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Coadjutor Archbishop Justin Simonds of Melbourne, Pope John XXIII and Michael Costigan, 10th June 1960. Photograph by the Pontifical Photographer, Felici.

See article page 83.

Front cover: window, St Benedict’s Church, Broadway Photo: Lyn Mills
(see book review page 167)
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Contents

Robert Lehane, Father Therry, Dr Bland and the problem of the trans-Atlantic telegraph... 2
Odhran O’Brien, The curious case of Bishop Brady: a new perspective. 10
Robert O’Shea, Irish nuns during English Benedictine rule: the impact of Irish sisters in early Catholic Australia. 23
Stephen Utick, The faith-based charitable mission of Charles O’Neill in New South Wales (1881-91) 32
Vincent Crow, Secular and religious firsts of Haberfield. 48
Michael McKernan, Churches at war, then and now. 63
John Warhurst, Fifty years since the “Goulburn Strike”: Catholics and education politics 72
Michael Costigan, Vatican II as I experienced it. 83
Edmund Campion, Vatican II: fifty years on. 105
Benjamin Edwards, Vatican II and the dying gasps of Australian sectarianism. 115
Paul Crittenden, Vatican II viewed from afar. 125
James Franklin, Memoirs by Australian priests, religious and ex-religious. 142
Pat Mullins, Looking back on the way we were. 163
Book review: Lyn Mills, Australia’s Oldest Consecrated Catholic Church: St Benedict’s, Broadway, reviewed by Edward Waters. 167
Book notes. 170

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Father Therry, Dr Bland and the Problem of the Trans-Atlantic Telegraph

Robert Lehane*

The advance of science in the 19th century owed much to the work of dedicated part-timers. In colonial Australia, Rev. Julian Tenison Woods, co-founder with Saint Mary of the Cross of the Sisters of St Joseph, was a major contributor; more than 150 published papers record his contributions to geology, palaeontology and zoology in the 1860s to ’80s.¹ Rev. W.B. Clarke of the Church of England, honoured by the New South Wales government in 1861 as the scientific discoverer of Australian gold, was another.²

These men were true scientists, whose rigorous observations and analysis have stood the test of time. The century also produced a crop of enthusiastic amateurs, excited by the industrial revolution, who were able to persuade themselves, if few others, that they had found the answers to some big questions exercising people’s minds. For example, Dr William Bland, a surgeon much lauded in Sydney from the 1820s until his death in 1868 for his healing skill and benevolence, believed he had solved the problem of manned flight; his ‘atmotic ship’ would cut the travel time between Britain and New South Wales from two or three months to four or five days. Bland’s contemporary, the much loved but disputatious Rev. John Joseph Therry, thought he had a solution to problems that caused the first telegraph cable laid under the Atlantic Ocean, in the late 1850s, to fail.

The Therry papers in the Mitchell Library include a handful of letters by Bland to the renowned priest, and some of his draft replies. The doctor, prominent in colonial politics from the 1830s and a key figure in the development of institutions including the Sydney Benevolent Society and Sydney College, was both his medical attendant and a friend.³

The first letter in the collection is dated October 1856, not long after Therry became parish priest at Balmain, the post he held until his death in May 1864. In it, Bland simply acknowledged ‘with best thanks’ a ‘most gratifying and kind communication’ from Therry enclosing a ‘very handsome fee’.⁴ In the next, sent nearly two years later with a bill, he had more to say:⁵


Dear and Very Reverend Sir,

Your being so well, as I was happy to find when I last did myself the pleasure to call on you, and the reports having been so favourable which have reached me since respecting your general appearance as to health, together with my hope and confidence had there been anything the least wrong you would have done me the favour to let me hear from you – have been my inducements to omit making any personal enquiries of late – and, in transmitting you the enclosed I will content myself with merely the expression of my sincere hope not only that you are in the enjoyment of your usual good health but that you may long continue to be so – and that you may thus be enabled to experience the fruits of your increasing labours spread over so many years and those acts of piety and benevolence for which you have been so long and are still so eminently conspicuous.

Believe me,

Dear and Very Reverend Sir,

Yours ever most sincerely

W. Bland

Subsequent correspondence makes it clear that the sentiments the Anglican doctor expressed were genuine, not simply the products of Victorian convention. Bland had preceded Therry to the colony by six years, sentenced to seven years’ transportation for killing a fellow naval officer in a duel. This inauspicious beginning was followed by a year in Parramatta Gaol for libelling Governor Macquarie, but it was not long before his works won him high regard among Sydney’s gentry as well as the poor and afflicted.

In a letter dated 3 May 1861, Therry confided that ‘on this day forty one years ago I arrived in this colony after a long and very perilous voyage having with me a particle of the holy Cross the festival of the invention or finding of which by Saint Helena mother of Constantine the Great is celebrated by the Catholic Church on this anniversary’. From ‘that day to the present’, he had been honoured by Bland’s friendship, and had ‘many opportunities of observing that the principal object of your ambition has constantly been to promote the interests not only of the society amongst whom you reside and of which you are justly looked upon as one of the most distinguished members, but those of mankind in general’.

He therefore felt he could ‘with well founded confidence’ make a suggestion ‘which under your patronage as a great promoter of science may be of considerable advantage to the public in general’.
Permit me to make this suggestion in a very plain and simple way by requesting you at a leisure hour, which you very seldom have, to order your domestic bath to be nearly filled with water, a cord of about half an inch diameter with some pieces of cork and as many of lead to be provided. Let the cord be passed through as many pieces of cork as may be sufficient to make the cord float horizontally on the surface of the water from one end to the other of the vessel, attach a piece of lead to every part of the cord that passes through a cork of weight sufficient to sink the cord and corks to the bottom, but let the weights be attached to the cord by strings of a length equal only to three-fourths of the depth of the water.

To your scientific and comprehensive mind this experiment would be superfluous but to the generality of mankind it might be profitable and would not even by scientific men like yourself disregarded on account of its simplicity. I need scarcely add that it is my wish that you should in your own way endeavour to give on a grand scale to the submarine telegraphic cable the benefit on a grand scale of this humble suggestion.

Bland replied immediately, offering ‘warm thanks for your highly prized letter’. After acknowledging the friendship the two had shared from the ‘earliest’ days, he wrote, ‘I cannot but offer you additional thanks for the substantial proof you gave of that friendship by confiding to me a knowledge of your very interesting invention which you have described so well that I perfectly, I believe, understand it.’ He hoped the following week it would be possible ‘to gratify myself with the pleasure of seeing and conversing with you’ on the subject. Whether Therry’s idea ended up being ‘adopted in its entirety or not’, he continued, it threw ‘quite a new light’ on the problem of perfecting an undersea telegraph connection. A solution was a matter of vital concern ‘to the civilization, happiness and advancement of mankind’.

Whether the two had the proposed discussion is not recorded, but the matter remained on Therry’s mind and he wrote to Bland again in March 1863, nearly two years later, drawing the doctor’s attention to an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* about the Atlantic cable.

This told the story of efforts to date, initiated in 1851 and crowned briefly with success in August 1859 when Queen Victoria and U.S. President James Buchanan exchanged telegraphic greetings. The line went dead two months later, and it was not until 1866 that a lasting undersea connection was established.

Therry told Bland he felt convinced that adoption of his proposal, which would prevent damage to the cable due to contact with the ocean floor, would
‘obviate the principal difficulties adverted to’ in the *Herald* article. Bland again replied immediately, writing that ‘after careful reconsideration of the subject’ he retained the high opinion of Therry’s ‘ingenious invention’ that he had expressed two years earlier.\(^{10}\) He added,

There are, however, one or two special objections that I have heard made – for instance in the high latitudes the whale might be found destructive of the cable if raised from the bottom in the way that you propose – while within the range of the Gulf Stream it was thought that should the stream be found to act powerfully at any considerable depths, this might itself become an important objection. The latter objection might perhaps be readily got rid of – as to the former, I am not at present able to offer any opinion. But these are matters which would require a more ready means of discussion than that afforded by the pen and I therefore propose doing myself the pleasure of calling on you, that we may talk over this highly interesting matter at our leisure – at any time that you may do me the favour to appoint.

Apparently at this meeting Bland made a promise that he was remiss in fulfilling. On 3 May 1864 Therry wrote again:

Permit me to remind you that about 12 months since you had the goodness to tell me that you would bring under the consideration of His Excellency Sir John Young [the Governor of New South Wales] the subject of my letter to you under date 3 May 1861. Three full years have now elapsed since I did myself the honour to address that letter to you, and I have not during that period discovered any reason to alter the opinion I therein expressed. The principle referred to is a simple one, and when modified and regulated by practical and scientific men will I do believe prove itself to be comparatively economical and extensively useful.\(^{11}\)

Bland’s immediate reply is lost. He wrote again – to ‘My very dear and Very Reverend Sir’ – a week later asking that he ‘be so kind as to inform me whether you have received a letter sent you by me bearing date 5th Instant’ in reply to his of the 3rd.\(^{12}\) Therry responded next day:

When I received your very kind letter this morning asking whether I had received yours of the 5th instant I resolved at once to reply to both, but from that time 11 o’clock till the present nearly three o’clock PM every moment of my time has been occupied by various duties that I could neither lawfully omit nor postpone. The history of these few hours is that of every day as I am literally the servant of the people. I now have time only sufficient to add that I still hope you have not altered your resolution to submit the subject to His Excellency.\(^{13}\)
Therry’s long life ended twelve days later, and no more was heard of his ‘invention’. Bland attended the requiem at St Mary’s Cathedral, and heard Archdeacon McEncroe praise him in his moving panegyric as one of those who had protested forcefully when in 1825 the government withdrew Therry’s accreditation as chaplain, banning him from attending Catholics in gaols and hospitals. An anecdote of McEncroe’s provides another glimpse of the Bland/Therry relationship. Speaking at a meeting in 1857 called to begin fundraising for a testimonial presentation to Bland, McEncroe recalled his first contact with the doctor 25 years earlier. The Herald reported – using indirect speech, as journalistic convention of the time dictated – that soon after his arrival in Sydney the priest had been called to attend a poor, distressed woman.

When he came to see her, after administering to her spiritual consolation, he said she was much in need of medical advice, and told her she must obtain it; but she replied she had sent for a medical man, and that he wanted five guineas for his services. He (Mr McEncroe) then went to Father Therry, the patriarch of the Catholics of New South Wales, and told him a poor woman was almost dying in great necessity, and the utmost she could do was to keep a house over her head, and give food to her children. Father Therry said the most benevolent man he knew was Dr Bland, and if sent for he was sure assistance would not be denied. The rev. gentleman continued, he said, to supply Dr Bland with plenty of patients, but who gave no pay; still they received no less aid than if they had come rolling in carriages.

Bland often attended Catholic events. One reason, doubtless, was his frequently expressed disdain for sectarian division; probably another was the affinity he felt with Therry and McEncroe, fellow spirits in boldness of speech and concern for society’s outcasts. In 1841 he chaired a meeting called by prominent clergy and laymen to protest at a Legislative Council committee report that lamented that a third of the colony’s assisted immigrants were Catholics and proposed steps to boost recruitment of ‘a more desirable class of persons’. The Anglican Bishop Broughton had chaired the committee. Cheers and applause greeted Bland’s description of ‘factious and party feelings’ such as those displayed in the report as ‘great sources of mischief and misery’. Another example: In July 1846, at McEncroe’s invitation, he addressed a gathering of more than five hundred at the quarterly ‘tea meeting’ of the St Patrick’s Total Abstinence Society.

