2007). Usually a Provincial Chapter occurred a year before the Congregational Chapters. The changes, with comments from sisters, reveal how these Chapters affected their lives.

The title *From Taproot* (imagined as top-down authority) to *Rhizome* (imagined as horizontal responsibility) was taken from a book called *Green Sisters*.⁵ In it McFarland Taylor, the author, explains

although the rhizome is strong and tenacious, its strength does not emanate from a central source; instead it comes both from its organic decentralization and lateral structure, which provides it with flexibility to adapt quickly to new conditions.

Section Three

Chapters 10-14, contain a number of minor differences in NSW Province to be addressed. None of these is found in the other Provinces of the Congregation e.g.,

- 1) Sisters caring for the Apostolic Delegate and staff
- 2) Josephites in Tertiary Education
- 3) Gregorian Scholar

3 K. Burford, *Monograph of events 1883-1983*, written in November 2000.

4 These were, approximately six yearly gatherings of Josephites to discuss their life and ministries. Provincial Chapters had delegates from each particular province and the Congregational Chapters had sisters from across the Congregation.

5 S. McFarland Taylor, *Green Sisters: A Spiritual Ecology* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 18

4) NSW becomes a Legal Entity

5) Beatification of Mary MacKillop

As part of this three-sections structure I began with a poem taken from Noel Meehan's *Book of Stories*⁶. These poems were gestated in the Vatican II period and, to me, seem to capture the agony and ecstasy of what Vatican II initiated. One of Noel's poems powerfully captures these sentiments so I used it in the Prologue to Section Two.

A Birth-Breaking Day

Morning was gently breaking its day-colour I stood high.
Waking land below sounding day-life.
Night clouds above changing in light.
I was warmed by the beauty of day-birth.
A simple everyday happening, and yet,
it was as though I had never been there before.

I felt so good.
I could smell the newness,
Hear the promise,
Face the risk.
Stand strong in the salvation of the coming sun.

I became aware of myself.
I looked at my hands and touched the meaning of my own creation.
There were time-lines on my face, and many years of memories to remember.
Why so long before I found myself a breathing piece of the beauty of being?
Yes, healing and changing I need.
That hope is promised, but, before the need and hope there was and is the created gift of person within the frame I am.

I met myself that morning.
It was birth-breaking for me and the newly given day I honoured.

What I found pleasing after the launch of this book were the effusive comments from so many sisters by phone, in person and by email. As anyone who lives in an institutional setting knows, one does not usually get compliments in such an atmosphere. However, this work was THEIR STORY, the personal story of the NSW Josephites and that made all the difference to their reception of the work.

6 Noel was a Redemptorist in NZ at the time.

Understanding notion of Provinces

In addressing the evolution of the NSW Provinces, it has to be noted that in its short life NSW went from one province to two to three to four and then back to One Province. In the beginning there was only one Province in NSW but as the number of sisters/ministries/convents grew eventually NSW Provinces included Sydney, Armidale/Lismore, Wollongong, Canberra-Goulburn, Wilcannia-Forbes.

The bishops Quinn in Brisbane and Bathurst were ‘thorns in Mary MacKillop’s side’ with the result that Josephites left both Brisbane and Bathurst dioceses after commencing teaching there. However, Bishop Torreggiani wanted sisters for his diocese, Armidale, so some of the sisters from Brisbane could be moved to Armidale. Hence Armidale was one of the first NSW Provinces outside Sydney.

Main cause of discord in Sydney

Probably the most painful experience for the sisters in NSW was the existence of two levels of authority - CLT and PLT ⁷. Mary Reardon captured this well in:

Thinking about your focus on the effect of the Sydney Provinces made me reflect yet again on the ambiguities and impact, personal and collective, of a situation which was unique to NSW, namely the very real influence of the physical location of and the constant exercise of authority by the Generale, [Superior General] in Sydney. This was quantitatively and qualitatively different in NSW from what it was in other provinces.⁸

What was obvious when looking at the deliberations of the Provincial and Congregational Chapters (1969-2007) was the evidence that the Provincials of NSW had very little real power because they could be/often were overridden by the Superior General. They never gave a report to Chapter till late in the 1970s. Sisters had arrived in NSW in 1880; Mary Mackillop arrived in Sydney in 1883 after she was expelled from South Australia by the bishop. The Superior General gave the NSW report to Congregational chapters when Provincial throughout the Congregation gave reports of their own province. The Superior General made the community changes for the NSW Provinces. The Provincial went through the charade of sending to North Sydney the list of sisters to be changed from one convent to another

⁷ Congregational Leadership Team and Provincial Leadership Team.

⁸ M. Reardon, from SA Province lived in NSW for many years. She gave permission to use her name. Most other sisters did not want their name recorded so I used a different font for their words.

for her particular Province. These moves were made at the end of each year. One Provincial said to me, 'I never recognized the list when it was returned to me from North Sydney!' Other Provinces owned their own houses but NSW never did, until about 2007. That is, when NSW became a Legal Entity.

North and South Sydney

As Sydney grew it was divided into North and South Sydney separated by the Hume Highway. So sisters in Bankstown, Southern Province, were in a different province from the sisters in Lidcombe, Northern Province, a distance of about ten minutes by car. Even between the different Sydney Provinces different rules applied to the sisters' living, mainly, according to one sister, depending on the style of leadership of the Provincial.

In the North you could wear sandals in the chapel, wear skirts and blouses, go to the movies. Really important aspects of religious living you would agree! In the South none of these were possible/permitted. Two blood sisters lived in different Sydney provinces and their family said 'they could have belonged to different religious congregations'. In some Provinces a sister could do renewal courses but in another this was not supported. With secondary schools the allocation of staff was fraught because it was thought that city schools were given priority over country schools. If a sister (me and other sisters) was not appointed to Milperra, a quintessentially Josephite school, we thought we were second class citizens.

To outsiders, all the above issues could be insignificant aspects of religious living and not worthy of comment but to those who lived through these deprivations they were serious. With hindsight they are now sources of humour because we survived them! I have to admit that I have lived in all four Provinces at one time or another but never felt I did not belong to the whole.

Multicultural composition of Sydney Province

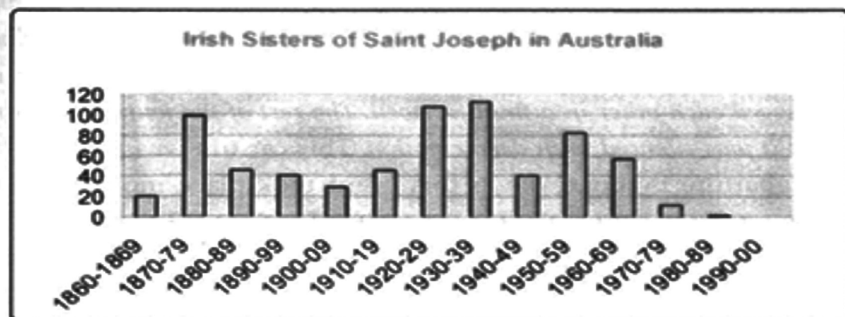
As we all know, even though we may not admit it, there could be a streak of xenophobia (fear of the foreigner/the 'other') in all of us. Megalogenis' comments on Australia's xenophobia is worth reflecting on.

Our history teaches us that sectarianism is the strand of xenophobia that is the hardest to overcome. The Irish Catholics were at the wog whipping post for half a century... The Greeks and Italians had about 30 years on the outer... The Asian waves were integrated faster still... The Lebanese have become the surrogate for Australians' fear of Islam... It is politics that will be most influential in shaping how quickly this wave of xenophobia passes.⁹

9 G. Megalogenis, 'The Danger in Division'. *The Weekend Australian*, August 5-6, 2006, p.20.

When praying the Office each day we read the names of Josephites who died on that particular day. The number of other nationalities is very interesting, surprisingly many Germans. However, the largest of these ‘others’ in the early days of Josephite history were the Irish.

I must confess I did not understand the Irish culture until I wrote a book called, *Heroines in a Harsh Landscape*¹⁰ on the stories of eighteen



Irish sisters. Brief excerpts of these stories are in Chapter 3, Section One. These stories, together with research for my Doctorate,¹¹ taught me so much about cultural differences and the pain of migration. Hence the reason why I included snippets of the Irish and our Asian sisters’ stories in this chapter in the hope that a similar understanding of migration and displacement would result for more sisters in NSW. Understanding culture is a great way to respect and reverence of difference in others.

One Province day (1984 after NSW became one), four sisters from different cultural groups spoke to us about their cultures. The statement that hit me like a bomb was the sister who said, ‘I longed for an olive’. It was such a simple statement but I began to understand the depths of cultural deprivation. The Asian sisters who wrote their stories for this book spoke with humour about what happened when they took their turn to cook for communities ... we always put less garlic and spice in it!

10 C. Thom, ed, *Heroines in a Harsh Landscape: Stories of Eighteen Irish Girls who became Sisters of St Joseph in NSW* (Sydney: Sisters of St Joseph, 2010).

11 C. Thom, *Early Irish Monasticism: An Understanding of its Cultural Roots* (London: T & T Clark an imprint of Continuum, 2006).

Arrival of Vietnamese Sisters in Sydney



Many will remember this event during the Vietnamese war when 45 Vietnamese sisters arrived at Richmond Airbase. Years later a number of these sisters left their Mary Queen congregation and asked for admittance into our congregation, in NSW.

Many will remember this event during the Vietnamese war when 45 Vietnamese sisters arrived at Richmond Airbase.¹² Years later a number of these sisters left their Mary Queen congregation and asked for admittance into our congregation, in NSW.

One can imagine how cultural misunderstanding arose when years before the 1970s Chinese, Singaporean, Malay women entered our congregation. Later Cambodian, Vietnamese sisters started coming to us in the post Vietnamese War years.

The Provincial was very conscious of the potential for misunderstanding in our multicultural NSW Province. She let the sisters know that anyone who

¹² Fr Tony King sm (died in June, 2023) had been negotiating with Mother Denis Earl for the Vietnamese sisters to be housed at Josephite Novitiate in Baulkham Hills. Photo of sisters arriving, 24 April, 1975, at Richmond airbase met by Fr Tony King.

wanted to get some understanding of different cultures could accompany the Vietnamese/Cambodian sisters on their home visits. I think about 15 sisters took up the challenge. My nagging question remains unanswered: why only 15 responded out of a few hundred NSW Josephites? Hence the second most important chapter in this work was on multiculturalism

St Margaret's Hospital

This third chapter in Section One brings together the story of a wonderful woman who was with Mary MacKillop in Adelaide in the early days. Originally this Irish sister Mary Jane O'Brien, wanted to begin a contemplative Congregation. She left the Josephite congregations and when she arrived in NSW the Archbishop denied her request. She was eventually joined in Sydney by a few other sisters who were asked to leave the Congregation by Mary because they were causing trouble. Conflict arose between Julian Woods and Mary MacKillop with differences regarding these women whom he thought were mystics. It was Mary Jane O'Brien, later called Gertrude Abbot who founded a place for women (often prostitutes or homeless women) to have their babies and be cared for. Nursing and midwifery and its allied services were not in other Provinces, with the exception of Victoria that had foundling homes. A contemplative group of women religious was eventually founded by Julian Woods and they were located in Brisbane; our Congregation now has responsibility for the few sisters that remain.

Section Three and the five minor differences between the Provinces of the Congregation, speak for themselves.

Authority and Obedience discussed at Chapters

It might be important to remind the reader of a statement from Mother Adrian Ryan prior to 1969 *Special General Chapter of Affairs* because the language used had never been heard before in relation to religious life of Josephites and indicated a potential for the Rhizome to emerge. She assured us:

There was no need for panic, that the congregation [was] alive and healthy, keenly aware of its vital function in the life of the Church...that deliberations were to be conducted from a position of strength...to secure the present and future members of the congregation a life that is **spiritually rich, psychologically and humanly rewarding.**

One issue that some might see as most significant to religious life was authority which is tied to the vow of obedience. Religious professed before Vatican II had not been encouraged to see government as their responsibility unless they were in a position of authority. This was about to change. 'Each chapter should express the fact that all members have a share in the welfare

of the whole community and a responsibility for it.’¹³

Some questions asked of delegates at the Chapter indicated that they were willing to tackle the hard questions relating to obedience and authority, such as:

- * Do these [words in the constitutions] reveal a NEED FOR CHANGE in the concept of religious obedience...for those in authority and those not?
- * Could it be said that there is a CRISIS OF AUTHORITY in the congregation? [Upper case in the document].

Related questions challenged the delegates:

How did we understand independence and self-determination?

How could one integrate the above with commitment to religious obedience?

In what does freedom consist for the religious vowed to obedience?

These could be earth-shattering questions for some religious and more particularly for those in authority. However, they did provoke very intense discussion at community level, all in the light of the resurrected concepts of Dialogue, Epikeia and Subsidiarity. Fortunately Josephites had the help of Fr Walter Black msc and others who led us through the thickets of these complex aspects of religious life. One insightful and honest comment was, ‘the failure of some as superiors lay not only in the spiritual area but in areas related to interpersonal relationships.’ Another challenging comment, ‘Courses in public relations, interpersonal skills and adult education were seen to be potentially more useful than Superiors’ retreats.’ In the light of these discussions Mother Adrian’s comment about chapters being ‘psychologically and humanly rewarding’ would come to pass.

The Sisters Speak about division/tensions

I remember one NSW Province day (it was just the Northern Province) had booked St Joseph’s College Hunters Hill for Province Day. All the sisters arrived for the day. I went for a walk and saw the sisters just across the road and I was not part of that group of Josephites. I was so upset; I was hurt; I didn’t belong. I never felt I belonged to the [Armidale-Lismore] Province, here we were in Hunters Hill right in the middle of Sydney and we didn’t belong.¹⁴

The only thought I remember thinking was how ridiculous it was to have all those sisters at Hunters Hill named as belonging to the Armidale-Lismore Province. I thought it was cracked. I remember feeling bad about it-that it was manipulative or something tricky.