Did Bland become a Catholic the day before his death in July 1868? The Freeman’s Journal report of the alleged conversion brought a heated denial
from the Anglican paper, the *Australian Churchman*, which accused its rival of continually publishing ‘untruthful statements and inflammatory appeals to the passions of ignorant Romanists’. However, the detail in the Catholic paper’s account gives it the ring of authenticity.

Those intimate with Bland knew that for many years he had had ‘strong predilections in favour of the Catholic church’, *Freeman’s* reported. One friend, ‘a Catholic lady of high social position’ had lent him books of Catholic devotion. (This may have been Caroline Chisholm, who wrote in 1862 that Bland – ‘that venerable and venerated medical gentleman’ – had attended her ‘without expectation of fee or reward’ when she was ‘at death’s door’ three years earlier.) A ‘venerable and highly respected pastor’ (the context makes it clear this was McEncroe) had ‘always proclaimed his belief that the doctor would be received into the true fold...and made that happy event the subject of long and fervent prayer’.

That clergyman and Bland had visited each other often in recent months, *Freeman’s* reported. On one visit to the doctor’s house a few weeks before his death, the priest had been shown ‘a precious memento’, a Catholic prayer book presented to Mrs Bland by Father Therry. He had been asked for ‘further books of Catholic piety...for reading to the doctor’, and returned the next day with some suitable volumes including McEncroe’s *Wanderings of the Human Mind in Searching the Scriptures*.

Therry’s gift to Mrs Bland may be further evidence that the doctor had been considering conversion for some time. She remained in the Church of England, but seems always to have been solicitous of her husband’s feelings. A letter she wrote in March 1860 is in the Therry collection: ‘Should your arduous duties permit you to visit Sydney [from Balmain] may I take the liberty to request the favour of a call?’ she asked. No reason was given, but one could speculate that the doctor had revealed his ‘strong predilections in favour of the Catholic church’ and, aware of this, Therry brought the prayer book when he called.

*Freeman’s* reported that the dying Bland sent for Archbishop Polding, McEncroe and the Rector of Sydney University’s St John’s College, Very Rev. Dr John Forrest. Polding arrived first, and found Bland conscious, ‘in full possession of his faculties’ and expressing a desire to be received into the church. The archbishop proceeded with instruction and prayers; then McEncroe, who came shortly afterwards, conditionally baptized him in the presence of Mrs Bland – who brought in ‘the Holy water necessary for the blessed ceremony’ – and ‘a few Protestant friends’. Polding administered Extreme Unction a few hours before the doctor died.
Another paper, Goulburn’s *Southern Argus*, threw interesting light on the presence of Dr Forrest. For several years, it reported, Bland had been ‘in the habit of conversing’ with the sociable Irishman ‘on the many occasions on which they met in the Sydney University’.  

Forrest was another greatly interested in science, and it would be fascinating to have an account of the pair’s conversations. Bland saw a better world on the horizon. He believed manned flight would contribute to the ‘perpetually improving order of things which we now enjoy’ by breaking down barriers between peoples. He was confident the spread of education, central to the progress of the age, would elevate man’s nature, with the outcome that ‘not only the inducements to war, but war itself, may altogether cease’.  

Forrest, much less optimistic, displayed remarkable prescience in a talk he delivered in Sydney in 1861 that was published as a pamphlet after a repeat performance in Maitland nine years later. He feared that the immense power scientific and industrial progress was placing in human hands would lead to ruin unless there was corresponding moral progress. ‘The progressive increase of the forces which man can employ baffles all the calculations of sober thought,’ he said. ‘And when [man] shall have multiplied a thousandfold his conquests, and combined the irresistible forces of nature to an extent that imagination cannot picture, what if he should become the enemy of his kind and convert the vast and varied elements under his control into engines of destruction?’ The power unleashed would be formidable – ‘for good or for evil, for man or against him, according to the use or abuse of human liberty’.

**End notes**


3 Rev. John Joseph Therry papers, MLMSS 1810

4 Bland to Therry, 6 December 1856

5 Bland to Therry, 7 October 1858


7 Bland to Therry, 4 May 1861

8 Therry to Bland, 3 March 1863

9 *SMH*, 3 March 1863

10 Bland to Therry, 4 March 1863
Father Therry, Dr Bland and the problem of the Trans-Atlantic telegraph

11 Therry to Bland, 3 May 1864
12 Bland to Therry, 12 May 1864
13 Therry to Bland, 13 May 1864
14 Freeman’s Journal, 1 June 1864.
15 SMH, 30 July 1857
16 Sydney Gazette, 16 Sept 1841; SMH, 20 Sept 1841
17 Morning Chronicle, 1 July 1846
18 Freeman’s Journal, 25 July & 8 August 1868; Australian Churchman, 1 August 1868
19 Empire, 13 June 1862.
20 Published in Dublin in 1859.
21 Eliza Bland to Therry, 28 March 1860
22 Reprinted in the Empire, 28 July 1868
23 SMH, 22 Sept 1959.
THE CURIOUS CASE OF BISHOP BRADY – A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Odhran O’Brien*

John Brady is an enigmatic figure in Western Australian history. On 9 May 1845 Pope Gregory XVI appointed him as first Bishop of Perth. On return to the Swan River Colony, he was the first resident bishop of any denomination. During his episcopate Brady established Catholic schools, built churches, recruited religious orders, formed a productive relationship with the colonial government and was pivotal to the foundation of the Spanish Benedictine monastery of New Norcia. Yet these achievements, coupled with the complexity of being the founding bishop in a frontier society, have been understated by scholars who have written about Brady with an emphasis on his disagreements with religious orders and, in particular, his public battle with Bishop José María Serra. Serra, who became Brady’s long term rival, was one of the Spanish Benedictine monks who co-founded New Norcia. Brady’s struggle to remain sole leader of the diocese left him in a state of anxiety, and the diocese in disarray. As a consequence, he was forced to resign as bishop of Perth. These tumultuous events have been reviewed by a small group of historians: Bourke, Covesi-Killerby, Dowd, Farrell, Garrad, O’Donoghue, Tiggeman, and Walderssee, who have focused their work on a narrow set of archival material. The overemphasis of ecclesiastical archives has resulted in little or no reference to state archives and their collection of colonial government papers which contain extensive correspondence to and from Brady.

The Colonial Secretary was one of the highest ranking public officials under the Governor in Western Australia, acting as a representative of the British Colonial Office in the colony. The British Government appointed the Colonial Secretary and covered the expense of the official’s salary, which was one of the highest along with the Chief Justice and Comptroller General of the Prison. While the Colonial Secretary acted on many levels as counsel for the Governor, the primary function of the role was that of Chief Administrative Officer of the colony. The role was multifaceted and required the individual to act as an intermediary between the Governor and the various administrative departments, such as the Land and Surveys and the

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The Curious Case of Bishop Brady – a new perspective

Treasury departments. The Colonial Secretary’s Office was also in charge of conducting all the administrative functions required by the colonists and was the main point of contact between residents of the colony and the Governor. As standard practice, the Colonial Secretary was a member of the Executive and Legislative Councils. The papers of Colonial Secretary are particularly useful for the purposes of this study, as Brady wrote prolifically to the officer on a diverse range of administrative issues from land applications to marriage legislation. Brady’s letters often questioned the Governor’s administrative decisions and whether they were fair from the Catholic Church’s perspective. Further, Brady often corresponded with the Governor on social issues within the colony generally and the resources and on support required to establish a religious organisation. Most significantly, Brady also attempted to explain the very specific laws and practices of the Church which imposed certain mandatory undertakings by the bishop, such as establishing a separate Catholic cemetery – a requirement of Canon Law. This correspondence sheds light on Brady’s extensive and lucid knowledge of canon law, British law, and the need for collaboration with the laity on diocesan affairs. Uniquely, it reveals Brady’s response to challenges outside of the Catholic community, particularly the machinations of the colonial bureaucracy.

This paper will provide an overview of Brady’s correspondence with the Colonial Secretary’s Office from 1846-49, the years in which he had sole control over the diocese prior to the appointment of Bishop Serra as an coadjutor bishop of Perth. The Colonial Secretary’s records will be explored in conjunction with secondary source scholarship on the Catholic Church and colonial settlement many of which dismissed Brady as a ‘muddled and quarrelsome administrator’. This exploration aims to provide evidence that there is a much larger body of archival material relating to Brady, his personal life and his administration of Perth Diocese than that which has been hitherto used. The material will demonstrate that Brady had skills which made him an effective missionary and administrator, skills that have been marginalised in previous studies. There is a need for further research to be conducted particularly in the archives of colonial offices in Australia and their counterparts the United Kingdom. This paper is not aimed at exonerating Brady, rather at providing a greater context for Brady’s response to a difficult set of circumstances for which he was ill-prepared, but during which he remained committed to a vision of providing pastoral care in the Swan River Colony.
John Brady was born around 1800 in Coratober, County Cavan, Ireland. The knowledge of his youth is scant and can aptly, although rather unsatisfactorily, be summarised as ‘born to peasant stock in Ireland’. He spent at least part of his seminary training in Paris at the Seminaire Des Colonies. He studied in France perhaps due to the Penal Laws then in force in Ireland, which required seminarians to pledge allegiance to the Crown. Following his ordination around 1825 he volunteered for missionary work in the French island of Réunion, formerly known as the Island of Bourbon, in the Indian Ocean and he remained there twelve years.

After leaving Réunion, Brady made his way to Rome where he met the Benedictine Fr William Bernard Ullathorne, Vicar General to John Bede Polding, also a Benedictine and Vicar Apostolic of New Holland from 1834-42. Resident in Sydney, Polding had episcopal oversight of the entire Australian continent. In July 1837, Ullathorne recruited Brady for the penal settlement of Norfolk Island, located off the coast of Australia. On 23 February 1838 Brady arrived in Sydney and, instead of despatching him to Norfolk Island, Polding decided to appoint Brady to the district of Windsor, west of Sydney. Here he earned a reputation as a defender of the convicts and for providing care for the Aboriginal people. In his role as priest at Windsor, Brady earned the respect of Polding who in 1843 promoted him to Vicar General in charge of Western Australia. The Windsor experience equipped Brady with an understanding of the colonial social landscape: its laws and bureaucracy. This knowledge proved useful in the Swan River Colony, particularly after he was appointed bishop.

The first Vicar General of the Swan River Colony
On 8 December 1843, Brady disembarked at Fremantle port. Almost immediately, he began constructing a church in Perth on land granted to the Catholic community by Governor John Hutt. It was a promising sign of
government support. On 11 February 1844, less than three months later and after a brief tour of the colony, Brady sailed for Europe. In Rome, Brady petitioned officials of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, the curial office for missionary affairs, to create a new diocese, based in Perth and carved out of the Archdiocese of Sydney, which had been created in 1842. This was a bold move by Brady particularly as he had not consulted Archbishop Polding. Moreover Brady had incorrectly estimated the Catholic and Aboriginal population in the western part of Australia. He submitted to Propaganda Fide that there were 2,000,000 Aboriginals and 8,000 Europeans in the colony - an exorbitant figure. The 1848 colonial census calculated a total population of only 4,622 Europeans with 337 Catholics.

The figures presented by Brady to Propaganda Fide created a sense of urgency in the minds of the staff and cardinal members of the Congregation about putting in place structures of government and missionary organisation for the Catholic Church to bolster its presence in the Swan River Colony. There were other factors that also supported Brady’s application. In 1842 Polding had raised the possibility that Perth could become a diocese and the expectation of a large Aboriginal population in need of evangelisation. Ullathorne endorsed Brady’s promotion and it was noted that Brady had worked closely with the Aborigines in New South Wales. The Cardinals in

Figure 2 Map of the town of Perth in 1845, drawn by draftsman and surveyor Alfred Hillman. The map shows the size of Perth in the year that Brady petitioned Rome to have a Catholic diocese created within the colony. SRO, series 235, cons 3868, item 296
charge of Propaganda Fide met and discussed the question of Perth becoming a diocese without gathering local intelligence; in their deliberation, the Cardinals concluded that Polding would be supportive of the new diocese and Brady’s promotion, based on the fact he had sent Brady to Perth in the first place. In a papal audience on 4 May 1845, in light of the Cardinals’ support, Gregory XVI approved the establishment of Diocese of Perth. Subsequently, Brady was appointed its first bishop. Shortly after, he recruited twenty-seven missionaries in Europe and on 16 September 1845 began his return to the Swan River Colony. The large number of missionaries indicates the scale of pastoral work that Brady expected to undertake. He had made it clear to the religious orders that the Aborigines were a priority.

Brady and his new diocese (1846-48).

The freshly consecrated Bishop Brady arrived in Fremantle on 8 January 1846. His subsequent correspondence with the Colonial Secretary shows that he expected to be provided with adequate support to implement his plans. Within a month he wrote to Peter Broun, the Colonial Secretary identifying the diocese’s strategy for evangelising Aborigines. He requested land to post missionaries at King George Sound, Moore River and the Victoria Plains area and asked that surrounding government stations provide the missionaries with supplies. Subsequent correspondence applied for funding to establish a school without reference to religion. The tone of Brady’s requests was frank. On one occasion he asked ‘that the Governor please make an allocation from the colonial fund’. The forthright nature and minimal justification with which Brady wrote at this point suggests that he felt gaining funds from the colonial treasury was a matter of right. He had become accustomed to a system adopted in New South Wales where the Church Act of 1836 (introduced by Governor Richard Bourke) provided the major churches with funding proportionate to their size. Brady later argued to Revett Bland, Colonial Secretary, that the act placed all denominations ‘on the same footing’. Brady’s letters from 1846-49 indicate that he maintained the belief that the colonial government in the Swan River Colony should adopt the same funding system as New South Wales. He wrote that the ‘RC Community are entitled to a portion of the funds which were available’ to the colonial government and attached a letter from a member of his congregation stating that Brady was entitled to the ‘same salary as any other clergyman in the colony’. Bourke’s major study of the Catholic Church in Western Australia admits that funding was more liberal for Catholics elsewhere, however, it fails to demonstrate the extent to which Brady expected to
receive government funding in the Swan River Colony. Bourke’s study also indispensably negates the centrality of government funding to Brady’s large scale plans, particularly for the Aborigines, and his efforts to convince the government that the pastoral care he wished to provide was pivotal to the welfare of the colony.\(^{32}\)

At the time when Brady was attempting to gain funding from the government, the Swan River settlement was in a state of economic depression with limited investment from either the British Government or private investors. Crown land management hampered the progress of the settlement and could be described as verging on negligent. The British Colonial Office had allocated large tracts of arable land to a small group of settlers, many of whom did not have the necessary skills or labour. Consequently, the development of primary industries was very gradual.\(^{33}\) The depressed economy impacted the government’s ability to financially support Brady and he was first informed by public advertisement in 1843 published in the Government Gazette and the *Western Australian Journal* that funds would not be granted to church groups until further notice.\(^{34}\) The poor state of government revenue aside, Brady disagreed with the disproportionate support the government offered the Anglican Church. Reverend John Wollaston, an Anglican clergyman who established a church near Australind, noted in his diary at that time ‘the Bishop is...against the encroachment of the R Catholic Bishop’.\(^{35}\) The ‘Bishop’ referred to was Bishop William Grant Broughton, Anglican bishop of Australia, and he had little to fear from the Catholics.\(^{36}\) As Brady struggled to gain support for his schools in 1846, the Governor commissioned Reverend William Mitchell to investigate whether a government-funded school was viable in his parish.\(^{37}\) Not only was the government unwilling to support Brady, but his attempts to establish Catholic schools had triggered the government into attempting to establish a government schools throughout the colony. When Brady confronted the Governor’s office about the issues they refused to deny that they were attempting to rival the new Catholic education system.\(^{38}\) In addition to the correspondence of the Colonial Secretary and the Governor, the correspondence of the clergy, from other churches, provides important context to Brady’s missionary efforts coupled with the opposition he faced and such a comparison has not yet been extensively undertaken.

In addition to competing with other denominations for government support, Brady was plagued by internal division within his missionary group which he attempted to address in several ways. He continued to apply for funding from the government based on the merits that his plans would
benefit the colony and that it was his right to receive funding under British and colonial law. He also organised the diocesan administration through the appointment of a Vicar General and other official positions which provided collaboration and support. The diocese also had committees for the construction of churches, property trustees and education.

As Brady established a diocesan structure, he organised the missionaries into groups dedicated to specific areas of pastoral care. Lack of income remained, however, a critical setback as Brady could not support all the missionaries. Brady admitted to Bland in one of a frenzy of letters in 1849 that the ‘R.C. Clergy are supported by prayer stipends’ Given the Roman Catholic community was comparatively small and generally poor or working class, it was unlikely that many in the congregation could afford to offer any substantial donation for mass to be said for a particular intention. Therefore this could not have produced a significant income – certainly not enough to support all the missionaries. Ultimately, liquidity problems forced Brady to send Serra to Europe to raise funds. On arrival in Rome, Serra was consecrated coadjutor bishop of Perth with responsibility for the diocese’s finances. Serra’s promotion resulted in the breakdown of unity and the collapse of government within the Perth Diocese which could only be resolved by a visitation from Polding in his capacity as Metropolitan Archbishop.

Biographers of key missionaries such as Dom Rosendo Salvado, a Spanish Benedictine monk who co-founded New Norcia, and Ursula Frayne, Mother Superior of the Sisters of Mercy, place the blame for Perth Diocese’s lack of progress and intermittent cohesion solely with Brady and his lack of administrative ability. George Russo the author of Salvado’s biography, Lord Abbot of the Wilderness, has suggested that Brady’s lack of planning led to his inability to provide resources for the missionaries, making him an ineffectual and ‘incompetent’ leader. Similarly, in Ursula Frayne: A Biography, Catherine Kovesi-Killerby states that Brady’s ‘vision far outstripped his resources’. These evaluations are parroted by Thomas O’Malley in Tales Without Reason: Forgotten Heroes of The Apostolate in 1840s Australia, the history of the missionaries belonging to the Society of the Holy Heart of Mary, Frs Bouchet, Thévaux and Thiersé. The conflict between Brady and the priests of the Holy Heart of Mary over provisions and land resulted in their decision to leave the colony for Mauritius. In spite of the overall negative attitude towards Brady by these historians, Kovesi-Killerby does concede that he was able to gain some support from the government for education.
Bishop Brady – a new perspective

Two significant works relating to the study of the Catholic Church in Australia during the colonial period, James Waldersee’s *A Grain of Mustard Seed* and Christopher Dowd’s *Rome in Australia: The Papacy and Conflict in the Australian Catholic Missions*, give a bleak view of Brady. Waldersee studied the relationship between the Society for the Propagation of the Faith which funded Catholic missionary projects, and its contributions to Australian dioceses. He notes that Brady received a disproportionate allocation of funds and yet still acquired a debt of £11,000. Dowd’s study of Propaganda Fide and its relationship with the Australian Catholic bishops similarly estimates that Brady accumulated the unserviceable debt of £10,000. However, these studies rely primarily on a single set of data from an ecclesiastical archive and therefore do not incorporate all the data relating to Brady’s income and expenses.

As Russo reflects in Salvado’s biography, the debt which Brady accrued was due to the accumulation of assets, namely land, in addition to maintaining the missionaries. The land acquisitions were important for the construction of schools, churches and the New Norcia monastery which provided pastoral care for the Aborigines. The acquisitions support the notion that Brady had capabilities as an administrator, because they required a sound knowledge of the relevant regulations that were gazetted by the colonial government in 1847. Brady’s voluminous correspondence with Richard Madden, Colonial Secretary in 1848, revealed his understanding of the 1847 regulations and their application, particularly when he contested the government’s refusal to grant him a licence to clear land for grazing adjacent to that which he owned freehold. Brady claimed that being denied the licence caused him to lose stock and placed the diocese under further financial pressure. The loss was
Martin Newbold attempted a biography of Brady in the 1970s, but died before it was published. Again, like other accounts of Brady, Newbold’s work focused on Catholic archives with only a limited attention paid to colonial records. The manuscript called ‘The Turbulent Bishop Brady’ presented a balanced view in the sense that Newbold reflected on both Brady’s ‘muddled’ financial dealings and the tendency of some members of the religious orders to ‘grizzle’. Nevertheless, it neglects to contextualise Brady’s administration and does not examine his relationship with religious orders alongside his rapport with the government and the pastoral care structures he put in place. Newbold fails to give a broad perspective on Brady’s strengths and weaknesses as a founding bishop and, like other scholars, concludes that Brady had an excessive number of missionaries which he struggled to support. This is too simplistic and lacks context. Brady’s strategic plan relied on funding which he did not receive, yet he made land acquisitions and created administrative structures that were long lasting.

Brady’s letters to the colonial secretaries are a record of the opposition he faced from colonial authorities in fairly acquiring land, and of his complaints about the loss of stock – a loss he could not afford. At times such losses exacerbated his frustration with the Governor and government for being obstructive. The same record also demonstrates that he was able to gain support in the form of townsite and rural lot allocations for building churches, some contribution towards the maintenance of the clergy, which he nonetheless described as a ‘pittance’, and cooperation in having the Mercy convent repaired when in urgent need of a new roof. There is also evidence that he achieved positive results in the provision of social welfare as he influenced the government with regard to the treatment of hospital patients and orphans and the accessibility of pastoral care for prisoners.

Between 1846 and 1849, Bishop John Brady laid the foundations on which the Catholic Church of Western Australia continued to grow as the nineteenth century progressed. He was part of a much larger effort by the European Catholic Church to evangelise newly colonised places across the world. Missionary work was often high risk and missionaries were not professionally trained to manage the obstacles and challenges that they faced. Rarely did Catholic missionaries undertake research prior to the establishment of new missions or dioceses. Brady’s own lack of due diligence in trying to arrive at a full understanding of the social and economic
conditions of the Swan River settlement before he recruited missionaries is an example of this neglect and was an important factor in his personal problems and forced resignation.