When I asked to go to Queensland by plane (my first trip) as my brother

13 Special General Chapter, 1969, forty-fourth session, p. 49.

14 Many sisters made contributions on condition their names were not used, so a different font will be used.

wanted to pay for me to experience plane travel, I was told that 'they' like us to go the cheapest way. So, no I didn't walk, I went by bus. However other sisters in other Provinces were allowed to travel by plane.

As I recall the period I believe there were some areas of tension but my perception was that the major challenges arose within communities rather than between Provinces. These tensions were located around...times of prayer and silence, community review, new understandings of the nature and exercise of authority and, regretfully, far less significant matters, such as position of hemlines, the showing of hair, the decisions of individual choice e.g. colour of one's hosiery. These latter had a very divisive effect within some communities.

'A cultural crisis' [was how one sister characterized the difference with the Northern Province and Provincial]. She continues...sadly the [Superior] General still played along with the erroneous belief that she was alone responsible for the administration of Sydney...I do not remember if that attitude of reporting dire deeds (wearing sandals in the chapel) to the Mother General (who sadly took up the cause) was rife in the Southern Province, but that it existed in the Northern Province I am absolutely sure. It made life for the Provincial almost unendurable.

Sisters attending the Sacraments of Family Members

According to Canon Law religious were allowed to attend the wedding/ Ordinations/other sacraments of relatives but they were not permitted to attend the celebrations after the event.¹⁵ A sister was going to a country convent to attend the Ordination of her brother but she was not permitted to attend the meal after the Mass. However, the sisters in the convent could attend both events. One of the sisters in the community confessed:

Recognising this as a scandalous situation, I took it on myself to phone Mother Denis (SG) and acquainted her of the situation. She gave permission for the sister of the newly ordained priest to also attend the lunch and indicated she would follow up with the Provincial.

Another simple statement about the pain of these days of reflections on Vatican II.

I remember well the day in Canberra when Ralph Huse sj¹⁶ asked us to name the sins of the Order. I nearly fainted with joy!...Could we invite him Back?

15 Dr Connolly, resident canon lawyer at Josephite Chapters. Provincial Chapter Motion 23, *Community Life and Poverty* section, p.39.

16 Ralph was one of the many 'experts' who worked with Josephites in preparation for the major Provincial and Congregational chapter that addressed the changes suggested by Vatican II

Habit discussion at Provincial and Congregational Chapters

During both the Provincial and Congregational Chapters the issue of the habit was much discussed. As I have said earlier this is not intrinsic to religious living but at a number of levels it is important: firstly because we are women and clothes matter; secondly for eons religious dress had been an outward sign of commitment. Fr Julian Woods was keen that Josephites 'not have a habit that would frighten the children'. Even some Bishops of Rome had on occasion mentioned the importance of religious clothes helping to maintain a healthy lifestyle. As early as 1943 Pius XII urged women religious to... update their religious dress. In 1951 at a general congress in Rome he urged those present to adopt a simpler and more practical mode of dress. Apostolic Delegate, Romolo Carboni, challenged religious regarding adaptation of lives and apostolates.¹⁷

The voting numbers at the Provincial chapter of 1968 to the decision:

That we accept the principle of evolving change in the matter of the habit are informative: forty-three for, fifteen against and seven abstentions. A Josephite reminded the author of the time a sister publicly challenged Elizabeth Murphy (SG) *'Mother Elizabeth what do you think of a Sister of St Joseph wearing black pants to a St Patrick's Day celebration?'* Elizabeth's reply was characteristically shrewd: *'I don't think the colour matters'*. Fr Ralph Huse sj reflected, 'I remember one community laughing about the standard of the *Ajax tin* to determine the height of their skirts and their admiration of one notorious sister who flouted it.'¹⁸ In communities some sisters had two habits: one the 'Ajax tin' for visits to North Sydney and another mid-calf habit for all other occasions.

The Provincial and Congregational Chapters (Section Two) have much discussion on habits as well as other important topics. It is from these discussions one can see the gradual movement (From Taproot to Rhizome) towards a new understanding of this not-insignificant aspect of religious living. When we speak of habits included are, veils, rosary beads, belts, emblems, crucifix, ring as well as fabrics, colours and manner of manufacture! In the early days the main habit was 6 yards of army serge with the same fabric for a substantial veil. The habit was held in place with a thick leather belt 1 and a half inches wide to hold a substantial crucifix. On the belt also swung two strings of beads, one the Rosary and the other the Dolours. Little by little slight changes were made to this habit. The fabric was altered from army serge to 'Mother's Choice' a shiny, probably synthetic product.

¹⁷ Comment made at Brisbane Josephite Conference, 24-5 June 2008.

¹⁸ Personal email 12 March, 2007.

In 1977 at the Special General Chapter a sweeping statement was made that indicated that some of the anguish regarding the habit might be over! It stated:

‘That appropriate dress consistent with consecrated witness and of poverty may be worn on occasions such as private leisure, sport and special needs of the apostolate; [also permitted] a modification of the normal habit within the convent.’¹⁹

Later the statement read:

‘The statement of norms with regard to dress will read: the dress of a Sister of St Joseph will be always simple and appropriate to the occasion. For ministry and official functions the colours will range from brown to white.

The distinguishing symbol will be the emblem or crucifix and ring.’²⁰

This was the first time, since the foundation of the congregation that the ring was mentioned in chapters.

Later at the chapters of the 1980s and 90s further freeing statements were made; even novices were consulted about the range of colours available. At this time novices were attending *Kairos*, a part of the *Xavier Institute* programme. They said that having a restricted range of colours made them feel *drab and institutional* in the presence of other religious; one might say the presence of male religious, attending the course, could have been the more important factor!

Different influences on Habit discussion

A historical emphasis also hinted at other influences on religious dress. One sister :

In the history of women in the Church, because women were seen in the past as sex objects the patriarchal church considered it necessary that they be clothed in such a way that they would not provide a source of temptation.

Another intervention of this same delegate emphasized in the light of the emerging role of women in the church today, the freedom for women to determine their own form of dress is a significant symbol for me. It is tied to the fundamental relation between men and women in the church and in society generally which, in turn, is intrinsically tied to the respective freedoms of men and women.

How we dress affects all women in our society; it can be added that the power of the media and advertising does not contribute to a healthy self image.

I am more conscious of the struggle to come to terms with our own sexuality

19 Special General Chapter, 1977, *Community in Christ commission*.

20 Special General Chapter, 1977, *Community in Christ commission*.

and to relate to our bodies, not as sex-objects, not as things for men. Being affected all the time by how men see us...

Other significant indicators of change were stated; one being that *the matter of dress should be decided by the inner authority of the individual and not be part of group decision making.*

Another statement

We are called to develop as free, independent beings who chose to witness to the Gospel with others. What we wear is an outward sign of how we see ourselves²¹.

By the 1990s insights were emerging in chapter documents and decisions that encompass psychology, sexual attraction, theology, philosophy and the 'Colour Me Beautiful' books. While not so important these books did help some people wear colours more appropriate to their age. The statement of the 22 General Chapter, ²² is succinct:

In keeping with the Gospel way of life, our dress as Sisters of St Joseph is simple in style. Our distinguishing symbols are the plain silver ring, the emblem and/or the approved crucifix. The wearing of the veil and rosary beads is optional.

Sisters walking another path.

This aspect of religious life, not necessarily only as a result of Vatican II changes, was experienced as painful by many sisters. In the Year of Reconciliation 2000 the Provincial Team suggested there be a dinner to invite all former Josephite in NSW. Again in 2005 for the 10 Anniversary of Beatification of Mary MacKillop former Josephites were again invited to a meal. At this event the Provincial, Sr Judy Sipple, addressed the gathered women as **Sisters All**. The response to this inclusive mode of address was very moving. Examples of what some former Josephites said included:

For me being addressed as 'Sisters All' was the highlight of the evening. I know how, I'm not an ex-Josephite. I'm part of an extended sisterhood.

Thank you for your vision in making this possible. These gestures build so much good will and understanding and do much to heal and bring hope to those who still feel a measure of pain.

More was achieved than just a meal together. It was the renewing of long dearly held friendships. The chance to catch up with so many, be it ever so short was incredible. The many '...remember when...' were mind boggling.

21 General Chapter, 1989, 'Rationale on Dress' statement, p. 22.

22 Special General Chapter, Jan 1990, p. 27.

I have many things to be grateful for... teacher training without which I would not have been able to earn a living. Self discipline...yep! Owe that to the Congregation! And boy, oh boy, did we learn how to house keep!

Some humorous aspects of Women's Religious lives

In keeping with some misguided understanding of the theology of Religious Life, watches with black leather bands, fountain pens and boots could be used provided they did not cost the Congregation any money (Directory).

At the Mother House there was a 'Grace procession' during which sisters left the refectory after the evening meal and processed to the Chapel, praying. In the 1960s a young sister asked the purpose of this practice. She was told it was 'to keep the Japanese out of the Harbour'. Any historian would ask a subsequent question, Why still keep doing this? Another alternative reason was given by a sister from the W.A Province. She said 'It was an old monastic practice to enable the lay sisters (Josephites never had lay sisters) to clear the dining room and make it ready for the next meal in the morning'.

Some superiors insisted that the community (one other sister in many rural convents) rise at 5.30 am even when Sunday Mass was not celebrated till later in the morning. When a young sister asked the superior why they could not sleep in, she was told, 'we have to keep the rule'. Mary MacKillop had said, very early in the life of the Congregation, that sisters might rise later so that they would not have to fast so long before communion; remember that Catholics had to fast from midnight in the pre Vatican II days. When a Provincial was visiting the convents in Wilcannia-Forbes Diocese she said that the communities should go for a walk together each day, within sight of the convent, for the good of their health. This was an important decision at one of the earlier chapters; in the post Vatican II days it was stated:

- *That sisters had an obligation to take sufficient recreation*
- *That each person recreates differently*
- *That younger sisters might need to recreate in the daytime when outdoor activities were more appropriate*
- *That the ministry of each sister would dictate the time she could give to recreation.*

Another odd practice was the pattern of sisters writing a list of clothes they needed at the end of the year and putting this list in the Superior's office. This list included sister's name, garment name and size only. In city convents these were procured by the superior from Mark Foys. In country districts the superior would buy the needed garments from the local shops. The writer was reminded by another sister that the superior of a large convent in a rural

area went to the local shops armed with the community lists and lost them all (2011). Imagine the fun locals had when they read the name of the sisters in the community, their sizes and the items they required!

Rhizome emerges (As described by sisters)

- *I am grateful that subsequent Province and Congregational Chapters have continued to bring more personal involvement in Community, Province, and even Congregational levels...*
 - *We now have greater opportunity for education re Vat II documents, theology lecturers, guest speakers, open dialogue. I experienced a sense that we were moving forward, More freedom and responsibility. Opportunity to chose our retreat each year, availability of spiritual direction.*
 - *Looking back, the changes were gradual and took time to filter through to some communities, while others were more dynamic.*
 - *Recent chapters seemed to fulfil the expectations of the sisters and lead to a greater sense of change.*
 - *Gradually one came to be one's own person, **again**.*

I will conclude with another sister's longer comment:

For me the main conversation point for our Congregation was under the leadership of Elizabeth Murphy (1977-89) and her team. It seemed as though the windows were open and the cobwebs blown away. I felt a new spirit was emerging and we began a movement away from the non-essentials. I felt so blessed that I have lived in the tense times and been given the gift to live through them. I am now enjoying the freedom that has been given as we are treated as normal human women ... we never got it right, but for me it has been an amazing transformative lived experience.

GEORGE CARDINAL PELL'S CONTRIBUTION TO TERTIARY CHAPLAINCY REFORM : A PERSONAL RECOLLECTION

Robert M. Haddad*

Abstract

With the recent passing of George Cardinal Pell in January 2023, many commentators, both religious and secular, spoke publicly concerning his life and achievements, some positively and others negatively. In this paper, Robert Haddad recalls one of Cardinal Pell's most audacious and successful achievements – his reform of the Catholic chaplaincies in the Archdiocese of Sydney, especially at the University of Sydney. The focus is primarily on the seminal years of 2001 and 2002, which saw the creation of the new University of Sydney Catholic Chaplaincy team, the establishment of the John Paul II Student Resource Centre, the construction of the regular roster of activities on campus, and the new chaplaincy's immediate impact on the lives of Catholic students on campus. There is also a focus on how Cardinal Pell was personally instrumental in overcoming all the difficulties and obstacles to the success of this initiative, ensuring its survival and long-term success. The benefits of Cardinal Pell's initiative remain and will continue for decades to come.

"If through this work we change only one life, it will all be worth it."

It was near the end of lunchtime during an ordinary working day in August 2001 in St Charbel's College, Punchbowl, when suddenly one of the school secretaries, Mary Arraj, poked her head out of her office window and shouted out to me across the playground, "Robert, there was a phone call for you. We were looking for you but couldn't find you." I replied, "I have been outside doing playground duty." Then I asked, "Who called?" Mary replied, "Archbishop Pell." In astonishment I responded, "Archbishop Pell, what is he ringing me for?" Mary continued, "He left his number and asked if you could call him at 5.00pm."

For the next four hours I was ruminating without respite as to why Archbishop Pell wanted to speak to me. I did not know him personally and had only a couple of brief encounters with him in the past, once in Melbourne in 1993 and again in Sydney in 1999, well before anyone imagined

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he would be appointed as Archbishop of Sydney. I did not even attend his installation as Archbishop of Sydney in May 2001, though I did attend a welcome arranged for him at the University of Sydney a month earlier by student members of the Catholic Society of St Peter. My genuine fear was that someone had spoken to him and put forward my name as a possible candidate for a job in the Archdiocese, perhaps as a lecturer in the seminary or Catholic Institute of Sydney, etc. However, I had not at that time acquired the necessary qualifications for any such position and I had no desire to leave St Charbel's College, being now in my twelfth year there and hoping to stay for many years more.