The Colonial Secretary’s records add to the scholarly understanding of the often cumbersome social, bureaucratic, administrative and pastoral responsibilities that Brady faced as the first Bishop of Perth. This material provides a broader interpretation of the man and the early years of his administration, highlighting the contribution he made to improving social welfare of European settlers and the Aborigines through shaping government policy and legislation. He was indeed persistent, zealous and at times ‘baffling’. He found himself in trouble at various stages of his administration, but should not be dismissed as troublesome. He was constantly negotiating complex relationships whether with the colonial government, the religious orders or the faithful for whom he determinedly wanted to provide pastoral care. The study of Brady has previously focused on his relationship with the religious orders, the debt he accumulated, and Serra’s appointment to take charge of the diocese’s finances. These are only three components of his overall administration for which Brady as an individual, as well as being the first Bishop of Perth, should not be dismissed as a failure. A much broader analysis inclusive of materials such as the colonial papers examined in this exegesis is required. Until then a large volume of material in colonial and Catholic archives around Australia and overseas will remain untapped and the story of Perth’s first bishop will remain the curious case of Bishop Brady. 

End notes


4 In 1841 the colonial government made an act of parliament in which an onerous task was placed on all clergy outside of the Church of England who were forced to subsequently apply to the registrar for a licence on behalf of the couple.
5 John Brady to Colonial Secretary, no date given (some time in 1847), CSR, vol.160, folio.230, SRO.

John Brady: his early life and missionary work (1800-1843)
8 Brady’s exact date of birth cannot be confirmed: Bourke 8; Dowd, 276; O’Donoghue.
9 It has also been suggested that he may have studied at St Suplice in Paris: Stormon, 276; Bourke, 8.
10 Dowd, 125; Geraldine Byrne, Valiant Women: Letters from The Foundation Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia, 1845-1849 (The Polding Press: Melbourne, 1981), x.
11 Seminaire Des Colonies where Brady did some of his training is also known as the Seminary of the Holy Ghost: Ralph M. Wiltgen, The Founding of the Roman Catholic Church in Oceania, 1825-1850 (Australian National University Press: Canberra, 1979), 199-201.
13 Ullathorne hoped to fund the appointment from a donation that had be made to Propaganda Fide by an Austrian canon, ‘Canon Schmidt’. Schmidt had been informed of the notoriously harsh conditions faced by convicts on Norfolk by Baron von Hügel, who had visited Australia, and wanted missionary priests to be present on the island to provide pastoral care: Wiltgen, 199-200; Leo Madigan (ed), The Devil is a Jackass: Being the Dying Words of the Autobiographer William Bernard Ullathorne, 1806-1889, (Downside Abbey Publications: Bathurst, 1995), 145.
14 ‘Shipping Intelligence’, 26 Feb. 1838, Sydney Morning Herald, column 5, 2.
16 Moran, 555.

The first Vicar General of the Swan River Colony
17 Phillip Pendal, The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 20

18 ‘Shipping Intelligence’, Inquirer, 14 February 1846, column b, 2; Erica Erickson, The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians, re-1829-1888, vol. 1 (University of Western Australia Press: Nedlands, 1987), 290.

19 Dowd, 126.

20 Colonial Secretary’s Office, Census of October 1848, Government Gazette, Perth, 19 December 1848, State Library of Western Australia, Perth


23 Dowd, 129.


Brady and his New Diocese (1846-1848)

26 John Brady to Colonial Secretary, 3 February 1846, Colonial Secretary’s Records (CSR), vol. 147, folio. 167. State Records Office of Western Australia (SRO).

27 John Brady to Colonial Secretary, 5 March 1849, CSR, vol.188, folio: 185. SRO.

28 John Brady to Colonial Secretary, 8 March 1846, CSR, vol.147, folio.174. SRO.


30 John Brady to Colonial Secretary, 12 May 1849, CSR, vol.188, folio.219. SRO.

31 John Brady to Colonial Secretary, 13 July 1848, CSR, vol.175, folio.89. SRO; Robert D’Arcy to Colonial Secretary, 19 December 1843, CSR, vol.175, folio.91-92. SRO.

32 Bourke, 27.


34 Pendal, 16.


37 William Mitchell to Colonial Secretary, 17 March 1846, CSR, vol. 147, folio.175. SRO; O’Brien & Statham-Drew, 36-7.

38 De Garis, 320.

39 Fr Peter Powel begins corresponding with the Colonial Secretary in Brady’s behalf in March in 1846 and signed his letters as Vicar General: Peter Powel to Colonial Secretary, 27 March 1846, CSR, vol.147, folio.178. SRO.

40 Catholic Church Building Committee: Terrace Farrelly to Colonial Secretary, 3 May 1848, CSR, vol.175, folio.70. SRO; Roman Catholic Church Trustees:
Frayne’s biography provides many detailed descriptions of the Roman Catholics as she found them in 1846 after the arrival of the missionaries in the colony: Catherine Kovesi-Killerby, 121.

Garrad estimated Brady’s debt at £10,000 and attributes the schism largely to Brady’s accumulation of the debt: Garrad, 50.

Kovesi-Killerby, 121.

O’Malley, 15-18.

Dowd, 131; Waldensee, 144.


John Brady to Colonial Secretary, 4 September 1848, CSR, vol.175, folio.112-13. SRO; John Brady to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1849, CSR, vol.188, folio.160. SRO.

Note from Richard Madden attached to Brady’s letter reveals that the Governor granted the funds: Terence Farrelly to Colonial Secretary, 3 May 1848, CSR, vol.175, folio.70; (town land grant) John Brady to Colonial Secretary, 3 July 1849, CSR, vol.188, folio.168. SRO. (contribution to clergy) John Brady to Colonial Secretary, 15 March 1849, CSR, vol.188, folios.201-02. SRO. (aid repairs to the Sisters of Mercy Convent) John Brady to Colonial Secretary, CSR, vol.188, folio.212. SRO.

Brady made repeated requests that James Egan a prisoner be allowed to attend Mass: John Brady to Colonial Secretary, 1 January 1848, CSR, vol.175, folio.58. SRO; Brady disputed that Dr Ferguson, the colonial surgeon, stopped him visiting the sick in hospital and attempted visits while Ferguson was away: John Brady to Colonial Secretary, 26 January 1849, CSR, vol.188, folio.166-67. SRO. Brady requested an investigation into children who were found abandoned in his churchyard: John Brady to Colonial Secretary, 11 August 1849, CSR, vol.188, folio.234. SRO.

Stormon, 276.

The desire for a cohesive Australian identity is a ceaseless one that permeates many aspects of society, including religious traditions. However, fashioning a meta-narrative of a distinctively Australian manner of belief is complicated by differences of denomination and ritual, which are often predicated upon ethnicity. The Catholic Church frequently invokes its supposed universality to diminish these divisions in its rhetoric, as exemplified by Archbishop Polding’s 1856 pastoral letter: ‘Before everything else we are Catholics; and next, by a name swallowing up all distinctions of origin, we are Australians ... we are no longer Irishmen.’ Yet this unity is fragile, as Polding proceeds to proclaim ‘the man who seeks by word or writing to perpetuate invidious distinctions is an enemy to our peace and prosperity’. However it was not only men who sought to infuse their faith with Irishness: lay women and in particular religious sisters brought Irish notions of Catholicism and applied them to an Australian context. Whilst Polding’s phraseology suggested nationality was irrelevant, his vision for a Benedictine abbey-diocese was perceptibly English in origin. Fearing that such a model would alienate the primarily Irish laity, Irish Catholic leaders encouraged orders such as the Irish Sisters of Charity to take a more active role in society. Furthermore, Irish nuns acted on their own volition to remould the Church community in closer emulation of the Irish ‘devotional revolution’. Their close connection with the laity and the secular public gave them a substantial influence within Australian Catholic society which continues to resonate through the schools, hospitals and social institutions which Irish nuns enthusiastically founded.

Nineteenth century Irish emigration was not confined to lay people alone; Irish clergy developed an efficient system for gaining foreign episcopal appointments, especially through the influence of Paul Cullen, Rector of the Irish College in Rome and later Archbishop of Dublin. All Hallows Seminary in Dublin was established especially for the information of missionary priests. The pattern of religious exports extended to nuns; many Bishops had cousins or sisters who belonged to religious orders, providing a pool of loyal supporters to found convents in newly-established overseas dioceses. Moreover, Irish women were progressive in establishing

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new orders which took simple vows rather than solemn vows, a move which had been resisted by the Vatican for three centuries. Such vows permitted nuns to leave the cloister and become more vigorous in ministry, especially to the poor; this earned them the colloquial designation ‘walking nuns’ amongst the Irish.

Thus the nuns were integrated into an increasingly active Irish community, energised by Daniel O’Connell’s popular political movements. (One of the pioneering nuns in Australia, Scholastica Gibbons, was O’Connell’s relative). Irish immigrants to Australia were accustomed to parishes where ‘social and political motives mingled inextricably with religious’. Suttor observes that similarly, ‘the other organs of Irish Catholic resurgence, the newly founded religious congregations … had the same character’.

In this period of Irish missionary zeal, the status of the Bishopric of New Holland as a monastic domain was atypical. John Bede Polding, nephew of John Bede Brewe, head of the English Benedictines, was appointed to lead the Australian Church by Pope Gregory XVI, himself a Benedictine, in 1834, just before the rise of Irish ecclesial expansionism. In childhood, Polding’s fascination with the colonisation of Australia caused his fellow students to mock him as the ‘Bishop of Botany Bay’ and by the time this nickname was fulfilled, Polding had an ambitious vision for the colonial Church. He envisaged an abbey-diocese, served by monks instead of diocesan priests, believing that the strictures of monastic living would disguise differences of nationality amongst the professed and have an edifying impact upon the convict-tainted laity. A fundamental part of this proposal was the establishment of an enclosed Benedictine convent, comprised of ‘our own dear sisters … the right sort – accomplished, religious, energetic souls … to educate the better, and the poorer classes too, if they can’. Polding’s primary objective was to replicate his own privileged schooling, in contrast to the developing Irish focus upon ‘parochial schools’ for the less wealthy. To enable his plan, he sponsored the passage of ‘a mother and three daughters of culture and means’ as potential candidates for his convent. The only diversion from this Benedictine predominance resulted from an approach by a ‘Tipperary girl named de Lacy’ who challenged Polding even before his consecration as Bishop to consider bringing the Sisters of Charity to Australia. This uncloistered order had only received final approval from the Vatican in that year, whilst de Lacy was not yet a postulant. Nevertheless, Polding decided to sponsor her novitiate to enable her to establish the order in Australia at a later date. This uncharacteristic support for an unenclosed
Irish order could have been inspired by de Lacy’s youthful enthusiasm for the Australian mission, which recalled Polding’s own childhood aspirations.

Polding’s decision to bring the Australian Church within the Benedictine Rule was unique, as Suttor notes: ‘English Benedictinism since the Protestant period provided no precedent for what he was going to do’. Even in the nineteenth century, there was no Benedictine seminary in England; priests were educated in Belgium and upon their return, their ministry was ‘largely the affair of the gentry’. This contrasted sharply with the Australian Catholic experience wherein Rodger Therry concludes ‘there were not half a dozen Catholic families belonging to the gentry’. Nevertheless, Polding’s predilection for gentrified monastic clergy was probably useful in gaining acceptance from colonial authorities, who had constrained the activities of pioneering Irish priests John Joseph Therry and John McEncroe. As Irish emigration to Australia intensified however, discontent at the English orientation of the Australian Catholic hierarchy increased. The arrival of the Sisters of Charity did little to assuage tensions; some Irish priests resented sacrificing a portion of their allowances to the Benedictine Cathedral-Monastery and McEncroe for instance, chose to ‘tithe himself on behalf of the Charity Sisters or the Irish Colleges’.

Meanwhile, the laity immediately ‘idolised’ the Sisters of Charity. A warm reception was perhaps inevitable, as they were Australia’s first unclerestressed nuns, but their reputation was enhanced by their strong links to prominent members of the lay community – Sister Mary O’Brien was Rodger Therry’s cousin – and their impressive rapport with the convict women at the Parramatta Factory. The effectiveness of their ministry was such that prisoners wanted to make their confession to the nuns rather than the priests.

The success of the nuns could be posited in competitive terms: ‘the only other religious congregation in Australia was making a good showing against the Benedictines’, and Polding responded by protesting to Bishop Goold that the Sisters ‘almost from the beginning have been more or less a trouble to us’. While there had been issues of discipline – even on the passage to Australia, one of the nuns had to be released from her vows after a dalliance with the captain of the ship – the conduct of the sisters was less troubling to Polding than their divided loyalties, which were emblematic of Irish ambivalence to Benedictine authority. William Ullathorne, Polding’s Vicar-General, was suspicious of the Superior General of the Sisters of Charity, believing that there was ‘something radically wrong in Mrs. Aikenhead’s judgement’. However, her decision to institute the Australian branch as a separate congregation under Polding’s control should have appeased the
clergy. Yet the Sisters insisted that Mother Aikenhead and the Archbishop of Dublin were their ultimate arbiters. Correspondence to Dublin featured countless complaints of a lack of support from the Benedictine diocese, including quite banal grievances: ‘every day means Lent to us, not being able to afford butter for breakfast’. The Sisters became dependent upon lay Irish Catholics; their convent at Parramatta for example was donated by William Davis, who was transported for making pikes for use in the 1798 rebellion. Periods in which Polding was absent from the diocese were exploited; in 1847 three nuns relocated to Hobart to work under an Irish Bishop, and when Polding was in Rome in 1857 St. Vincent’s Hospital was founded, in what Walsh interprets as ‘a declaration of independence’. Health care was an area the Sisters of Charity were ‘excelling at in Ireland’ and their expertise was fundamental in establishing Australia’s first ‘professional’ hospital. The establishment of St. Vincent’s as a public hospital also represented a notable adaptation of the Sisters regulations, which had hitherto prevented them from receiving government subsidies. Their determination to operate outside diocesan control was such that Sister de Lacy, along with Plunkett and McEncroe, empowered themselves as direct owners of the hospital property, rather than simply trustees. Polding, who considered a hospital a low priority, returned from Rome a victim of an ‘all too nimble Irish coup’. St. Vincent’s is emblematic of the tenacity of the Irish nuns. O’Farrell declares that the Irish community saw the hospital ‘as a project peculiarly their own’ and were more generous in their donations to it than to other church institutions! Whilst Irish Catholicism was typically more confrontational than Benedictinism, potentially stalling integration into society, non-denominational programmes such as St. Vincent’s served as an outreach. The nuns in particular garnered respect from non-Catholics; a Presbyterian surgeon told the nuns ‘I love you women but I hate your religion’. In 1859 the provision of Protestant Bibles in the hospital was objected to by the Diocese, yet Sister de Lacy preferred to resign and return to Ireland rather than compromise the Hospital’s non-sectarian stance. The departure of the pioneering Irish nun was condemned by the Freeman’s Journal as exemplifying ‘the terrible absolutism which governs our ecclesiastic affairs’. Polding’s conciliatory position towards Protestants was weakened and the resolve of the Sisters of Charity became ‘a standard theme of Irish ... eulogy’. In an attempt to break the nexus between Irish identity and religious vocation, Polding created an Australian order of nuns, the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, who initially operated a refuge for women. There was
little Benedictine heritage in such a ministry and thus the resultant order was a fusion of Benedictine theology with ‘the spirit, the experience and some of the methods’ of the Irish orders.\textsuperscript{47} Sister of Charity Scholastica Gibbons was charged with guiding the order, which steadily became similarly associated with Irishness. All bar one of the original nuns was Irish and the remit of the nuns brought them into close contact with the Irish.\textsuperscript{48} The Good Samaritans, ‘destined for the poorest the community’, made several modifications to the Benedictine Rule which heightened Irish influence.\textsuperscript{49} Soon after foundation, the order abolished the traditional Benedictine distinction between choir and lay nuns; whilst the change was ‘in line with Australian egalitarianism’, it also made profession more accessible for lower class Irish women.\textsuperscript{50} The dowry prerequisite that existed in the ‘older European and Irish orders’ was not enforced upon entry, causing Bishop Murray to criticise the order as open to ‘servant girls who were well known as such.’\textsuperscript{51} Thus the status of a Good Samaritan Sister was open to the stereotypical ‘Bridget’.

Cardinal Moran was cruelly critical of Polding’s legacy, declaring that ‘every auxiliary upon which he seemed to rely for success ... crumbled to dust’.\textsuperscript{52} In explicating Polding’s faults, Moran remarks ‘his seminary failed, his college failed, his religious community failed, his monastic cathedral failed’.\textsuperscript{53} Notably, Moran does not mention the Good Samaritan order, whose nuns proceeded to distinguish themselves in teaching and social work. Their ministry extended beyond the Sydney Archdiocese, with the same Irish Bishops who undermined Polding’s authority inviting his Benedictine institute into their dioceses.\textsuperscript{54} In this respect, the Good Samaritans were less of an ‘auxiliary’ than they were the primary means of perpetuating Benedictine spirituality in the Australian Church.\textsuperscript{55} The delicate admixture of Irish and Benedictine traditions in the order survived a variety of threats. Scholastica Gibbons, who remained a Sister of Charity despite being Superior-General of the Good Samaritans for nearly two decades, resigned after being accused of the very Irish offence of drinking.\textsuperscript{56} However the next three Superior-Generals were of Irish descent, including Berchmans McLaughlin, the grand-daughter of an Irish convict.\textsuperscript{57} When Vaughan succeeded Polding, he requested that his own Benedictine monastery be secularised and considered suppressing the ‘un-typical Benedictine congregation for women’.\textsuperscript{58} Yet the order survived and its role was substantially expanded when state aid was withdrawn from Catholic schools. Drawing simultaneously upon the Benedictine tradition of selective cloister schools and the nineteenth century Irish model of the industrial school, the Good Samaritans created a variety of schools for ‘every class of persons’, \textsuperscript{59}
Whilst the Good Samaritan model mitigated the extremes of both Benedictinism and Irishness, it did not instigate the immediate rise of a singularly Australian mode of belief. Male clergy and religious were typically recruited directly from Ireland, extending the ‘condition of tutelage’ that ensued once the ‘Cullenite bloc’ confirmed its control of the Australian hierarchy. In particular, Cardinal Moran interfered with the Good Samaritan Rule, excising Benedictine precepts. Amongst the nuns themselves, sisters responsible for Novice formation reported continuing difficulties with ‘the divisiveness of racial point-scoring, Irish over Australian’. When the Good Samaritans were sent to rural areas, they were often based in locations with some of the highest proportions of Irish ancestry, such as Coragulac, Koroit and Port Fairy, ensuring that their affinity with Irish culture continued after its decline amongst the general population.

Nevertheless, the experience and contribution of Irish nuns remains integral to Australian Catholicism. Whilst Irish clerical assertiveness impeded the development of more nuanced, inclusive Catholic society, Suttor concedes ‘that there was a Catholic subculture in Australia ... was largely owing to the nuns, so many of them Irish girls’. Irish nuns provided the laity with their primary interface with religious life, through their teaching, nursing and social missions. Despite their intimidating habits and strict Rule, nuns made themselves available to the public through their fundraising efforts and home visitations. Convents were incorporated into local parishes and schools, providing a counterbalancing influence upon congregations dominated by a dogmatic parish priest. Whilst there was an attractive equality and tranquillity to Polding’s ideal of a Benedictine ‘family’ – monks and nuns working together ... united under him as their sole superior’, ultimately such a narrow apex of authority could not satisfy the politicised Irish laity and clergy. Irish nuns reinvigorated an inert religious community; even the voyage to Australia served as a portion of the noviciate of several Sisters of Charity and their first postulant was a passenger on the boat that brought the first sisters from Ireland to Australia. Whereas Polding and Ullathorne found it difficult to motivate English Benedictines to join the Australian mission, Irish nuns were receptive to the prospect and were often propelled by specifically Irish sentiments; in her request to join the first contingent of Sisters of Charity in Australia, Sister John Cahill proclaimed: ‘I often wished to accompany the wretched men on board to begin there what the state of insubordination at Newgate rendered so difficult.’

It can be difficult to measure the historical impact of Australian nuns since many of the primary sources and much of the historiography focuses almost
Irish Nuns During English Benedictine Rule

exclusively upon Bishops and senior clergy. The essentially subordinate status of sisters within the religious hierarchy must be recalled, and acts of defiance such as those chronicled in this paper should be placed within a context of continual deference. However, on the level of social and personal history, it is reasonable to contend that ‘the influence of religious sisters and brothers has been more penetrating’ than the consequences of episcopal edicts. Edmund Campion argues that ‘this is especially true for Australian Catholicism, whose central religious institution, the parochial school, was the creation of sisters’. The formative role of education ensures a lasting influence across the Catholic community, which through the continued operation of congregational schools, extends into generations otherwise wholly untouched by Irish-inspired institutions. Whilst the presence of nuns, particularly those of Irish descent, is progressively more uncommon, the locale, iconography and fundamental mission of countless organisations is directly attributable to Irish nuns, whose beliefs and exertions provide a rare unifying force in the composition of Australian Catholic identity.

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17 Ibid.
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19 Ibid., 78.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid., 38.
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25 Campion, Australian Catholics, 18.
26 Suttor, Hierarchy and Democracy, 71.
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Irish Nuns During English Benedictine Rule


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Ibid.


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Ibid., 178.

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Ibid., 130.


Ibid., 130.

Ibid., 332.

Ibid., 240.


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Cullen, *The Australian Daughters of Mary Aikenhead*, 45.

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Ibid.
The establishment of the St Vincent de Paul Society throughout Australia during the nineteenth century was characterised by different foundational trajectories in each colony beginning with the establishment of first, albeit short-lived, Melbourne Conference by an English-born priest, the Reverend Gerald Ward (1806-53) in 1854. These trajectories lasted until the consolidation of the Society under a Superior Council of Australasia in Sydney with Louis Heydon (1848-1918) as first President in 1895. Between these two foundational milestones was the faith-based charitable mission of Charles O’Neill (1828-1900) undertaken during 1881-91 that, with the support of Society of Mary (Marist Fathers), successfully established the Society in New South Wales beginning with St Patrick’s Church Hill Conference on 24 July 1881. This mission of the Irish-Scot O’Neill, then one of the foremost civic engineers in the Australian colonies and a New Zealand colonial parliamentarian during 1866-75, is of historical significance for two reasons.