When it was finally 5.00pm I rang the number given to me by Mary. I was quite nervous, to say the least. Here I was ringing an Archbishop who I did not know, someone who was a powerful and controversial figure in the Catholic Church and in Australia. Once we got through the introductions Pell said, "I would like you to come in for a meeting." I said, "Sure, do you mind if I ask what this is all about?" Pell said, "I want to offer you a job." My worst fears were now realised. "What type of job?", I thought.

A few days later I met Pell in his private residence of Cathedral House, next door to St Mary's Cathedral itself. After some small talk about the exorbitant cost of building Cathedral House during the late 80s and early 90s, Pell began to outline the job he wanted to offer me. It related to the University of Sydney and its Catholic Chaplaincy. Pell conveyed his recent discussions with Mr Anthony McCarthy, the then President of the Catholic Society of St Peter, and how McCarthy impressed upon him the need to reform chaplaincy services on campus to better serve faithful Catholic students, who McCarthy believed were marginalised and inadequately served. Pell was willing to act on McCarthy's suggestions but he believed that McCarthy himself, being then only in his early twenties at the time, was too young himself to lead the renewal project.

Hence why Pell had called me in. He had heard (probably from McCarthy himself) that I was a Catholic teacher in my late thirties who enjoyed sport (I was then a rabid Cricket and Rugby League fan who coached the Junior Opens Rugby League team for St Charbel's College). Being a lover of sport himself (especially AFL and Cricket) Pell wanted someone who could connect with the university students in multiple ways, not just through theology and philosophy. I seemed to fit the mould of leader Pell was looking for.

While Pell was outlining the nature of the proposed new job, I began to think that it was a rather vague and unstructured job compared to my then occupation as a teacher. "Is this a real job?", I thought. Then to my surprise

Pell said, "And I want apologetics to be part of it." He must have also known that I had a keen interest in this field of theology and threw in this comment as an incentive for me to say yes to his offer. It worked. I immediately thought, "Well now this is a real job." However, his next comment, "But I want you to get on well with the Anglicans" tended to deflate me, though I tried not to show any disappointment.

After Pell completed his hard-sell I immediately accepted the job offer, excited and honoured to help establish this new project. Pell asked me to take on the role for two years but I was reluctant to be away from St Charbel's College for that length of time. We eventually agreed on one year, with me returning to St Charbel's College thereafter. I was for the next twelve months to be the 'Convenor of the University of Sydney Catholic Chaplaincy'. The term 'Convenor' rather than chaplain was specifically chosen as I was a layman and not a cleric.

The next five months was a period of transition to the new role. I linked up with Anthony McCarthy and our initial discussions related to the structure of our team. I would be Convenor and Anthony Deputy Convenor. There would also be two other part time assistants, Louise Altham and Lucy O'Connell. We would have an office in the 'chaplaincy hut', a small building on campus near the main sporting ovals and also a room in St Michael's College on the other side of campus, next to the Chapel of the Resurrection. I also met with the outgoing chaplain, who had agreed to a transfer to the nearby Sydney College of Technical and Further Education. It was a polite meeting without any acrimony or controversy. There would be no such pleasantries, however, when I would later meet with the Executive of the Catholic Society (Cathsoc).

I felt very glad to work with someone like Anthony McCarthy. The prospect of establishing a new chaplaincy seemed very daunting to me and I was keenly aware of my own lack of campus knowledge and the nature of the student clientele I would be serving. As a student on campus for the previous four years and recent President of the Catholic Society of St Peter, Anthony could more than adequately make up for what I lacked. While I could lead presentations on Scripture, theology, apologetics, Church history and philosophy, Anthony knew how university student societies worked and was a bridgehead to those Catholic students already active on campus. He also brought immense talent in event organisation and knowledge of Catholic artistic culture.

Anthony McCarthy and myself formally began work on Monday 21 January 2002. We met at 9.00am on City Road in front of the old St Michael's Chapel of the Resurrection. Louise Altham and Lucy O'Connell would

arrive soon afterwards. With some trepidation about the year ahead I said to Anthony, "If through this work we change only one life, it will all be worth it." We were determined to be revolutionaries, Catholic revolutionaries, bringing authentic Catholicism onto campus – Catholic teaching, Catholic theology, Catholic philosophy, Catholic activity, evangelisation and apologetics – and we were determined to sweep away what had been before, which to me was an anaemic, faithless and fruitless pseudo-Catholicism more interested in allying with and advancing the sexual revolution than Catholic teaching. No longer would authentic Catholics be marginalised or excluded. We were ready to begin.

One of my first actions was to clean out our room in the Chaplaincy hut. By the end of day one, I had deposited twelve large garbage bags of books and other materials into the nearby compactor. Most of the books were authored by notorious dissenters and non-Catholics. We would build a new library, stocked with books faithful to official Magisterial teaching.

Soon after, it came to my attention that we would be sharing our room in the Chaplaincy hut with the Pentecostal Chaplain. She was a pleasant enough person but such an arrangement was unsustainable. This chaplain was a member of Hillsong, a virulently anti-Catholic organisation. Her occupation of half the room also made it impossible for both Anthony McCarthy and myself to base ourselves in the same room. We had to find alternative premises.

What we really needed were premises that would be a working base for all the staff as well as a centre that could receive students in large numbers – a refuge on or near campus where students could socialise, study, access technology, gather for Bible studies, eat, play pool, etc. Our efforts seemed forlorn until Anthony McCarthy discovered a large empty floor above the Legion of Mary offices in nearby Broadway, just across the road from the northern end of campus. It was the perfect size, newly painted and carpeted, but completely empty. To suitably transform it for our purposes would require money – a lot of money. Chancery would not be so forthcoming.

My next meeting with Pell focused on our intentions to secure and transform these newly discovered premises. Pell was impressed with our vision and showed a willingness to intervene. To my surprise, a few days later Pell came with his Financial Controller to directly negotiate a lease agreement with the Legion of Mary. The premises were secured for a rental of \$200.00 per week. Pell then showed his readiness to financially support the refurbishment of the premises with office furniture, photocopier, lounges, computers, shelving, books and the compulsory pool table. Once

established, the premises would be officially named and blessed as the “John Paul II Student Resource Centre.”

With the guaranteed support of Pell to fit out our new premises we were now in a position to roll out our regular program for students. The following would be the weekly offering:

Daily Mass, twice a day at 12.10pm and 1.10pm

Free BBQ on campus every Monday

Weekly promo stalls every Tuesday and Wednesday

Weekly public forum on Wednesdays

Small Bible study groups across the week

There would also be a collection of major events sprinkled across the annual calendar, including:

Life Week (May)

Australian Catholic Student Association Conference (July)

Mission Week (October)

Mid and end year retreats

The ‘Archbishop’s Cup Soccer tournament

Annual ‘Society Ball’

In addition to all the above, Anthony McCarthy augmented the program with a series of Catholic cultural and musical events under the banner of ‘Carnivale Christi.’ These were held during April of 2002 at the nearby Seymour Centre and involved dozens of students who enjoyed being actively part of the performances. Pell happily attended a number of these events.

The weekly events would prove to be very appealing to students. Between the two Masses, around 30-40 students would attend each day. The free BBQ on Mondays would always be popular for both Catholic and non-Catholic students. The weekly promo stalls would be courageous and genuine acts of evangelisation through which we promoted our weekly public forum and mission weeks to 4000-5000 students passing by every hour. The weekly forums themselves would always touch on controversial topics, in the hope of fortifying the faith of Catholics and attracting non-Catholics to hear the ‘Catholic case.’ The small Bible study groups (on the Gospel of John) would be intimate events that provided students with an in-depth understanding of Scripture from a Catholic perspective, influenced by the writings of recent famous converts such as Dr Scott Hahn. I clearly remember how Pell when coming to say Mass for us would count the number of students in attendance and comment happily afterwards how many “new faces” he saw. He would

also have an interest in how many were attending the small Bible study groups as well.

The 'major events' would be ground-breaking experiences for the new Catholic Chaplaincy. Immediately after the completion of 'Carnivale Christi' in April, the chaplaincy team began planning the first 'Life Week' campaign on campus. This was truly going 'into the deep' as we were prepared to host events that related to highly controversial issues, including abortion, contraception, euthanasia, embryonic stem cell research and the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. Life Week in 2002 and in the years that followed would occasionally expose ourselves to verbal and physical attacks from radical Left elements on campus. We were willing to embrace this, knowing we had the moral support from Pell. In subsequent years, Pell himself would appear on campus to address certain controversial topics and this would see protests being staged in opposition, necessitating the organising of campus security to protect him. These protests, however, never fazed Pell and he always remained willing to come on campus to speak.

The first 'Mission Week' in October 2002 would be a larger scale than Life Week but less controversial. It was a determined effort to promote Catholicism and to win converts. In my initial interview with Pell in August 2001, he also mentioned that I should be "open to accepting converts." I was very happy to do this. Mission Week proved to be both busy and exciting, as well as fruitful. It was the first time I could engage in apologetics with the aim of winning souls rather than arguments, heeding Pell's original advice to "get on well with the Anglicans." Two conversions would eventually arise from this first Mission Week – Kiran and Glen – the first a High Anglican and the second the son of a Baptist minister and executive member of the Evangelical Union on campus. There would be a steady stream of converts in the years to follow flowing from future missions, re-named "Christweek."

Other significant events run by the new chaplaincy in 2002 were the mid and end of year retreats and the so-called 'Society Ball.' The first of these retreats was held down the New South Wales south coast (near Huskisson) and the second at the old Marist formation house in Toongabbie in western Sydney (now the location of Campion College). The number of participants for both these retreats was very encouraging (between 50-80) and the respective programs were very substantial by way of doctrinal, philosophical and historical formation, not to mention also the quality of the liturgies. Pell made a presence at the second of these retreats and I clearly remember him sitting at the back listening to my presentation on the Emperor Constantine, sitting with the students in small Scripture discussion groups, and conversing



Archbishop Pell and Robert Haddad (two to the right of Pell in this view) with Sydney University students at end of year retreat, 2002, Sydney University Chaplaincy

with the students about his new role as head of the Vox Clara Commission tasked with producing a new English translation of the Novus Ordo Missal. Pell also never missed attending any of the end of year Annual Balls, which were gala events gathering together hundreds of Catholic students from all the universities across the Archdiocese (and many non-students). Pell was always a favourite among the attendees on these nights and knew how to ‘work the room’, greeting and talking to as many students as possible.

Vital to our success on campus would be the Chaplaincy’s relationship with the pre-existing Catholic student societies. There would be an immediate alliance with the Catholic Society of St Peter due to the orthodox orientation of its membership. A similar convivial relationship would be formed with the Catholic Asian Students Society (CASS) due to the good relationship between its head – Sr Teresa Chiu – and Pell. We would be attending their large gatherings every Friday. The main concerns lay with the one other student society – the Catholic Society (Cathsoc). Its executive showed itself to be overtly hostile from the start, pointedly refusing to cooperate with me and formally removing me from executive membership. I decided to simply ignore them and proceed with our plans with or without their involvement. The last I heard of them in 2002 was an effort to place various articles in the Sydney Morning Herald and *Honi Soit* (the University student paper) denouncing us as ‘Pellites’ promoting a conservative agenda. In the years to follow, CathSoc would eventually dissolve due to declining membership and be replaced by the Catholic Society of St Peter (CSSP) as the main student

society for non-Asian Catholics on campus. In further time, the CSSP would have a name change, itself becoming the new Cathsoc, this time an orthodox Catholic student society which continues to this day.

A more serious issue involved our relationship with the Catholic chaplaincies based in the other universities across the Archdiocese, namely, the University of New South Wales (UNSW), Macquarie University (UMaq), the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) and Sydney TAFE. Unbeknown to me, the heads of these various chaplaincies met monthly, and these meetings continued as usual into 2002. The first I heard of these meetings was when the priest chaplain of UNSW emailed me to inform me that these meetings were occurring without any representative from USyd and that Anthony McCarthy and myself were being deliberately kept in the dark. I was thankful for the 'tip off' and in my next regular meeting with Pell I showed him this email. His response was instant and dramatic. He immediately arose out of his chair and called to his private secretary to convene a meeting of all the university chaplains. Pell himself would chair this meeting wherein he made it clear that the new chaplains of the University of Sydney were now a permanent feature of the landscape. Everyone got the message loud and clear.

Another front in the struggle for authentic Catholic chaplaincy in 2002 related to the 'takeover' of the International Movement of Catholic Students' Australia (IMCSA) by orthodox Catholics. This was a surprisingly successful 'coup d'état' that delivered a national structure that could be utilised to connect and galvanise young faithful Catholics across Australia. Soon after the takeover, the name of this body was changed to the Australian Catholic Students' Association (ACSA) and a five-day national Conference was staged in western Sydney six months later featuring orthodox Catholic intellectual speakers, with the full support of Pell. ACSA continues to this day to host a national conference in a different Australian capital city each year.

2002 was also significant for being a 'World Youth Day' year, this time in Toronto, Canada. Pell was the first senior prelate in Australia to lead large delegations of young adults to international World Youth Days (WYDs). Beforehand, Australians travelling to WYDs did so only in private groups or as individuals. This changed in the year 2000, when Pell led a group of Victorian young Catholics to WYD in Rome. Now as Archbishop of Sydney, Pell was intent on leading a group of Sydneysiders to WYD02 in Toronto. The new USyd Catholic Chaplaincy was eager to send students as part of this group. Through the intense efforts of Anthony McCarthy, within a couple

of months a group of 42 students had signed up as part of a USyd student contingent. In mid-July they happily flew out of Sydney under the leadership of Pell. Since 2002, the USyd Chaplaincy has sent large numbers of students to every WYD without exception.