Firstly, this mission formalised the first major lay Catholic outdoor relief welfare program in New South Wales in an era before government welfare relief. Given the support and endorsement of Archbishops Roger Bede Vaughan osb and (subsequently Cardinal) Patrick Francis Moran, it quickly became the largest that existed in the Australian colonies prior to Federation.

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Secondly, O’Neill’s charitable mission, providing as it did a Catholic alternative to the then flourishing evangelical slum missions, was guided by principles external to those then dominating Australian colonial philanthropy. Much of this externality came through the guidance of the Society’s President-General Adolphe Baudon (1819-88) who ensured that O’Neill’s mission was guided by the Rule of the Society, founded in Paris in May 1833. This ‘French connection’ was reinforced by the support of the Marists who like the charismatic influence behind the St Vincent de Paul Society, (now Blessed) Frédéric Ozanam, had associations with the city of Lyon. O’Neill himself, having led the Society in the Western Districts of Scotland during 1859-63, was already well schooled in the Society’s practices. He was deeply influenced by the traditional Catholic doctrine of mercy applied to charity and had inculcated a simple incarnational spirituality with respect to the poor through devotion to both St Vincent de Paul and St Francis of Assisi. O’Neill also sought to promote a less obtrusive form of outdoor relief in contrast to the prevailing judgemental climate in philanthropy.

The mission was initiated by Baudon through a written invitation to O’Neill of 4 September 1877, following the latter’s successful application for a conference he presided over in Wellington to be aggregated (i.e., affiliated with and formally recognised by the Society). Baudon’s letter to O’Neill recognised the disappearance of the Melbourne Conference and conveyed concerns (from a European Catholic perspective) about the activities of freemasonry, as this extract reveals:

> Some time ago, a Conference was formed in Melbourne, but we fear it is broken up. Could you not, with the assistance of the good Marist Fathers, re-establish it; and found new Conferences in Sydney and the other chief cities of Australia? It is much to be feared that the Masonic lodges are very numerous in those cities. Why should Catholics always allow these lodges to surpass them in zeal and energy?

An ongoing problem was matching the ‘bottom up’ establishment of conferences with the ‘top down’ Society administration in Paris, a situation then exacerbated by the colonial tyranny of distance. The solution to this situation was for O’Neill to re-locate himself to the Australian colonies; this he completed after a series of Trans-Tasman voyages including to Sydney and Melbourne between January 1880 and May 1881. However, despite favourable responses from and personal audiences with Vaughan and Archbishop James Goold in Melbourne, O’Neill was initially unable to galvanise sufficient interest among local laity to re-establish the Society.
The relative prosperity of the early 1880s may have been a factor in this initial disappointing response to the mission. In addition, Catholic communities in the colonies had yet to fully appreciate a lay-based leadership providing outdoor relief, despite the contemporary example of Caroline Chisholm. Catholic assistance to the poor had traditionally been associated with the figure of the priest, exemplified by the ‘sickbed, suffering, death and burial’ ministry by Reverend John Joseph Therry during the convict era, and by Ward with the foundation of the Melbourne Conference. Catholic religious orders providing relief for the poor were also increasing in numbers throughout the Australian colonies by the late nineteenth century. The ministry of the first religious sisters included some home visitation of the poor, although religious work over time became focused on institutional care. The Friendly Brothers in Melbourne, founded by Reverend Patrick Geogeghan in 1848, then undertook much of the basic charitable work then proffered by the Society.

Catholic acceptance of the Society in the colonial context was but one challenge facing the O’Neill mission. Despite Baudon’s concerns about freemasonry, the latter’s charitable activities were primarily focused on benefits for the immediate families of active freemasons. More serious was the sectarian ill-will directed at the growing Irish-Catholic minority in New South Wales, where O’Neill’s mission finally gained a foothold in July 1881. This was an accumulated legacy of the royal assassination attempt by Henry O’Farrell in 1869, Dr John Dunmore Lang’s attacks on ‘popery’ and Henry Parkes’s campaigns against further Irish immigration.

There was a yet more subtle challenge; this being establishing the Society’s public charity credentials within the broader framework of colonial philanthropy then operating in the Australian colonies, something that O’Neill may not have fully appreciated at the outset. This framework included eschewal of the Poor Laws of Britain and discouragement of paupery, and was subject to the growing influence of Christian faith-based charity missions based on an evangelical Protestant ethos. Within this framework, both the benevolent societies supported by colonial administrations and those charities more directly associated with the Protestant denominations emphasised the distinction between the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor in the practice of charity. Further, intrusion had become the cold face of colonial public philanthropy particularly in matters of religious conviction. Yet the O’Neill mission succeeded in the face of such challenges with the successful establishment of the Society in New South Wales during 1881-84, followed by consolidation with twenty active conferences served by over
The faith based charitable mission of Charles O’Neill in New South Wales

three hundred members, undertaking almost eleven thousand visits to poor annually by 1891, the year of O’Neill’s resignation from Society leadership.

Three factors lay behind the final acceptance by the Church in New South Wales of O’Neill’s mission. The first was the support of the Marists and the second, the support of the Catholic hierarchy. The third was O’Neill’s recruitment of a base of volunteers from among the male Catholic laity in Sydney, permanently committed to home visitation in pairs, fund raising, local parish leadership and administrative support.

O’Neill’s association with the Marists began during 1876-80 in Wellington New Zealand, where the Reverend Jean-Baptiste Petitjean sm had established a conference in 1875. O’Neill’s friendship with Wellington’s Bishop Francis Redwood sm was also forged during this period; Redwood publically gave his blessing to O’Neill’s mission at St Mary’s Cathedral Wellington in March 1880. In July 1881, when O’Neill approached the Marist community at the presbytery of St Patrick’s Church Hill, Sydney, he raised the shared French roots of the Marists and the St Vincent de Paul Society. The Marists welcomed O’Neill’s approach, given the challenges that they faced in ministering to the slums of The Rocks district. Key supporters included the Reverends Charles Heuzé sm (first spiritual advisor to St Patrick’s Church Hill Conference), Pierre Le Rennetel sm, Peter Piquet sm and Augustin Ginisty sm who subsequently promoted the St Vincent de Paul Society to parishioners, became spiritual advisors and referred needy locals to St Patrick’s Church Hill Conference. Le Rennetel, later parish priest, became well known for his promotional charity sermons during the 1880s.

As noted, O’Neill’s approaches to the hierarchy also proved fruitful. Within three days of a preliminary meeting of the St Patrick’s Conference held on 24 July 1881, Vaughan had given written approval to O’Neill to the Society’s establishment. O’Neill immediately gained an additional conference from the parish of St Francis de Sales, Haymarket formed by young volunteers on the same day as the one at St Patrick’s Church Hill; here the influence and support of Vaughan’s Vicar-General Dean John Sheridan osb was evident. Sheridan became spiritual advisor to the Particular Council of Sydney, formed in January 1884 to coordinate the Society’s activities in the city, and held this position until 1890.

By the time Moran arrived in Sydney in September 1884, the establishment of the Society in New South Wales was firmly in place. By that year and under O’Neill’s leadership, the Society had sixty-five members and ten honorary members within its four conferences in addition to the
presiding Particular Council of Sydney.\textsuperscript{28} Within a few months, Moran demonstrated his own support by presiding over a meeting of the Council in November, followed by a Society general assembly in December 1884. He demonstrated enthusiastic support for the Society with its overwhelmingly Irish Catholic membership, and made some personally symbolic gestures, including donating the proceeds of his printed lecture \textit{The Civilization of Ireland before the Anglo-Norman Invasion} in 1885.\textsuperscript{29} The Society clearly benefited from the Moran era, as did the many other Catholic societies, guilds, associations, confraternities and devotions that provided the laity with many new channels of participation in the Church.\textsuperscript{30}

One significant development came on 12 May 1885, as Pope Leo XIII proclaimed St Vincent de Paul as the patron of all associations of charity throughout the Catholic world. This was a tremendous boost for the Society that bore that saint’s name, in promoting itself to Catholic laity. This was followed by a Pastoral Letter of the Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in Australia issued on 28 November 1885, signed by Moran, one archbishop and fifteen bishops, that referred to the Society’s work ‘for the succour of the bodily and spiritually destitute’.\textsuperscript{31} The Pastoral Letter exhorted parish priests to support Catholic associations such as the St Vincent de Paul Society, as part of their pastoral ministry: ‘We can hardly understand any week-day duty more suitable to a zealous priest than his working through the mass of parishioners by means of societies sanctioned by the Church for these purposes.’\textsuperscript{32} At the time of the release of the Pastoral Letter, O’Neill presided over ten of the eleven existing Society conferences in the Australian colonies; a new Melbourne Conference had only just been established by Francis Healy at St Patrick’s Cathedral in July 1885.\textsuperscript{33}

Importantly, members of the Society gained a distinct identity within the Catholic Church. The spiritual benefits Society members received included indulgences granted for attending masses, receiving Holy Communion and attendance at general meetings.\textsuperscript{34} This proved invaluable to O’Neill as he sought to promote and expand the Society among the Catholic laity mainly in the parishes of the Sydney metropolitan area. The data at Appendix A show the Society’s growth in New South Wales during 1881-91. The data at Appendix B reveal the scale and scope of the charitable outcomes during the O’Neill era.

During this period O’Neill served as President of St Patrick’s Church Hill Conference and from 1884, President of the Particular Council of Sydney, assuming an onerous burden of administration while settling in a cheap lodging house at 200 Cumberland Street, The Rocks.\textsuperscript{35} He remained
a bachelor, set up an engineering practice in Sydney and was supported in his charitable work by unmarried siblings, his sister Maria Gordon (1840-83) and older brother John James (1826-1901). In an era noted for a strong religious impulse in faith-based charity; O’Neill’s leadership and example attracted a wide range of male recruits from among the growing Catholic laity in Sydney from all backgrounds. The Society’s activities also supported the charitable works of religious orders, including the Sisters of Mercy, the Sisters of St Joseph and the Little Sisters of the Poor.

Despite Baudon’s concerns about freemasonry, the actual sectarian challenge for the mission had emerged as a result of several decades of anti-Irish Catholic reaction in New South Wales. The problem was a short-lived but immediate one; O’Neill’s mission coincided with a heightened campaign for Home Rule for Ireland in that colony peaking in 1883-84, a cause that O’Neill, as a prominent member of the Irish National League of New South Wales, supported passionately himself. The issue was not that it would act as an impediment to Society foundation; rather that given the overwhelming Irish background of its membership, such circumstances might skew the focus and direction of this mission.

Any such difficulties were averted with promotion of the slogan: ‘The title of the poor to our commiseration is their poverty itself; we are not to inquire about what party or sect they belong’. Such information, derived from Paris, appeared in the Society’s earliest reports and conveyed its position as being above political or sectarian consideration. Baudon’s material also emphasised the Society as an international confederation of benevolence, affirmed through a visit by General Council member, the French lawyer Dr Ernest Michel, in January 1884.

In addition, the ‘Irishness’ of the Society was promoted by O’Neill and his followers in a positive way. Fund raising included magic lantern shows featuring Irish scenery and sales of shamrock buttonholes. Other events, such as a Society Charity Concert held in 1883 at Sydney’s Garden Palace, represented a further benchmark of public respectability.