As the new USyd chaplaincy began to settle into a regular routine, discussions began to occur concerning expanding the new model of chaplaincy to the other secular universities in the Archdiocese of Sydney. I was eager for this to happen. However, this was fraught with political danger and caution was necessary, especially if it were to involve the removal of any of the existing chaplains. Pell was particularly cautious and, on the occasion when I strongly urged him to move on replacing the chaplain at UNSW, responded, "You belong to the 'War Party.'" No changes would be made to the other chaplaincies in 2002 but in due course Pell would move to replace the chaplains at UNSW, UTS and UMaq. By 2006, all four of the major chaplaincies in the Archdiocese would be led and staffed by orthodox Catholics and united under a Director of University Chaplaincies based at USyd. =

Though our premises in Broadway above the Legion of Mary offices were adequate for our first year of operations in 2002, we always hoped that we would eventually have a better and more central location on campus itself. There was an opportunity for this in and around St Michael's College and the Chapel of the Resurrection on City Road, both owned by the Archdiocese of Sydney. Built in 1969 as the first purpose-built chapel to celebrate the Novus Ordo Mass in Australia, the Chapel of the Resurrection was now in a dilapidated state. The College itself, which housed many Asian students, was even in a worse condition. Both were served by Fr Kevin Muldoon, an elderly and faithful priest of the Archdiocese. This priest was very supportive of the new chaplaincy's work and direction and he allowed us to use one of the rooms in the College for Bible study groups. He was also supportive of the idea of renovating the site.

I would have regular conversations with Pell regarding redevelopment of the site and he was always supportive. However, it would eventually involve more than a thorough renovation; it would involve a total demolition and reconstruction of the whole site. This would be a massive undertaking and would initially involve the Archdiocese in a property boundary dispute with the University of Sydney that would last many years. The time from initial concept to final opening of the new facility would span thirteen years. Only in 2015 would the new St John Paul II Student Centre be blessed and opened by Pell's successor, Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP. This Centre is part of

a massive student residential block sitting in the heart of the University. The facilities for the students include a magnificent chapel, study areas, meeting rooms, kitchen/dining area and work stations. Being owned by the Archdiocese of Sydney, it ensures a Catholic presence on campus in perpetuity, a great advantage in the age of 'cancel-culture.' Without a doubt it amounts to the best Catholic chaplaincy-student facility anywhere in the world, all thanks to Pell.

Even more important than constructing new premises was Pell's decision in 2004 to install a Dominican presence into the USyd chaplaincy team. This started with Fr Dominic Murphy OP in 2004, who was soon supported by various Dominican novices from year to year. His impact was immediate, with the formation of a Dominican lay chapter and young men showing interest in the Dominican Order. This Dominican presence was further expanded by Pell in 2008 after the Sydney World Youth Day when two Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia ('Nashvilles') were appointed to the USyd chaplaincy staff. To date, ten university students have joined the Dominicans (six Friars and four Sisters) and they still maintain a strong presence at Chaplaincy, leading Scripture and other study groups. In addition, eleven other male students who were active with one of the four renewed Chaplaincies have joined the priesthood (Sydney Archdiocese, Lismore Diocese, Emmanuel Community, Priestly Fraternity of St Peter) and three other women have joined other religious communities (Immaculata Sisters, Fraternas, Opus Dei (Numerary)).



Cardinal Pell and Robert Haddad (back row two to the right of Pell) with Maronite students and staff at Sydney University, 2003, Sydney University Chaplaincy



Cardinal Pell with Sydney University students, circa 2004, Sydney University Chaplaincy

As the end of 2002 approached, my thoughts turned towards returning to St Charbel's College. I knew I could not remain as Convenor of the Chaplaincy beyond January 2003, yet a number of the students were hoping that I would remain. Eventually, the idea was suggested that I somehow remain in a part-time capacity, leading a Bible study group every Wednesday afternoon and presenting forums from time to time. To my pleasure, this was agreed to by both Pell and the Principal of St Charbel's College. I would retain this part-time role until mid-2004, before returning again as fulltime Convenor from 2006-2008.

In the twenty-plus years since the establishment of the new Chaplaincy, there have been multiple Convenors – Stephen Lawrence, Thomas Waugh, Daniel Hill, Tony Mattar and Natalie Ambrose. All these leaders faithfully maintained (and continue to maintain) the original spirit of the 2002 foundation. They have been faithfully supported by numerous other staff members in both USyd and the other three major secular campuses, notably Rita Azzi who has been a student activist and chaplaincy staff member continuously since 1999. The growth of supporting staff at all these campuses

is another example of Pell's extraordinary support for university chaplaincy, especially (as noted above) the appointment of the Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia to USyd in 2008 and a year earlier the Fraternas consecrated women to UNSW in 2007.

In conclusion, the USyd Chaplaincy, CathSoc and the other university chaplaincies continue to go from strength to strength, as evidenced by their published activities and respective websites. I have the honour and privilege of still being part of their work through invitations to present on these campuses from time to time. With the passing of Pell in January 2023, the thoughts of many turned to his legacy, with not a few recounting his numerous outstanding achievements for Christ and his Church. Without a doubt, his reform of university chaplaincy at USyd and beyond ranks as one of his greatest and most fruitful achievements. Knowing now how many young lives have been changed for the better by this great endeavour, I can happily repeat those words I uttered to Anthony McCarthy that first day on 21 January, 2002, *"If through this work we change only one life, it will all be worth it."*

RESOLVING CATHOLICISM'S DICHOTOMIES

Paul Collins*

Committed Christians are inevitably involved in various dichotomies. By “dichotomy” I mean a paradoxical contrast between two apparently irreconcilable realities. Perhaps the most fundamental of these dichotomies is the tension between commitment to the kingdom of God and its values and living in the reality of the world and in a culture whose priorities are sometimes other than, or in conflict with the Christian faith.

Jesus articulates the first side of the dichotomy when he tells Pontius Pilate in John's gospel account of the passion: “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews” (18:35–36). Jesus seems to be saying that Christians are primarily citizens of another realm, but must still live life on earth in a particular culture and deal with the realities of that existence.

But the gospel also makes it clear that Jesus was not someone who rejected the world in “the vale of tears” sense. John's gospel also quotes Jesus saying: “For God so loved the world (κόσμος (*kosmos*) in the Greek text), that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (3:16). Positivity about the created world is also a theme in Paul's theology. He tells the Colossians: “Christ is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him ... and in him all things hold together” (1:15-17).

Paul is saying that Christ is the medium through whom creation occurs and the passage actually sets-up a striking trinity: God – Christ – Creation. It also says that the cosmos is created “for him” and he is the one through whom “all things hold together.” Christianity doesn't deny or despise the world. In fact, it has a very positive view of material reality; for genuine believers “matter really matters.”¹

1 Paul Collins, *God's Earth. Religion as if matter really mattered*, North Blackburn, Vic, Dove, 1995.

* Paul Collins is a former Head of ABC Religious Broadcasts. His latest book is *Recovering the True Church: Challenges for Australian Catholicism beyond the Plenary Coun-*

The dichotomy in history

However, for New Testament Christians the dichotomy between this world and the heavenly realm was less pressing because of their messianic expectation of the proximate second coming of Christ. In the First Letter to the Thessalonians, probably the earliest writing of the New Testament dating from around AD 50, Paul says: "For this we declare to you ... the sound of God's trumpet will descend from heaven ... Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together ... to meet the Lord in the air and so we will be with the Lord forever" (4:13-17). But as time moved on this messianic expectation ebbed away and Christians had to adjust to a Roman world in which their religion was legally proscribed and in which they were intermittently persecuted.

While some, mainly heretical movements in early Christianity like Montanism, embraced an apocalyptic, sectarian vision of faith, the growth of the mainstream church indicates that the large majority of believers lived in the real world and interacted with their neighbours and influenced them. It's estimated that by the year AD 300 there were some six million Christians, mainly in the eastern provinces of the empire, out of an empire-wide population of forty-four million. Church membership ranged from slaves to the highest levels of Roman society, including members of the households of several emperors.²

But Constantine's victory at the Milvian Bridge (October 312) and the Edict of Milan (February 313) granting toleration to the church, radically changed the situation of Christians. Their faith was no longer an illegal religion and while it didn't become the official religion of the late-Roman world until AD 380, it was certainly the most favoured. The challenge that Christians now faced was coming to terms with *Realpolitik* and dealing with the state. In some ways it was easier to be a committed Christian while the faith was a minority, intermittently persecuted religion that demanded serious commitment. Once Christian faith became socially "respectable", the game changed as new converts, many not necessarily motivated by strong faith, joined the church.

One thinker who confronted the dichotomy was Augustine (354–430). Living in the dying days of the Western Roman empire and the sack of Rome by Alaric's Visigoths in AD 410, Augustine was forced to confront the tension between this world and the realm of God. In *The City of God*, he articulates a philosophy of history that envisions human affairs in terms

2 Paul Collins, *Recovering the 'True Church'*, Bayswater, Vic., Coventry Press, 2022, 79–82.

of two cities, that of God and that of humankind. The two are intimately intertwined and conflict between them is inevitable until the second coming of Christ. Despite an element of theological predestination, the book has been enormously influential.

While what today we call “Christendom” (the medievals called it *Christianitas*) began with Charlemagne (768-814), the whole period since Constantine has seen a struggle between church and state for power in a nominally Christian society in which the basic teachings of the gospel were often distorted, even lost. Certainly, throughout the medieval period there were many, like Hildegard of Bingen and Francis of Assisi, who challenged the status quo by re-asserting basic gospel principles and highlighting the centrality of Christ, they were the minority. That’s not to say that those whose vocation it was to negotiate with the temporal world of politics were wrong; it’s just that the two approaches – the radical gospel commitment to the Kingdom of God and the *Realpolitik* of the church in the world had to be kept in a tension in which the balance was often lost.

If the medievals dealt with the dichotomy by a semi-continuous struggle over who was supreme in Christendom, the church of the 19th and 20th centuries until Vatican II retired into a self-sufficient, all-embracing, immutable “perfect society” resolving the dichotomy by simply rejecting modern culture. This is not to claim that modernity was perfect – far from it. But in a real sense the papacy and many bishops and Catholics in this period exacerbated the tension between faith and culture.

This rejection of modernity began with the French Revolution whose values of liberty, equality and fraternity were rejected by the popes of the 19th century, particularly Gregory XVI (1831-1846) and Pius IX (1846-1878). Both condemned liberalism, democracy, modernity and freedom of conscience and religion, largely influenced by their experiences in the Papal States where an inefficient and corrupt clerical government attempted to suppress all manifestations of liberalism. In the encyclical *Mirari vos* (1832) Gregory XVI condemned democracy and particularly “the evil smelling spring of indifferentism ... [from which flows] the erroneous, deranged and absurd opinion that freedom of conscience must be asserted for everybody.”

Even more extreme is the Syllabus of Errors (1864) of Pius IX. This list of eighty modern errors condemned an extraordinary range of topics, the supreme error being “That the Roman Pontiff can, and ought, to reconcile himself and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization.” Listing all these “errors” together gave the impression of a complete rejection of the contemporary world and it achieved nothing other than an alienation

of the papacy and the church from modern culture. The attack of Pius X (1903-1914) on the so-called heresy of Modernism – basically a honest attempt by loyal Catholic scholars to develop a dialogue with modernity – only deepened this alienation, which lasted until Vatican Council II.

The Australian context

Within this broader historical context, I will now consider how Australian Catholics have resolved the dichotomy between the heavenly and earthly kingdoms. The anti-democratic attitudes of the pre-Vatican II papacy certainly impacted the church's relationship with society in pluralist countries like Australia where, from early-on, Catholics embraced democracy as a way of maintaining their hard-won freedoms, often within the context of sectarianism and anti-Catholic bigotry. This is typified by the influential Irish-Australian priest, John McEncroe. In 1850 he founded the newspaper, *The Freeman's Journal*, as a mouthpiece for Catholics. He said that "My sole object as a priest and as an Irishman is to establish a paper which will be soundly Catholic and at the same time liberal in its general views and Irish in its sympathies."³ This was a long way from the theocratic notions of the 19th century popes.

Catholics had arrived with the first fleet in 1788, but it was not until 1820 that a convict chaplaincy was established by two Irish priests, John Joseph Therry and Philip Conolly; Therry stayed in Sydney and Conolly went to Hobart. As well as their spiritual and sacramental ministry, the chaplains were also meant to act as social workers and moral police for Catholic convicts. Therry was effective as a priest, but he was truculent, impulsive and resented authority, civil and ecclesiastical. He was often in conflict with Governor Ralph Darling (1824-1831), an autocratic martinet and was eventually dismissed. His disorganization meant that church structure was neglected.

Things changed with the arrival in 1832 of Sir Richard Bourke as governor. Bourke was appointed following Catholic Emancipation (1829) and the election of a liberal Whig government at Westminster. By the end of Bourke's governorship in 1837 the church was established in NSW on firm institutional foundations. This was largely due to co-operation between Bourke's administration and the newly-appointed Vicar General, the young English Benedictine, William Ullathorne. Ullathorne, who arrived in February 1833, brought order to Catholicism. Unlike Therry, Ullathorne was lucky with his governor; Bourke was an Irish Anglican who was sympathetic

3 Quoted in Edmund Campion, "Archdeacon John McEncroe: an architect of the Australian church", *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, 39 (2018), 4–12, at 6.

to Catholics. In the 1830s Catholicism's ministry extended beyond convict chaplaincy to pastoral care for the growing free community.

Bourke also introduced the Church Act of 1836 solidifying the position of the Anglican, Catholic and Presbyterian churches. Despite Anglican opposition, the Act introduced stipends for clergy and subsidies for church buildings. The Act was later extended to Wesleyans, Baptists and Jews. Essentially, the Church Act reconciled the two kingdoms dichotomy by bringing church and state together in a process of turning a convict colony into a moral society.

Despite Bourke's efforts, sectarianism was rife by the late-1830s. The key protagonists were Anglican Bishop William Grant Broughton, Catholic Vicar General Ullathorne (the *Sydney Morning Herald* regularly called him the "Agitator-General"), and Presbyterian, John Dunmore Lang. From the 1830s to the 1960s sectarianism regularly flared between the churches leaving them exhausted and self-engrossed. While Manning Clark has highlighted the positive roles of Catholicism, Protestantism and Enlightenment secularism in the formation of Australian culture, he also criticises "the folly and madness of such sectarian strife."⁴

This "folly and madness" broke out during the education debates of the 1860s and 1870s. By 1860 Australian secularists and reformers were focusing on education which they claimed should be free, compulsory and secular. Church-controlled schools were often under-resourced and pedagogically inadequate, partly resulting from the massive population increase during the Gold Rushes. In response, there was pressure to give control over education to the state, and colonial legislation attempted to eliminate the churches from education. The colonial education acts essentially abolished the 1836 Church Act, including all the benefits the churches and clergy derived from it.

Here, a caveat needs to be noted: while the acts were secular in inspiration, their promoters were not necessarily secularists in an ideological sense. Many were pragmatists who saw the education being provided by the churches as inadequate and were determined to improve it. In response, the Catholic bishops were equally determined to maintain their largely parish-based schools.

Historians have interpreted the imposition of secular education in different ways. For Tim Suttor the framers of the education acts were secular liberals who "attacked the very idea of Christianity by attacking the concept of God the Creator, religion ... the supernatural, and revelation and dogma." He claims that the bishops discerned the secularist motivation of the acts

⁴ C.M.H. Clark, *A Short History of Australia*, New York, Vintage Paperback, 1980, 176.

and set out to establish an independent Catholic system.⁵ Ronald Fogerty agrees with Suttor in seeing secular liberals joining anti-Catholic Protestants in an effort to drive religion out of state subsidised education.⁶ For Patrick O'Farrell the key issue was the church's rejection of the attitudes and values that underpinned the free, secular and compulsory philosophy which was that religion had no role to play in education and that religion should not be subsidised by the state.⁷ A.G. Austin argues that, while there was an anti-church element in the acts, colonial legislators were convinced that it was a fundamental responsibility of the state to provide education for all citizens.⁸ Tony Heffernan sees secular education within the broader context of "nation building and social order," as well as teaching the ethics required "to be a 'good' citizen who fitted into Australia's growing society." There was also an economic motivation; good education prepared people for the labor and professional workforces.⁹

The education acts introduced the classical modern separation of church and state into Australia, meaning the church now had to manage the dichotomy of the heavenly and earthly kingdoms. The bishops were determined to stick to their basic principle that a Catholic ethos should permeate education. Sure, some of them were spoiling for a fight, but their action does have a genuinely prophetic ring. Large numbers of religious sisters, brothers and priests were quickly recruited, mainly from Ireland, to staff the schools and parents were often pressured to send their children to fee-paying parish schools.

From the 1860s until Vatican II Catholicism largely dealt with the two kingdoms dichotomy by retiring into a kind of self-sustaining, Irish-Australian cultural ghetto with its own self-funded schools and parochial structures. However, the retreat was not absolute. Many of the brothers' schools set out to prepare their students for safe, middle-class jobs and careers, especially in the public service. Many of the sisters' schools set women up for entry into the professions. Two prominent examples are Senator Susan Ryan and Germane Greer who speaks highly of the education she received

5 T.L. Suttor, *Hierarchy and Democracy in Australia 1788–1870: the Formation of Australian Catholicism*, Melbourne University Press, 1965, 246–247.

6 Ronald Fogerty, *Catholic Education in Australia 1806–1950*, Melbourne University Press, 1959, Vol I; Clark, *Short History*.

7 Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community in Australia: A history*, West Melbourne, Vic., Thomas Nelson, 1977,

8 A.G. Austin, *Australian Education. 1788–1900. Church, State, and Public Education in Colonial Australia*, Carlton, Vic., Pitman, 1961.

9 Tony Heffernan, *The History of Education in Australia*, La Trobe University, published online: 26 May 2021 at <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.1459>

from the Presentation Sisters.¹⁰ Many bishops also participated in public issues: Sydney Cardinal Patrick Moran supported Australian federation, trade unions, the Labor Party and advocated an independent defence and foreign policy for Australia. In Melbourne the first two archbishops, James Goold and Thomas Carr were also involved in social issues and saw the church as a participant in society rather than an inward-looking institution.

But sectarianism was never below the surface. A virulent outbreak accusing Irish Catholics of not doing enough for the First World War effort broke out in 1915 and gained momentum during the first conscription referendum of 1916. The key figure here was the Irish-born co-adjutor archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix. In 1916 Prime Minister Billy Hughes introduced his first conscription referendum, which was narrowly defeated. Looking for someone to blame, Hughes attacked Mannix who responded by accusing Hughes of promoting conscription for a “sordid trade war”. Mannix strongly opposed Hughes’ second attempt at a referendum on conscription in 1917 (he was now archbishop) which was also defeated. But the conscription debate was characterised by nasty sectarianism.

After the War sectarianism increased. In July 1920 a young Presentation Sister in Wagga fled Mount Erin convent and was taken in by sympathetic Protestants and the anti-Catholic Loyal Orange Lodge. She later sued the Wagga bishop, but lost.¹¹ Sectarianism again surfaced in 1925 over Pius X’s *Ne temere* Decree of 1907 stipulating that marriages involving a Catholic had to be celebrated by a priest for validity and that the children must be brought-up Catholic. Any marriage involving a Catholic celebrated outside the church was declared invalid. Conflict came to a head in NSW when the Marriage (Amendment) Act was introduced into the NSW parliament which eventually passed in 1925 after extensive modifications. It had been formulated in response to *Ne temere*, claiming that it would prevent Catholic priests interfering in domestic life and questioning the validity of people’s marriages.

By the late-1920s everyone was exhausted and “Australian Catholicism slipped into a peace of segregation and isolation,” as Brigid Moore says.¹² Catholics retired into a ghetto and individual and family identification with the church community became paramount. This was especially strong in

10 Germane Greer in Jackie Bennett and Rosemary Forgan (Eds), *Convent Girls*, London, Virago, 2003.

11 Jeff Kildea, “Blast from our sectarian past”, *Pearls and Irritations*, April 16, 2023.

12 Brigid Moore, “Sectarianism in NSW: The *Ne temere* legislation 1924–1925”, *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, 9 (1987), 3–15.

Melbourne where Catholicism focused around Archbishop Mannix. Post-war immigration brought large numbers of European Catholics to Australia and the church became for them a way of entering into and identifying with Australian society. Catholic schools promoted church attendance and Catholic identification.

Everything worked to enhance this with Mass attendance being an essential form of witness, strengthened by the threat of “mortal sin for missing Mass”. The result: this period saw an extraordinarily high rate of practice with Mass attendance reaching unprecedented highs. Attendance in the 19th century was between 20% and 30% of all Catholics. Between 1900-1940 it was around 30% to 35%. It had climbed to 63% in 1947 and to 75% in 1954, declining to 55% in 1962, the year Vatican II began.¹³ The post-war period also saw the culmination of the struggle for state aid for Catholic schools which also provided another form of identification with the church.

The Vatican II approach

Vatican II was profoundly about reconciling the earthly and heavenly kingdoms. It was also a decisive abandonment of the stance Catholicism had taken since the Counter-Reformation and French Revolution. In his opening address to the Council, John XXIII outlined an integrated vision of hope for the church and humanity. Rejecting “the prophets of doom” who “can see nothing but calamity and disaster in the present state of the world,” he signalled the end of the church’s negative response to modernity. The pope contrasts that negative stance with “the results of humankind’s inventive genius and scientific progress, which have so revolutionized modern living,” saying that the church must “keep up-to-date with the changing conditions of this modern world, and modern living.” The church, he argued, can’t abandon the world and retreat into a sect if it is to be true to itself and the gospel.

This theme of hope and engagement was taken up in Vatican II’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes* (GS). GS tackles the difficult task of bringing the kingdoms of heaven and earth together. Addressing the whole of humankind, GS says: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts ... That is why [the church] realizes that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds” (1).

13 Paul Collins, “Historical Mass Attendance Figures”, Unpublished paper. See also my *Believers. Does Australian Catholicism have a Future?* Sydney, UNSW Press, 2008, 94–95.

GS highlights the radical historical change in which humankind is involved. “Triggered by the intelligence and creative energies of humankind, these [profound and rapid] changes recoil upon us, upon our decisions and desires, both individual and collective, and upon our manner of thinking and acting with respect to things and people.” If the church is to respond to contemporary reality, Catholics “must recognize and understand the world ... its explanations, its longings, and its often-dramatic characteristics” (4). GS opens the church to dialogue with modern culture, emphasizing that the world is the locus of living Christian life. Culture can also be a source of inspiration for faith as it challenges the church to “decipher authentic signs of God’s presence and purpose in the happenings, needs and desires” of our contemporaries (11).

Historian Peter Hünermann says that while there were no precedents for this “new vision of the church in the world,” there is a sense in which GS “came to describe the entire conciliar message.”¹⁴ While the second part is devoted to specific issues (marriage and family, cultural progress, economics, peace, nuclear weapons, the Cold War and building a world community), it is the first part that lays the theological foundations for the future relationship between the disciples of Christ and the human community. GS moves beyond the usual ecclesial preoccupation with doctrine and church, looking outward to the world and humanity, in the process achieving a vast vision bringing faith and culture together. For a document written in the 1960s, it is extraordinarily prescient in its analysis of the contemporary world. GS also articulates the challenges that humanity faces: “The human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a dynamic, evolutionary one. In consequence there has arisen a new series of problems ... calling for efforts of analysis and synthesis” (5). This was the fundamental challenge Vatican II laid down for post-Vatican II church: embrace the new reality and analyse and critique it in the light of the gospel and the Catholic tradition.

The *kairos* of Australian Catholicism

There’s no doubt that Vatican II had an enormous influence on Australian Catholics. The liturgical changes had the greatest impact, but the ecumenical opening to the other churches halted sectarianism and former rival churches became sisters and brothers in faith. Another fundamental change was the shifting emphasis from the hierarchical church to the church as community. The focus on Catholicism’s role in promoting social justice was highlighted and issues that were formally *verboten* were now debated. There was a new

14 Peter Hünermann, “Final Weeks of the Council”, in Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak (Eds), *History of Vatican II*, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis, 2006, V, 422–423.

openness to the world and a willingness to debate contentious issues like the Vietnam War – then at its height – the use of nuclear weapons and, following the introduction of the pill in 1961, contraception.

Nevertheless, there was strong resistance to Vatican II from a well-organized minority, including priests and bishops. Much of this was focused on defending the hierarchical church and decrying GS's openness to the world leading to the danger of embracing "secular values". While the Vatican II changes and emphases needed to be tested, the endless opposition eventually wore down peoples' patience and endurance and many gave-up. This was reinforced by the encyclical *Humanae vitae* of July 1968 condemning all forms of artificial contraception. Given many Catholics were already using the pill, it caused a major rupture in Catholic experience. Many people abandoned practice and a sizeable number of priests left the ministry.

The impact of the Council and the encyclical also occurred just at the time when many Catholics "arrived" socially as they moved from the working class to the middle class, largely due to the efforts of Catholic schools. "Ghetto" Catholicism's strong identification with the church quickly dissipated with many embracing a kind of "cultural Catholicism". By this I mean Catholics who still identify and own a connection with the church, but who are not practising and whose values are generally those of the prevailing culture. Even if they sent their children to Catholic schools, the cultural connection often disappeared in the next generation. Census figures show that the Catholic proportion of the population has dropped from 27.3% in 1991, to 19.9% in 2021, a 7.4% drop in thirty years.

The role of John Paul II and to a lesser extent Benedict XVI in all this is significant. Ironically for a man who was probably the most media-savvy pope in history, John Paul's papacy saw a decisive shift away from an emphasis on engagement with the world and a retreat into intra-mural church matters. While his achievements were considerable, he was always distrustful of what he saw as the false "optimism" that pervaded GS; rather, he saw Catholicism as a beleaguered "sign of contradiction." His view of Vatican II "was idiosyncratic, personal, and rooted in his Polish experience rather than in the Council's actual teaching."¹⁵ He also appointed many conformist bishops lacking the emotional intelligence to assume responsibility for the local churches typified by many of his Australian appointments. On sexual abuse he totally failed to tackle or even recognize the crisis engulfing the church. This failure was rooted in his idealization

15 Paul Collins, *Absolute Power: How the pope became the most influential man in the world*, New York, Public Affairs, 2018, 225-226.

of the priest as “another Christ.” And while his so-called “theology of the body” sounded rather contemporary, it ignored modern feminism, arguing that women are biologically and morally bound by their maternal role, while condemning on contraception as contrary to nature. Finally, the “reform of the reform” movement gained strength under both John Paul and Benedict. The phrase meant that Vatican II reforms needed “reforming” because they had gone “too far.” Some of us might have asked if they had gone far enough?

Certainly, there is still a committed group of Catholics who have continued to participate in the life of the church and who have tried to get the community to “respond to the perennial questions which people ask about this present life and the life to come and about the relationship of one to the other” (GS, 4). This same group have also challenged the hierarchy to exercise a more “synodal” leadership.