In an age of voluntarism in philanthropy, the Society provided a cause for many Catholics to contribute in an area otherwise dominated by Protestant charities. As with the Hibernian Australian Catholic Benefit Society and Catholic Temperance Associations, the Society also became a means for Irish Catholics to demonstrate their worthiness as citizens.

As growth of the Society continued, anti-Irish and anti-Catholic sectarian feeling might not have dissipated entirely, but by 1885 the public mood was shifting. Reporting on the establishment of the Society on
Sydney’s North Shore, the *North Shore Times* and *Manly Press*, commented: ‘About the religion of the projectors, none but sour fanatics have any need to say anything. Their work is a work of humanity, and that’s all good men care about.’ Three years later, the Governor Lord Carrington also became a regular donor, despite his being a leading freemason.

The principle that ‘poverty alone’ was the ‘entitlement to commiseration’ implied that deservingness was not the primary consideration in the Society providing assistance. Yet over the decade of the mission, acceptance by the Catholic faithful and the wider public continued to grow as evidenced by increasing receipts from donations and fund-raising activities. Data on total charitable receipts, featured in Appendix B, show an incremental rise over the decade of O’Neill’s mission, to £2050 in 1891, and £13,302 during 1881-91. This income supported the Society in a range of outdoor relief assistance, mainly delivered through home visitation, including obtaining employment, fares, lodgings, poor burials, clothing and medicines. O’Neill presided over charitable expenditure worth £12327 over this same decade.

An important factor was O’Neill’s working closely with the philanthropic establishment. The Society communicated and cooperated with the main charitable body in the colony, the Benevolent Society of New South Wales (founded in 1813), that had its own outdoor relief effort and managed benevolent asylums. In August 1888, O’Neill wrote to the Under Secretary of the Colonial Secretary’s Department seeking supplies of blankets for the unemployed. O’Neill was chosen as a member of a Government advisory committee disbursing charity during the 1888 New South Wales Centenary celebrations. His further pursuit of his mission well beyond that date is evidence that he understood that gaining public acceptance was a long term project. Prior to his resignation, he attended the Second Australasian Conference on Charity hosted by the Charity Organisation Society, held at the Melbourne Town Hall in November 1891.

Another factor was the flexibility exhibited by Baudon in granting to O’Neill discretion in responding to local needs. In 1881, Baudon approved the Society providing money for rents in urgent cases; a practice that the Society discouraged in Europe. O’Neill implemented innovative fund raising techniques, and instituted new ventures such as penny banks for slum children in 1889.

A further factor was the manner in which O’Neill conducted this mission, providing a Catholic alternative to the Protestant evangelical slum missions of the era. The most important such mission operating in the same districts as the Society was the Sydney City Mission, established in
Confronted by the destitution in the slums, missioners provided food vouchers, clothing, coal and cash provided by Mission benefactors.

Comparisons are possible using remaining records of St Patrick’s Church Hill Conference during the 1880s and the recently uncovered Sydney City Mission journals of missioner James Mathers (1852-1911) written a decade later. In remaining Society records, deservingness was rarely noted; while Mathers set aside the principle in the face of destitution. However, a key difference between them was that the Society did not focus on religious affiliation during its visits, whereas Mather’s journal entries reveal an emphasis on up-front religious conversion with every slum visit. An in-depth glimpse into O’Neill’s spiritual approach can be obtained through a series of personal inclusions in his copy of a *Manual of the St Vincent de Paul Society* (published in Dublin in 1877) that served as a guide to his mission. His incarnational spirituality was conveyed through the prayers and sayings attributed to St Vincent de Paul and an inserted series of maxims that conveyed Christian humanism in confronting the poor. He was moved at the plight of abandoned women and their families.

O’Neill’s leadership of this mission came to end with his resignation in December 1891; the Society in New South Wales was now providing an outdoor relief program with expenditure approaching half that of the Benevolent Society of New South Wales. With economic depression then gripping the colonies, the significance of what he had achieved had only begun to dawn. His mission also represents an important example of transnational influence in Australian colonial welfare history.
Appendix A: Growth in the St Vincent de Paul Society in NSW (1881-91)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Conferences or Councils established</th>
<th>Total Conferences</th>
<th>Members &amp; Hon. Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881-83</td>
<td>St Patrick's Church Hill</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>61 &amp; 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St Francis's Haymarket</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St Mary's Cathedral</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St Benedict's Broadway</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>Particular Council of Sydney</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>65 &amp; 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>St Joseph's Balmain</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>195 &amp; 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our Lady of Mt Carmel Waterloo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St Joseph's Newtown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St Patrick's Parramatta</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St Charles's Waverley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St Francis Xavier's North Shore</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>Sacred Heart Darlinghurst</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>290 &amp; 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St Thomas's Petersham</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St James's Forest Lodge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our Lady of the Assumption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Campodown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St Bede's Braidwood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aspirant (Youth) Conference, Waterloo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>261 &amp; 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>261 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>St Bede's Pyrmont</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>283 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our Lady of the Suburbs, Macdonaldtown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Braidwood and Aspirant Waterloo Conferences lapse)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>St Fiachra's Leichhardt</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>314 &amp; 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St Brigid's Marrickville</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St Augustine's, Balmain East</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>St Vincent de Paul's Redfern</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>308 &amp; 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above compiled from data extracted from the Report of the St Vincent de Paul Society, Council of Sydney, New South Wales 24 July 1881 to 31 December 1883, and annual Reports of the St Vincent de Paul Society, Particular Council of Sydney, New South Wales (to the Council-General in Paris) for the years 1884, 1885, 1886, 1887-88, 1890 and 1891.
### Appendix B: Charitable Outcomes of the St Vincent de Paul Society in NSW (under O’Neill’s Leadership), 1881–91

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Receipts (nearest £)</th>
<th>Expenditure (nearest £)</th>
<th>Home visits</th>
<th>Families assisted</th>
<th>Total assisted</th>
<th>Employment found &amp; business assisted to obtain a living</th>
<th>Hospital/ Benevolent Asylum cases</th>
<th>Assistance with ship or rail passage</th>
<th>Assistance with lodgings including one night lodgings</th>
<th>Poor Burials/ Funerals</th>
<th>Clothing, Footwear, Bedding etc.</th>
<th>Medicines/ Medical Assistance</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881-83</td>
<td>1004</td>
<td>978</td>
<td>4893</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
<td>101 &amp; 23</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>2508</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
<td>18 &amp; 4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>1115</td>
<td>959</td>
<td>3283</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
<td>21 &amp; 8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>1398</td>
<td>1319</td>
<td>4858</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>57 &amp; 17</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>1397</td>
<td>1321</td>
<td>6128</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>2310</td>
<td>93 &amp; 29</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>96</td>
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<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>1746</td>
<td>1616</td>
<td>7340</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>2301</td>
<td>92 &amp; 22</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>8545</td>
<td>843</td>
<td>2934</td>
<td>99 &amp; 29</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>744</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1763</td>
<td>8861</td>
<td>865</td>
<td>2523</td>
<td>123 &amp; 58</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>2050</td>
<td>1896</td>
<td>10924</td>
<td>1368</td>
<td>3860</td>
<td>114 &amp; 49</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>13302</td>
<td>12327</td>
<td>57340</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>718 &amp; 239</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>3661</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>1720</td>
<td>681</td>
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The above compiled from data extracted from the *Report of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, Council of Sydney, New South Wales 24 July 1881 to 31 December 1883*; and annual *Reports of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, Particular Council of Sydney, New South Wales* (to the Council-General in Paris) for the years 1884, 1885, 1886, 1887-88, 1890, 1891, 1895 and 1900. * Overall total of families assisted were not reported. * Reports do not record families and individuals receiving assistance for more than one year.
End notes


7. ibid., 442-443. This incarnational spirituality, that identified the presence of Christ in the presence of the poor, has subsequently remained a belief of many members of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia; see John Murphy, “Suffering, Vice and Justice: Religious Imaginaries and Welfare Agencies in Post-War Melbourne,” *Journal of Religious History* 31, no. 3 (2007), 293.


9. Baudon, while aware of the Melbourne case, was unaware of the activities of an unaggregated conference established by Sergeant Major John Gorman in 1865 in Perth, Western Australia or another in the Victorian coastal town of Portland that operated during 1869-73. A Ladies Society of St Vincent de Paul had been founded in Geelong in June 1874, but in that era ladies’ associations were separate to the male-only St Vincent de Paul Society. See John Gorman, *Perth Gazette and Western Australian Times*, 1 September 1865, 1; *Portland Gazette and Normanby General Advertiser*, 17 May 1869, 2; ‘St Vincent de Paul Society’, *Portland Gazette and Normanby General Advertiser*, 5 and 12 August, 2 September 1873; Bond, *Society of St Vincent de Paul, Victoria*, 30-38; Utick, *Captain Charles, Engineer of Charity, The remarkable life of Charles Gordon O’Neill*, 153-155.

10. Ibid., 146, 156.


Comment on early home visitation by religious sisters may be found in Edmund Campion, *Australian Catholics: The contribution of Catholics to the development of Australian Society* (Melbourne: Viking, 1987), 35. Institutional care included orphanages, industrial schools, providence homes and homes for the aged.

There is anecdotal evidence that the active presence of the Friendly Brothers in Melbourne served as an impediment to re-establishment of the Society there until 1885. See Bond, *Society of St Vincent de Paul, Victoria*, 8.

More broadly across the British Empire such benevolence included Royal Masonic Institutions for Boys and Girls and the Royal Masonic Benevolent Institutions for Widows and Aged, whereas the St Vincent de Paul Society was primarily focused on providing outdoor relief. Some useful background on Masonic benevolence during this era may be found in Eustace Grundy, *An Address before the Grand Lodge of South Australia on Wednesday October 16 1901* (Adelaide: J.H. Sherring & Co., 1902), 15-16.


Philanthropists were encouraged to only support the ‘deserving’ poor, these being deserted or widowed mothers and their children, newly arrived immigrant families, the aged, and families of sick, injured or gaoled men. See Garton, *Out of Luck, Poor Australians and Social Welfare*, 50; O’Brien, ‘Charity and philanthropy’.

Garton, *Out of Luck, Poor Australians and Social Welfare*, 52.


Correspondence Reverend Peter Piquet to William Davis, 16 May 1930, St Vincent de Paul Archives Lewisham, Sydney, Folder 52.


St Vincent de Paul Society, *St Patrick’s Conference Minute Book, January-June 1885, Minutes 26 June, 1885*, Marist Archives, Hunters Hill, Sydney
Correspondence, Archbishop Roger Bede Vaughan to Charles O’Neill, 27 July 1881, St Vincent de Paul Archives Lewisham, Sydney, Folder 29.

Ibid; Utick, Captain Charles, Engineer of Charity, The remarkable life of Charles Gordon O’Neill, 168-170. Sheridan also served as parish priest of the Haymarket parish.

St Vincent de Paul Society, Report of the Particular Council of Sydney, New South Wales, to the Council-General in Paris for the Years 1889 & 1890 (Sydney: O’Hara and Johnson, 1891), 5.

St Vincent de Paul Society, Report of the Council of Sydney, New South Wales, 24th July 1881 to 31st July 1883 (Sydney: ‘Express’ Office, 84 Clarence St, 1884), 8.