Even as long ago as 1991 the church seemed to have retreated from the challenge. In my book *No Set Agenda* I warned that the Australian church seemed to have lost its way.¹⁶ I pointed out that in the 1980s there was a kind of moral and religious vacuum that Catholicism was well placed to engage with by proclaiming the message of Christ. As US religious journalist, Peter Steinfels says: “Possessed of a sophisticated style of moral reasoning that is rooted in religion, but philosophical enough to engage non-Catholics and perhaps even agnostics and atheists, the Catholic Church ... seemed to poised to make a unique contribution to public life.”¹⁷ The same opportunity was there for Australian Catholics to participate in public dialogue about social policy, and to play an active role in the formation of new cultural and societal attitudes, particularly focusing on the status of women.

But due to a lack of intelligent episcopal leadership, an obsession with issues around gender and sexuality, and deliberate opposition from a minority who were determined to maintain the old closed style of church, even if it turned Catholicism into a sect, the moment was missed. Then came the sexual abuse crisis in the early-2000s and Catholic credibility was destroyed.

So where are we now?

According to Brisbane Archbishop Mark Coleridge, Catholicism is in deep trouble. He told journalists in Rome in February 2019 “the bishops’ credibility is shot to pieces.” The word “Catholic” is associated with “abuse”, “priest”

16 Paul Collins, *No Set Agenda. Australia's Catholic Church faces an uncertain future*, Brunswick, Vic., David Lovell Publishing, 1991.

17 Peter Steinfels, “State of the church: Has Catholicism lost a chance to be our moral clearing house?”, *New York Times*, April 8, 1990.

with “paedophile”, and “bishop with “liar””.¹⁸ It’s unsurprising then that most committed Catholics have little or no confidence in the bishops who, with some exceptions, have abandoned any form of gospel-inspired leadership initiative. They constantly claim even minor decisions are “beyond their competence” or “inappropriate at this time.” The leadership crisis is reinforced by the acute shortage of locally-born, mature men volunteering for priestly ministry. The short-fall is being plugged by importing foreign priests, most from developing countries, asset stripping those countries of clergy. In 2023 60% of clergy in Australian parishes were foreign-born.

What is particularly striking is the loss of the “Millennials”, the 25-to-39-year-olds, to the faith. The failure is even worse among Gen Z, those born between 1997-2015. One reason why Catholicism has lost these people is the failure to address sympathetically the modern emphasis on gender diversity. Given Christianity’s long negative history regarding sexuality, it’s understandable that the church would find gender diversity difficult to comprehend, but the price for maintaining a kind of neo-Augustinian, body-denying stance is that young people find such an attitude incomprehensible and irrelevant.

Believers today live in a world with little sympathy for their commitments. Modern education and culture are characterised by post-modernism, the general tendency to relativise everything and to deny the possibility of any widely accepted, normative concepts of truth, beauty, goodness, value or taste. It is difficult within this context to comprehend an overarching Christian faith that permeates all aspects of life. Nowadays many live life experience by experience, issue by issue. Within Australian culture there is also a pervasive, if unconscious anti-Catholicism, a hangover from the days of sectarian conflict. It’s been “the default position of Anglo-Australian culture since the 19th century.”¹⁹ Unfortunately as Catholics we have failed to address these issues with the church confronted by the abuse scandal and so much energy devoted to dealing with ecclesiastical dysfunction and a sclerotic clerical culture.

Certainly, living and proclaiming the gospel in an increasingly assertive secular world is difficult and often disheartening. Pope Francis has acknowledged the feeling of weariness among Catholics and actually compared European believers to “tired and bitter” apostles cleaning their nets after unsuccessful fishing. While acknowledging that many are angry and disappointed because of the “scandals that have disfigured the face of

18 Quoted in *America*, February 26, 2019.

19 Paul Collins, *Pearls and Irritations*, December 12, 2017.

the Church ... the time has not come to stop and give up” or be consumed by pessimism, let alone look back.”²⁰

The constant challenge is to move forward, our hope is based in the gospel promise that, if we proclaim the Jesus’ message, he is with us “always, to the end of time” (Matthew 28:20).

20 Pope Francis, *La Croix*, August 3, 2023.

BOOK REVIEW

A Bold Story Well Proven, One Hundred Years of the Knights of the Southern Cross in South Australia.

Author: Paul K Hawkes

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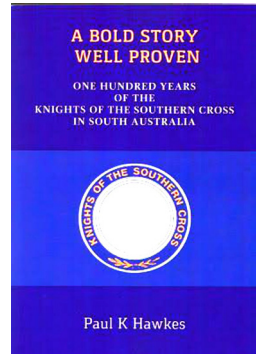
Price: \$40 plus \$10 postage

Reviewed by Monica van Gend*

Secret societies will always hold an allure, and the Knights of the Southern Cross are no exception. For the centenary of their founding, Paul Hawkes traces the long and varied history of the Order of the Knights of the Southern Cross in South Australia. Bringing to light the great works of the society for the Church in South Australia, Hawkes tells of much that was never spoken about at the time that it happened.

The history is broken up into eras delineated by the successive pontificates under which they worked, a fitting structure for the history of the Knights who were often styled “the Pope’s Men”. Hawkes begins his history with an overview of the roots of the Order, including the inspiration from contemporary orders of knights around the world, such as the Knights of Columbus in the US, and the more immediate roots of the foundation of the first branch of the Knights of the Southern Cross in NSW, from which the South Australian branch grew. He is quick to claim South Australia’s preeminence in the national history of the Order, however, claiming that the conception of the Order took place in South Australia, even if it was one of the last states to see the Order established.

Beginning in 1922, the early years and founding principles of the Knights in SA were shaped by the historical circumstances of Australian Catholics at that time: an era of heightened sectarianism after World War I and a perceived growth of anti-Catholic discrimination at the hands of Freemasons.



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Thus the first sub-committees of the Order reveal how the Knights set themselves up as a response to the problems of the age: “Victimisation” and “Employment” committees to deal with cases of discrimination against Catholics and to help them find employment. The early hallmarks of the Order, that continued much the same until the end of the century, included strict secrecy (the Diocesan newspaper made no mention of the Order until the 1960s!), an emphasis on a kind of Australian identity (evidenced by the singing of Advance Australia Fair at all their gatherings long before it was the national anthem) and a great loyalty to the Church and intent to support her activities. Perhaps the most significant work of the Order in this early stage, apart from being established and building its own premises, Australia Hall, was the setting up of a Starr-Bowkett Scheme. Beginning in 1924, the Southern Cross Starr-Bowkett Society assisted many members and the general public in acquiring their own homes. This work of the Society would later financially support the other works of the Order, too, remaining an important part of the Knights’ work until 1961.

The second phase of the Order, under the pontificate of Pius XII, saw the Order expand its work in supporting the work of the Diocese. Always maintaining a close relationship with the Archbishop, the Knights devoted their energies to assisting and establishing events for the Diocese, including a very popular Catholic Subscription Ball, Anzac Day Requiem Mass and supporting the Catholic Hour on the radio. Adapting to the needs of the post-World War II world, they also established a Catholic Soldiers’ Guild, a guild with very similar aims to the Catholic Returned Soldiers and Sailors’ Association begun in NSW after the First World War. The changes after the War also saw the Order focus on two key priorities: dealing with communism and immigration.

The time from the pontificate of John XXIII onwards saw a time of questioning the principles and activities of the Order in the face of changing historical circumstances. With the “major reforms and modernisation of the Church” put in train by Vatican II, members began questioning the need for the Order, or at the least whether it needed to change fundamentally to address the new cultural circumstances. With lay participation in the work of the Church being widely promoted and ecumenism replacing sectarianism, many were of the opinion that a number of the previously foundational principles of the Order needed revisiting. Thus the 60s and 70s saw the Knights move away from their secrecy and emerge as a public institution. It was also during this time that the Knights began what Hawkes considers

their “crowning achievement”: the establishment of Southern Cross Homes which remained a work of the Order until the 90s.

Through economic depressions, world wars, a changing society and natural disasters, the importance of the Knights and their continued efforts to adapt to the needs of the Church and society are clear in this history of the Order. Facing declining membership, the Order maintains its mission of serving the Church today.

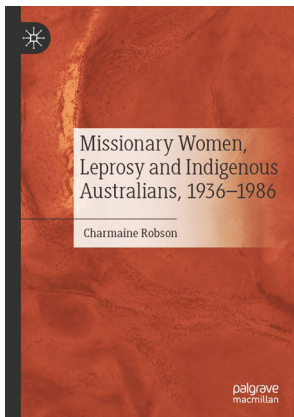
Hawkes’ history is a dream for the researcher: organised and detailed, meticulous footnotes, appendices & references, it is all that could be wanted to understand the history of the Knights in South Australia. Not an armchair read, as Cliff Baxter’s history of the Knights in NSW is, but an important contribution to the history of the Church in SA and the history of the Knights of the Southern Cross in Australia.

BOOK REVIEW

Missionary Women, Leprosy and Indigenous Australians, 1936–1986.

Author: Charmaine Robson,
Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022
ISBN: 9783031057984
Hardback: 278 pages
Price: \$160

Reviewed by: Hilary Carey*



This important, sensitively written and deeply researched study should be read by all Australians.

Charmaine Robson's book covers the history of Catholic religious Sisters' care of Indigenous Australians infected with Hansen's Disease ('leprosy'), and treated in island leprosaria located in northern Australia from before the Second World War, until the effective elimination of the disease in the mid 1980s. In many ways, the control of leprosy is an uplifting story, but the path taken to success includes many dark corners. The physical disfigurement caused by the disease itself was in many ways the least challenging element of a diagnosis of leprosy in an Indigenous Australian.

This led to a sequence of dehumanising practices, from forced removal and detention in leprosaria, the removal of infants from their mothers, often with little of what today would be recognised as informed consent, and the forced conversion and baptism of vulnerable patients, including at their death beds. Even when effective control of the disease was achieved, Indigenous patients formerly infected with the disease continued to be confined, due to government and community fears of contagion, exaggerated by racist government beliefs and practices.

Robson provides full and unflinching account of the grim realities of Indigenous leprosaria, but against this truth, there is a much of humanity, hope and informed, critical observation woven into the narrative.

* Hilary M Carey is Professor of Imperial and Religious History at the University of Bristol. She is currently writing a book on the history of the condemned sermon at London's Newgate Prison.

As a mode of reading this book, I suggest that it might be useful to begin with the final chapters. Earlier histories of leprosy have tended to focus on the extensive documentation provided by official, government sources. Robson does this too, as well as making a deeply impressive and thorough journey through the relevant church archives, both the readily accessible diocesan and archdiocesan archives, but also the widely scattered records of individual religious communities. What makes this study so valuable, and so human, is that Robson has included a wealth of interviews, many with elderly religious and Indigenous people whose experiences would otherwise have been lost. These interviews are supplemented with evidence from the secular and religious press and photographs – all handled with exemplary tact and concern for the privacy and point of view of the informants.

The final chapter ('Recollections, Connections and Conclusions') covers the period in which all the leprosaria considered in this book closed, Fantôme Island in Queensland in 1973, East Arm in 1982, and Derby four years later. It notes that for former patients, these sites were the only home they knew, much as historians and Indigenous communities have observed in relation to other missions. Despite being, by definition, sites of confinement, contagion, mutilation and death, leprosaria were also sites of recovery, community, and cultural sharing. One former patient, Dr Gumana attributes his world perspective to the years spent on Channel Island and East Arm.

Other chapters sensitively chart the professionalisation of the Australian religious sisters who engaged as nursing sisters and administrators on leprosaria. They include four communities: the Sisters of Saint John of God in Western Australia, the Sisters of Our Lady Help of Christians in Queensland, later replaced by the international order, the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, and the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in the Northern Territory. Exploited by governments for their low cost, and 'never complain' ethos, religious sisters nevertheless benefitted from undertaking work that was regarded as the epitome of Christian charity.

Some years ago, I interviewed a number of religious from the Sisters of Our Lady Help of Christians who had served as missionaries on Fantôme Island. They uniformly recalled that this service was a privilege, and a welcome respite from that of urban-based duties, where they lacked the autonomy and sense of achievement possible on Fantôme Island. These positive memories are reflected in the chapters which describe the value placed on this work by the sisters themselves. Another chapter provides a welcome balance in looking at the experience of 'missionary men', noting that 'the misty ambitions of would be Damiens' was rarely matched by the

reality of under-resourced, and isolated mission work, where the chaplains were often outmatched by the superiors of the religious sister.

This book is based on a PhD dissertation from the University of New South Wales. It is very much more than that in the form published by Palgrave Macmillan. This is an original and moving study, that should transform understanding of the treatment of leprosy, the relationship between Catholic missions and Indigenous people in Australia, the gender dynamic between male and female religious in the mission field, and the ways in which religion, race and racism have impacted on the lives of Indigenous people afflicted with this disease. I strongly recommend this to all students of Australian history, Australian medical history, the history of Indigenous people in northern Australia, and anyone fascinated by the stories of some remarkable, brave and resilient people.

BOOK REVIEW

Bleiburg: Massacre of the Croatian People 1945

Author: Zvonimir Gavranovic

Publisher: ATF Press

ISBN: 978-1-922582-77-5

Paperback, xxvii + 376 pages

Price: \$54.95

Reviewed by Edmund Campion*

ZVONIMIR GAVRANOVIC was born in 1946 in Austria, where his Croatian parents had gone to get away from the Communists who ruled their native land. They came to Australia in 1950 and Zvonimir was ordained as a priest a decade later. He worked in parishes west of Sydney but found time to research and write a long book on Cardinal Stepinac, Archbishop of Zagreb. This is evidence that Father Zvonimir, a priest of the Australian church, retained a close interest in his familial homeland – he never lost his language.

When World War II ended in Europe, in May 1945, the Croatian army laid down their arms and surrendered to the British army. They thought

* Edmund Campion is a Sydney Priest.

Englishmen were gentlemen who would treat them fairly. Instead, Harold MacMillan, Churchill's man for the Mediterranean, told army chiefs to pass them on to Tito's partisans, who killed Croatian Catholics in tens of thousands.

Gavranovic tells the stories of such massacres in sickening detail. Partisan death squads stripped their victims of their clothing and valuables, such as watches and rings, and made them run in bare feet to their deaths. One statistic is enough: 591 mass graves have been identified in Slovenia, 834 in Croatia and 91 in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Despite the enormity of their crimes, partisans were unable to kill all their prisoners; some escaped, throwing themselves into forests or bushes or simply running away. So they lived to give their testimonies to authors.

In a final chapter, Father Zvonimir reflects as a priest on the meaning of such evils. On a visit to Croatia in 1992, he met a grandmother who told him of later cruelties by Serbians. How did she feel about this? 'She felt no bitterness or hatred, only pity and sorrow.' Thus he counselled victims to forgive but not to forget.

Bleiburg: Massacre of the Croatian People 1945 is a worthy Australian addition to World War II history, seven years in its making. The author's reading has been capacious, as footnotes and bibliographies attest. It is pleasant to report that readers will find there the names of local writers such as Neil Brown, David Coffey and John Burnheim.

**Bleiburg: Massacre of the
Croatian People 1945**



ZVONIMIR GAVRANOVIC

BOOK NOTE

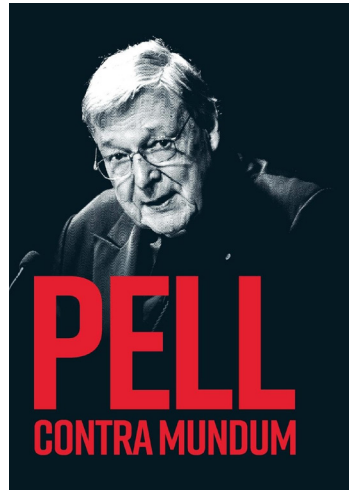
Pell Contra Mundum

Editor: Robert A. Sirico
Publisher: Connor Court Publishing
ISBN: 9781922815743
Paperback, viii + 239 pages
Price: \$34.95

Book note by James Franklin *

This is a short collection of pieces by Cardinal Pell and several of his admirers, gathered to celebrate his legacy following his unexpected death in early 2023. Pell's article 'The Catholic Church must free itself from this "toxic nightmare"', reprinted from the *Spectator* of 11 January 2023, attacks the "inclusive" understanding of synodality that Pell saw as threatening orthodoxy. Also by Pell is his last public homily, analysing the papal styles of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, and an address at Campion College reviewing the changes in Australia in his lifetime. Oswald Cardinal Gracias, Robert A. Sirico and George Weigel praise Cardinal Pell as a conservative hero. Of most interest from the point of view of

Australian Catholic history is the article 'How to be "boringly successful" in the Vatican', by Danny Casey, Pell's business manager in the Sydney Archdiocese who followed him to Rome to assist him in efforts to reform the Vatican finances. Casey gives a pungent but necessarily incomplete account of the corruption and incompetence rampant in church finances and the need for transparency and accountability. It is to be hoped he will tell his insider's story in much more detail.



* James Franklin is editor of the *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*.

BOOK REVIEW

Arthur Calwell: Transforming Australia through Immigration

Authors: James Franklin and Gerry O Nolan

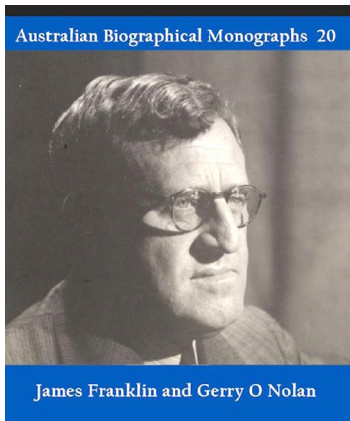
Publisher: Connor Court Publishing – *Australian Biographical Monographs* 20

ISBN: 978-1-922737-33-5

Paperback, 98 pages

Price: \$19.95

Reviewed by Michael Costigan *



ARTHUR CALWELL

This compact but all-embracing life of Arthur Augustus Calwell (1896–1973) is a timely inclusion, the 20th, in Connor Court’s Australian Biographical Series. Nine of Australia’s Prime Ministers and several other political figures have so far been the subjects of minographies in the (now) Queensland-based publisher’s collection.

Arthur Calwell, Leader of the Opposition for six of his thirty-two years as a member of the Commonwealth Parliament, failed by only a few hundred votes in 1961 to become a Prime Minister himself. Nevertheless his achievements as Australia’s first Immigration Minister (1945–49) can be said to have surpassed the productive record of most if not all of those who have held higher office.

Calwell implemented his own “populate or perish” philosophy through the immigration plan he first devised, then introduced with Prime Minister Ben Chifley’s blessing and in due time left to his and Chifley’s successors to carry on. As the historian Geoffrey Blainey has been quoted as reminding us, Calwell can be credited with bringing far more newcomers to Australia than Prime Ministers and other Immigration Ministers of varying political persuasions did.

* Michael Costigan was Associate Editor (as a priest) of *The Advocate* (Melbourne, 1961–69). After retirement in 2005, he was appointed an Adjunct Professor of the Australian Catholic University.

In spite of this, Calwell is still remembered chiefly by some as the cartoonist John Frith's "Cranky Cockatoo" character shrieking "Curse the press!" because of his wartime censorship of newspapers and other publications in his accompanying function as Minister for Information, once insultingly called the Australian Goebbels. He was under fire too for efforts to expel coloured refugees.

A reason why he was and may still be unfavourably recalled by others was his persistent defence of the controversial White Australia policy. Calwell sometimes used excessively vehement language in support of his view, but cannot be fairly accused of harbouring a racist attitude. There was no racism in the wish and hope he once expressed, that discrimination against Aboriginal Australians, many of them homeless, would end and they would receive justice. Meanwhile, he lived to see the beginnings of the abandonment of the White Australia policy at Government level. If still living he could have found reason to wonder how many supporters the waning policy still has among those who voted No in the recent Voice referendum.

Thoroughly and competently written by its subject's two experienced researchers, this new and overdue biography neglects nothing major in its coverage of aspects and phases of a busy life, with attention to successes, talents, setbacks, relationships, family, rivalries, tragedies, evolving motivations and occasional contradictions. The authors make good use of quotations from the eloquent and learned major speeches Calwell delivered, usually in Parliament, over the years. Some were prepared in cooperation with the inimitable speechwriter for Labor Party celebrities, the late Graham Freudenberg. Many of them included the kind of witty and memorable quips and politically designed thrusts for which Calwell was famous or in certain cases notorious. He is quoted as saying what could be applied to some of his well-known duels: "Half the problems that I have encountered for myself I have created for myself."

Calwell was approaching his mid-40s when he entered Parliament in 1940. He had already, from his late teenage years, made his mark as a leading figure in the Victorian ALP. His patience was rewarded by, as long expected, his succeeding the legendary Labor member for the Melbourne electorate, Dr William Maloney, the "Little Doctor". Maloney had just died at 86 after creating a record by remaining a never promoted backbencher for all of his thirty-six years in the lower House. Meanwhile, Calwell during the 1930s had been helping the Opposition Leader and future Prime Minister, John Curtin, to diminish the power of the separatist NSW Labor leader and Premier Jack Lang. For a few years towards the end of the 1940s Calwell and

an ageing Lang were to be fellow members of the House of Representatives. He also delighted in a link with the opening of the National Parliament in 1901 through the presence in the Chamber of one of its most famous survivors, William Morris (Billy) Hughes, acting for a period as the Minister for the Navy in the Liberal Party Government.

The relationship between Catholicism in Calwell's life and his belief in Socialism is incisively handled by Professor Franklin and his researcher colleague Gerry O Nolan. In their view much depended on the form of Socialism that won Calwell's loyalty. If it aimed to abolish private property without qualification, that would have made reconciliation with the Labor man's Catholic orthodoxy a problem. It is more likely that continuing research will confirm that what he most sincerely wanted was a fair and just sharing of the earth's resources. In that, he would have been close to the Scriptures and the social justice teaching of all the Popes from Leo XIII to Francis, as well as the Second Vatican Council, in which he had a keen interest. Whatever his heartfelt views were about private property, there is no doubting that his biggest target was always unrestrained monopoly capitalism. Essential to his thinking was the importance of the separation of Church and State.

As a devout Catholic, Calwell had to face the accusation by conservative Catholics that his refusal to move from the ALP to the DLP after the Party's split in 1954 was a "betrayal". It did alienate him from some old friends but did not change his love for Archbishop Mannix, although he was deeply hurt by Mannix's disgraceful public refusal to appear on speaking platforms in the presence of ALP politicians who had chosen to "stay in and fight". Calwell's presence by the Archbishop's deathbed, preceded not long before by the pair having a personal meeting, was indicative of his openness to reconciliation with adversaries, although the sad exception was B.A. (Bob) Santamaria, whose attempt to offer him sympathy after the tragic death of his 11-year-old son was rebuffed.

Calwell derived much satisfaction from the highest level papal knighthood awarded to him in 1963. In correspondence between him and Monsignor Montini, the future Pope Paul VI, there was a reference to "his humble efforts in the cause of distressed humanity". The testimonial accompanying the knighthood mentioned not only his work for migrants but also spoke of "the signal service you have rendered to the well-being of the Church and the advancement of Catholic affairs". It was a strong rejection of the criticisms directed at him by some fellow Catholics. One example of an episode when his behaviour was Christian in the very best way was the forgiveness and

support he offered to his would-be 1966 assassin, Peter Kocan, helping him to overcome his mental deficiency and to become a widely esteemed Australian poet.

This book complements very satisfactorily the main biographies of Calwell, published a good number of years ago and too few in number: *I am Bound to be True*, the excellent biography by his daughter Mary Elizabeth Calwell, 2012; *Calwell, a Personal and Political Biography* by Colm Kiernan, 1978; and Calwell's autobiography *Be Just and Fear Not*, 1972.

In this review I have spoken well of Arthur Calwell, without ignoring his faults altogether. I should reveal that I had a friendly rapport with him in the last half-dozen years of his life after interviewing him in his office in Canberra's old Parliament House for the Melbourne Catholic *Advocate* (16 February 1967). The interview took place on his last day as Leader of the Opposition before reluctantly handing over to one of his foes, Gough Whitlam. My knowledge about and interest in him grew from what I learned when his former longtime and profoundly loyal personal secretary, Joan O'Donnell, became a working colleague and friend of mine in the Commonwealth public service. She was there with me at the time of his State Funeral and burial, which she helped the Government and family to organise in July 1973. I attended both and saw something of the reactions of a grieving friend and admirer of Calwell, Robert Menzies, remaining in his car, and a less distraught Whitlam, standing emotionless by the graveside.

BOOK REVIEW

Seminary: My Life in a Spiritual Gulag

Author: Paul Hartigan

Publisher: Paul Hartigan, 77 Wakefield Gardens, Ainslie ACT 2602; email: secundo121@gmail.com

Distributor: Amazon

ISBN: 9798355403430

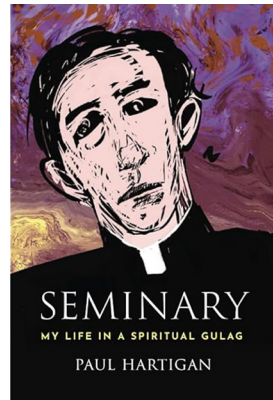
Paperback, 72 pages

Price: \$16.95

Reviewed by Michael Costigan*

Many former Australian seminarians and members of religious orders or congregations, whether or not they persisted in their calling, have had their memories published, either as lengthy books (for instance Dr Chris Geraghty's outstanding autobiographical trilogy) or as more succinct essays. Some idea of the volume of such literary outpourings can be had by perusing Dr James Franklin's comprehensive paper, "Memoirs by Australian Priests, Religious and Ex-Religious", accompanied by a long but inevitably incomplete list of titles, in the 2012 edition of this *Journal* (Vol. 33).

I contributed in the 2017 annual ACHS *Journal* (Vol. 38) a 2,600-word combined review of three books, by Kevin Peoples, Paul Casey (editor) and Victor Michniewicz, containing the reminiscences by former residents (I hesitate to call them "inmates") of two Sydney-based seminaries, St Columba's College Springwood and St Patrick's College Manly, both now replaced by a single institution, the Homebush Seminary of the Good Shepherd. I also reviewed in the 2018 *Journal* (Vol. 39) the 412-page book *Byways: Memories from a Catholic Seminary*, published by the late Dr Michael Parer and edited by Dr Lawrie Moloney, a collection of recollections by some forty ex-students



* Michael Costigan was Associate Editor (as a priest) of *The Advocate* (Melbourne, 1961–69); founding Director of the former Australia Council's Literature Board; and first Executive Secretary of the Australian Bishops Committee for Justice, Development, Ecology and Peace. After retirement in 2005, he was appointed an Adjunct Professor of the Australian Catholic University.

(including myself) of Corpus Christ College Werribee Park (and three other locations) and of Propaganda Fide College Rome.

Confronted by such an avalanche of remembered events and people, incorporating a host of both favorable and strongly critical commentaries and judgments, one could have questioned the need for yet another seminary memoir. If that had been my opinion, I would have been mistaken. I can offer several reasons why Paul Hartigan's relatively brief (72-page) contribution is important and should be welcomed as deserving serious reflection at a moment when the Catholic Church is or should be reviewing the place and role of the priesthood in its journey.

One of those reasons is that the author's attention, unlike that of a number of other reminiscing writers, is focussed almost exclusively on the 1960s and in particular on the six or seven years from 1962 to 1968, which he spent in three seminaries – Springwood, Manly and the Herzogliches Georgianum in Munich. Those years coincided with the Second Vatican Council and its immediate aftermath, which influenced him profoundly, and also with other radical changes taking place in the Catholic Church, other religions and the world. Even today we still cannot learn enough about those developments in a crucial historical period.

In the end, Hartigan was to come to the conclusion, while living a far more liberal and satisfying life in the Georgianum and in freedom-loving Munich than he had endured in Sydney, that he should “call the whole thing off”. It was the end of what had been torturing him for years and causing episodes of depression – what he saw as the unresolved issue of his homosexuality while trying to weigh the pros and cons of a possible future in the priesthood. One does not have to accept certain of the inadequately established or sensational claims of the French journalist Frédéric Martel in his book *In the Closet of the Vatican* (Bloomsbury, 2019) about the high number of gay males and females among clerics and religious in order to recognise with pleasure and love that some homosexuals are certainly present in those circles and should be hailed as being as devout, apostolic and fruitful as their non-gay companions. *Seminary* is a work written in a style that contributes admirably to this in spite of the author's doubts and hesitations.

The writer is scathing about the quality of the education at Springwood and Manly. In his Preamble he sums up his view with a degree of overstatement: “The teaching was terrible, daily existence was minutely organised, the emphasis on ritual and piety was suffocating and the seminary management was authoritarian”. He blames Cardinal Gilroy for ensuring by his appointments of rigid superiors that obedience was accepted as the

supreme virtue and that the training of priests should ensure that commands from above were to be obeyed without question before and after ordination. I doubt if Gilroy's excellent biographer, Brother John Luttrell, would see eye to eye with those observations.

In spite of these views, it is obvious that Hartigan gained much during those Australian seminary years by self-education, skipping some classes and reading for example the works of eminent philosophers, mostly British like Wittgenstein, Russell and Anscombe, who were either ignored or condemned by those in authority or lecturing.

It is true that eventually Paul Hartigan withdrew from active Catholic practice after his time as a seminarian. He looked for Christian fellowship elsewhere – “house Church, the Quakers and now Benedictus”. In later life (he wrote this book in his early 80s in 2022) he found “a strong antipathy to the Catholic Church” growing in him “not least because it continues to regard gays as ‘objectively disordered’” That is sad but should be noted when consciences are examined.

The hardest hitting chapters in this short book are those where Hartigan names individuals, mainly Australian seminary superiors and members of the hierarchy, and summarises his opinions of them in a few often sharp words. Many are condemned while a few are praised. He echoes some of the opinions of the likes of Chris Geraghty and Kevin Peoples and in a few cases with reservations while judging adversely. He has high praise for friends like the late ex-priest Roger Pryke, in whose memory the book is dedicated, the late Bishop Bede Heather, the late Archbishop Eris O'Brien and the still living and articulate ex-seminarian and lawyer, his close friend Kieran Tapsell.

Conspicuous among Hartigan's other talents is his skill as a painter and cartoonist. His amusing digital portraits of several seminary superiors are highlights. They include depictions of the appalling long-term ex-Rector of Springwood, the “martinet” and alleged child abuser Monsignor Charlie Dunne, the “deeply conservative” Manly Rector, Monsignor Jimmy Madden, and the author's own personal *bête noire*, portrayed in these pages as the far from helpful Spiritual Director and discipline enforcer Father Ted Shepherd.

Readers of this book are informed that the author was born in Canberra, where he still lives, and that he served at one stage as a “senior official” in the Commonwealth Government. He writes clearly, intelligently and provocatively. While recommending *Seminary* as a good and easy read, I would expect some of its assertions to be challenged by readers familiar with the personalities and events described.

BOOK REVIEW

New Visions of Priesting: an interview with Bob Wilkinson

Editor: Hilary Dominic Regan

Publisher: Hilary Dominic Regan, (ATF Press), Brompton SA:

<www.atfpress.com>

ISBN: 978-1-922737-33-5

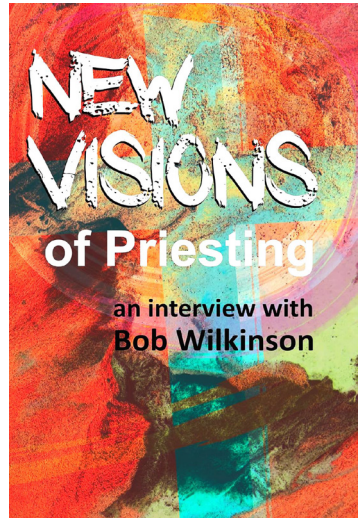
Paperback, 92 pages

Price: \$24.95

Reviewed by Michael Costigan*

It is normally regarded as against protocol for a reviewer to intrude personally in his or her review without a satisfactory reason. On this occasion, however, I wish at the outset to reveal that Adelaide's Father Bob Wilkinson and I have been good friends for over sixty years. We met and communicated as priest-editors of two diocesan weekly Catholic papers – the Adelaide *Southern Cross* in Fr Bob's case and the Melbourne *Advocate* in mine. For a few years in the mid-1960s, as noted in *New Visions of Priesting* (page 72), we both had executive positions in the Catholic Press Association of Australia and New Zealand (now renamed the Australasian Religious Press Association – ARPA). We were both honoured several years ago by being named Honorary Life Members of ARPA.

Bob's editorial tenure was long-lasting and much admired, coinciding sometimes with other priestly tasks, mainly chaplaincies. He claims in the interviews reported in this book that he was always given complete editorial freedom by his episcopal and other superiors, even when he published items about controversial matters or took disputed positions himself in his commenting.



* Michael Costigan was Associate Editor (as a priest) of *The Advocate* (Melbourne, 1961–69). After retirement in 2005, he was appointed an Adjunct Professor of the Australian Catholic University.

My experience differed from Bob's. On a few occasions I aroused the ire of "the cathedral" in Melbourne by allowing *The Advocate* to differ in its own voice or in news reports or letters to the editor from what was regarded as the "orthodoxy" which "good Catholics" should follow. One such issue was the Government decision to send 18-year-old conscripts to the war in Vietnam. Another was that war itself.

Although we refrained from opposing it editorially, I did make Father Wilkinson's *Southern Cross* editorial against the war a front-page news item. This was to lead to what he mentions himself in one of his replies to ATF questioning – an animated debate in our paper between "the two Bobs", Fr Wilkinson and Mr B.A. Santamaria, the leading Catholic defender of the war. Wilkinson's is said to have been the Church in Australia's first major public anti-Vietnam War statement. Several other Catholic individuals or agencies also became active and articulate opponents around that time and in the following "Moratorium" demonstrations.

Bob Wilkinson's career as a journalist and editor was so central and prominent in his life story that it seemed to me to be suitable to highlight it in this review. But it is only a fraction of what a full biography could have to say about him. This book, not planned as a biography, nevertheless says a great deal about him without by any means covering everything. More than anything else it is an account of the gradual evolution of his Cardijn-inspired thinking about what he chooses to call "priesting".

Having assumed the editorship of the *Cardijn Studies* journal in 2022 from Stefan Gigacz, who has excelled as a Cardijn expert and promoter of Jocism, Hilary Dominic Regan decided that it should be issued as an edition of the *Cardijn Studies*. It is of course in the form of a 92-page paperback book.

The plan was for the publication to consist of a series of replies by Father Wilkinson to questions posed by Regan on behalf of ATF. Their particular focus was on the ideas of the young Belgian priest, Josef Cardijn, later a Cardinal and Vatican II participant before his death in 1967, whose concern for young Catholic workers affected by the industrial revolution of the 19th Century led him almost 120 years ago to found the very successful Jocist movement, known in the English-speaking countries as the Young Christian Workers (YCW) movement.

Even before his ordination as an Adelaide diocesan priest in 1955, Bob Wilkinson had some association with YCW members and groups and was developing an interest in the movement's spirit and deeds. While studying Theology in the Manly seminary he read more writings by and about Cardijn

as well as relevant works produced in Paris by the likes of Emmanuel Cardinal Suhard and Father Henri Godin. In his first parish posting as a curate he was appointed the chaplain for the parish YCW group. Only a few years after his ordination he played a part in arrangements for Cardijn's first visit to Adelaide in 1958. Seven years later he had a central role in a second visit by the newly appointed Cardinal Cardijn.



Fr Bob Wilkinson and Joseph Cardijn in Adelaide, 1965

Meanwhile, Bob's writing and management skills led to his nomination as the *Southern Cross* Editor. During his long period in that successfully performed role he was able to accept several brief or lengthy part-time chaplaincies, including one at the Dominican Sisters' Cabra College for girls and later at Flinders University. At another time he worked for a while in Brisbane on a never completed Master's degree in Social Administration at the university there.

Among his other significant undertakings at different times were as the chaplain to one of the Teams of Our Lady and earlier as diocesan chaplain of the Christian Life Movement (CLM), working with the organiser Sister Ruth Egar RSM and the secretary Brian Moylan. He describes it as "a nonpolitical group based on a very strong sense of community". Observed with a mixture of curiosity and scepticism elsewhere in Australia, it thrived for a decade in Adelaide and paved the way for the better known and appreciated Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) movement. This led in turn to invitations to Father Jose Marins, the South American continental chaplain to the "vigorous" BECs in that part of the world, to visit Adelaide as an adviser. He accepted, gave his advice and was agreeably surprised at what he found there in the movement's early days.

Father Wilkinson also spent some time in PNG in the 1980s assisting the renowned priest-politician Father John Momis, Minister for Decentralisation and so-called "father of the PNG Constitution", to examine the prospects of a national youth movement. Momis was to become a leader of the campaign for the independence of Bougainville, from where he came.

Another of Father Bob's associations contributed much to the development

of his thinking. It was with the Young Christian Students' two movements, first for secondary school students and then for those at tertiary level. Reports of the sufferings of some YCS members in other countries were one factor in helping him to accept and propagate the growing part globalisation in the modern world should play in any campaign for social justice.

Adapting the Cardijn spirit and that of Vatican II to these and many other activities mentioned in his answers to Hilary Regan's questions, Bob reversed the traditional definition of Catholic Action: "the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the clergy (or hierarchy)". His preferred alternative is: "the participation of priests in the laity's apostolate, the essential focus being on their daily lives".

The book is full of quotable assertions and tributes to friends and counsellors who played key parts in Bob's journey. Some of them are deceased, one of whom, his close friend and travel companion Monsignor Robert Egar, died at 90 in September 2023.

A revised version of *New Visions of Priesting* would be worth considering. Written in 2022, this first edition would benefit from a re-writing, accompanied by better sub-editing than the edition under review received when it was seemingly issued in haste without Bob, such an expert journalist, having the chance to check it – and when his own concluding draft chapter had missed the press. The absent chapter suggested the creation of "a youth movement committed to the environment (in its every dimension, human and ecological, local and global)" and taking its part "within the rest of humanity to save our common home and its inhabitants".

A new version would also benefit from taking heed of recent events in Rome (the Synod on Synodality and the repeated messages from Pope Francis on the environment) and Australia (the Plenary Council's conclusion and aftermath).

BOOK NOTE

Hildegard of Bingen: A poetic journey

Author: Colleen Keating
Publisher: Ginninderra Press, 2019.
ISBN: 9781760417666
Paperback 248 pp.
Price: \$35

Book note by Anne Power*

This book about the poetic expressions of Hildegard has been appropriately written by an Australian poet. The book is mostly chronological, arranged as nine collections of poems. The first book of poems are about the arrival of Hildegard with her women entering the cloistered state, welcoming its rhythm and revelling in the beauty of the location of the Abbey at Disibodenburg. The second book begins with the spiritual support of her confessor, the monk Volmar. The third and fourth books are engaged with the death of her close friend Jutta and Hildegard's confrontations with the Abbot. She called on the papal envoy to help her in these confrontations. The fifth and sixth books see Hildegard leave the Abbey to establish the community at Bingen and write her book *Scivias*. The final three books include her missionary journeys and her success in having the dowries of the women returned so that the funds could be used to the benefit of the community they were serving. This is a very readable publication and its poetic language is an extra treat. Warmly recommended.

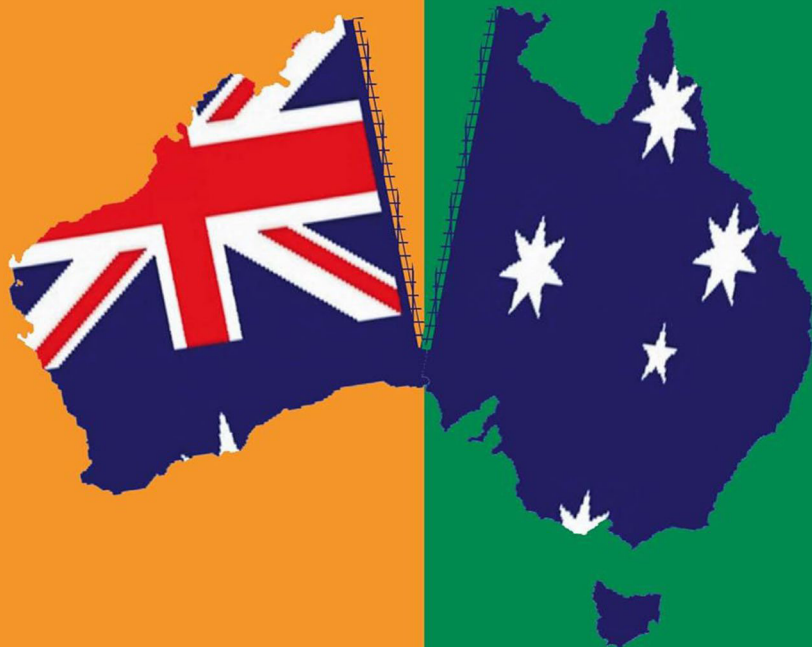


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The back cover image is from Jeff Kildea's *Tearing the Fabric: Sectarianism in Australia, 1910 to 1925* (Citadel Books, 2002). Stories in this issue relating to early twentieth-century sectarianism are those on the Tempe Magdalen Refuge (pages 22 and 42) and the two winners of the James MacGinley award (pages 50 and 71).

Tearing the Fabric

Sectarianism in Australia 1910-1925



Jeff Kildea