St Vincent de Paul Society, Report of the Particular Council of Sydney, New South Wales, to the Council-General in Paris From 1st January to 31st December 1884 (Sydney: O’Hara and Johnson, 1885), 3.


St Vincent de Paul Society, Report of the Particular Council of Sydney, New South Wales, to the Council-General in Paris for the Year 1885 (Sydney: O’Hara and Johnson, 1886), 10-11.

Ibid., 11.

Ibid., 9-11; Bond, Society of St Vincent de Paul, Victoria, 48.

Society reports listed the four ‘Special Festivals’ of the Society held during the year at which members were encouraged to attend masses. These were the First Sunday in Lent (for deceased members), the Second Sunday after Easter (anniversary of the translation [i.e., movement] of the relics of St Vincent de Paul), the Feast of St Vincent de Paul (19 July or one of the seven days following), and Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary (8 December or Sunday following). See St Vincent de Paul Society, Report of the Particular Council of Sydney, New South Wales, to the Council-General in Paris From 1st January to 31st December 1884, 2.

Utick, Captain Charles, Engineer of Charity, The remarkable life of Charles Gordon O’Neill, 182.

Ibid., 193-195. Among O’Neill’s more prominent volunteers were patent officer Joseph Spruson (Secretary St Patrick’s Church Hill Conference), Thomas Williamson MLA for Redfern (President, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Conference, Waterloo), bank official Francis MacDermott (Treasurer of the Particular Council of Sydney, President St. Francis Xavier’s Conference, North Shore), and Alderman W. J. Ferris, later Mayor of Parramatta (President, St Patrick’s Conference Parramatta).

Ibid., 183, 195-196.

O’Neill’s membership of this League is noted in the report ‘Annual Meeting of the Irish National League, Sydney’, Freeman’s Journal, 23 September 1883, 8. In February 1883, League Leader John Redmond visited Sydney promoting the cause, sparking a reaction from militant sectarians on the Protestant side; see Utick, Captain Charles, Engineer of Charity, The remarkable life of Charles Gordon O’Neill, 182.

St Vincent de Paul Society, Report of the Council of Sydney, New South Wales, 24th July 1881 to 31st July 1883, front cover. This slogan appeared on the cover of all subsequent reports over the course of O’Neill’s mission.

For Michel’s approval of the establishment of the Particular Council of Sydney,
The faith based charitable mission of Charles O’Neill in New South Wales

see Freeman’s Journal, 9 February 1884, 14; St Vincent de Paul Society, Report of the Council of Sydney, New South Wales, 24th July 1881 to 31st July 1883, 5.


For a report of a magic lantern show see Freeman’s Journal, 28 January 1882, 11. The shamrock venture is covered in St Vincent de Paul Society, Report of the Particular Council of Sydney, New South Wales, to the Council-General in Paris for the Year 1886 (Sydney, O’Hara and Johnson, 1887), 10, 22.

A flyer advertising this event still remains; see St Vincent de Paul Society, ‘Flyer: Garden Palace, Saturday Afternoon, August 19, 1882, a Grand Charity Concert’, St Vincent de Paul Archives Lewisham, Sydney, Folder 54. This event is also significant given that it had the patronage of the New South Wales Governor, Lord Augustus Loftus and his wife with the attendance, among other dignitaries, of Patrick Jennings who would later (1886-87) become the first (Irish) Catholic Premier of New South Wales.

For an understanding of this perspective of Irish Catholic temperance, see Patrick O’Farrell, *The Irish in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales, 1987), 168; Utick, *Captain Charles, Engineer of Charity, The remarkable life of Charles Gordon O’ Neill*, 179, 190. O’Farrell notes Irish Catholic temperance activity was as a result of internal moral energy rather than public pressure. O’Neill was himself a founding member of the Catholic Total Abstinence Society, joining in April 1885.

The quote (possibly penned by its editor, James Hobson) is taken from ‘Charity Indeed’, North Shore Times and Manly Press, 29 August 1885, 3.

Lord Carrington’s rank as a freemason is noted by William Lamonby, *Some Notes on Freemasonry in Australasia, from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: Warrington & Co., 1906), 27; the Carrington donation is noted in St Vincent de Paul Society, Report of the Particular Council of Sydney, New South Wales, to the Council-General in Paris for the Years 1887 & 1888 (Sydney, O’Hara and Johnson, 1889), 16.

O’Brien, ‘Charity and philanthropy’.

Correspondence Charles O’Neill, St Vincent de Paul Society to Principal Undersecretary, Colonial Secretary’s Department, 21 August 1888, New South Wales State Archives, 1/2737.

St Vincent de Paul Society, Report of the Particular Council of Sydney, New South Wales, to the Council-General in Paris for the Years 1887 & 1888, 26


While the original of Baudon’s correspondence to Charles O’Neill, 29 November 1881, has yet to be uncovered, the text was reproduced in St Vincent de Paul Society, Report of the Particular Council of Sydney, New South Wales, to the Council-General in Paris from 1st January to 31st December 1884, 14-15. See also Utick, *Captain Charles, Engineer of Charity, The remarkable life of Charles Gordon O’ Neill*, 174-175.

Penny banks reports may be found in St Vincent de Paul Society, Report of
the Particular Council of Sydney, New South Wales, to the Council-General in Paris for the Years 1889 & 1890, 22. For innovative fund raising, see also Utick, Captain Charles, Engineer of Charity, The remarkable life of Charles Gordon O’Neill, 183-184.

June Owen, The Heart of the City, the First 125 Years of the Sydney City Mission (Kenthurst, New South Wales: Kangaroo Press, 1987), 18-21; Malcolm Prentis, ‘City of God, City of Man: Images of the Slum 1897-1911,’ in Gritty Cities: Images of the Urban, ed. Lynette Finch and Chris McConville (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1999), 103. The principal aim of Sydney City Mission was ‘to rescue perishing souls from sin and vice, ignorance and death, and to carry the living message of the gospel to the very poor, the sick, the vicious, the outcast and the fallen’.


Ibid. Also, an account of a visit of Dr Ernest Michel and O’Neill to a Chinese gambling den in The Rocks in 1884 provides further (albeit anecdotal) evidence of a more tolerant attitude; Michel does not condemn the gambling and opium smoking of the Chinese but rather points out the social deprivation under which they exist, as in this extract from Michel, A Travers L’hemisphere Sud, Ou, Mon Seconde Voyage Autour Du Monde, Vol. III, 164-65 (translated from the French by Ailsa Solly, Chifley Library, the Australian National University):

‘In this establishment we see the numerous compartments where the Chinese people sleep; all the rooms, from the cellar to the attic, are full of shelves one on top of the other each being used as a bed for the children of the Celestial Empire; not surprising that just about all of them die, due to lack of air, of tuberculosis…’

By contrast, visits by missioners such as Mathers to such establishments would feature hymn singing, preaching and attempts at conversion; see Prentis, ‘City of God, City of Man: Images of the Slum 1897-1911’, 111.


Ibid., 230-232. These maxims were extracted from a Catholic liturgical calendar.

Utick, ‘Charles O’Neill, the Engineer of Charity’, 444.

In 1888, St Vincent de Paul Society recorded that it had assisted 790 families or 2,301 individuals and spent £1,616 on outdoor relief, compared to 5,742 cases assisted and £4,966 spent by the Benevolent Society for this purpose. In 1893, only two years after O’Neill’s departure, the St Vincent de Paul Society’s contribution to the charitable efforts in New South Wales had risen further; in that year it assisted 1,438 families or 5,807 individuals while spending £2,301 on outdoor relief. By 1893, the Benevolent Society reported that it had assisted 7,601 cases, but despite its handling of almost 200 more cases than in 1888, its annual expenditure on outdoor relief had grown only modestly to £5,083. Comparisons based on St Vincent de Paul Society, Report of the Particular Council of Sydney, New South Wales, to the Council-General in Paris for the Years 1887 & 1888, 17-19, and Report of the Particular Council of Sydney, New South Wales, to the Council-General in Paris for the Year 1893 (Sydney:
O’Hara and Johnson, 1894), 12; Benevolent Society of New South Wales, 
*Report of the Benevolent Society of New South Wales for the Year Ended 31 
December 1888* (Sydney, 1889), 19, and *Report of the Benevolent Society of 
New South Wales for the Year Ended 31 December 1893* (Sydney, 1894), 22. 

On 19 July 1891, O’Neill’s contribution and impending retirement was marked 
at the Society’s Annual General Meeting and Breakfast held in the School 
Hall at St Benedict’s Broadway. See ‘A Noble Order, Society of St. Vincent 
De Paul, £10,000 in Charity’, *Australian Star*, 20 July 1891. He died in Sydney 
on 8 November 1900; see Utick, *Captain Charles, Engineer of Charity, The 
SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS FIRSTS OF HABERFIELD

Vincent Crow*

Developed from 1901, the Sydney suburb of Haberfield is noteworthy for two historical firsts—one of a secular nature and one of a religious nature. Haberfield was Australia’s first planned Garden Suburb and, in 1909, the first church in the world named after the recently beatified Joan of Arc was erected there.

The concept of a Garden Suburb had developed in Great Britain and the USA during the nineteenth century in response to the adverse social and environmental impact of the Industrial Revolution. By the mid-19th century in Britain and the USA, rows of terrace houses had been built beside the newly built factories leading to cramped and unhygienic living conditions in the major cities with poor public health facilities and much general pollution. Terrace houses stood in close proximity to factories so that factory workers could walk to their place of employment. Some public health measures were undertaken such as drainage and sewerage schemes but the basic concept of a city containing a mixture of housing and secondary industry side-by-side remained. The concept of a Garden City sought to remedy this.

In essence, planners of a Garden City sought to separate residential, industrial and commercial areas from each other. Cities were to be planned to create living conditions conducive to the good health of the workers and their families. Such schemes had been attempted by benevolent company owners such as Cadbury’s estate at Bourneville (c.1879) near Birmingham and that of the Lever Brothers at Port Sunlight (c.1887) near Liverpool. However these schemes did not achieve long-term success. The term ‘Garden City’ was used by Alexander Stewart when naming a housing estate that he established at Hampstead on Long Island, USA, in 1869. The first Garden Suburb in Britain was developed from 1875 at Bedford Park near Turnham Green in the west of London. The theoretical basis for this town planning movement was outlined much later in 1898 when Ebenezer Howard’s book Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform was published. In the following year the Garden City Association was formed to facilitate the implementation of a Garden City. In 1902 Howard’s book was reissued under the title Garden Cities of Tomorrow. However Garden Cities were difficult to create due to their scope, complexity and cost. It was much easier

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to create a purely residential Garden Suburb. A *Garden Suburb* came to mean a planned suburb with the following characteristics:

a. A residential area free from encroachment by secondary industry but usually with a commercial area for the needs of the local residents;

b. Absence of congestion of buildings by spacing them a reasonable distance apart;

c. Provisions for parks and gardens;

d. Wide tree-lined streets;

e. Buildings designed in harmony with each other.

Suburban development in Britain’s Australian colonies in the second half of the nineteenth century followed the pattern established in the Mother Country with terrace houses being built in close proximity to factories. The Sydney suburbs of Glebe, Leichhardt, Paddington and Redfern are evidence of this type of development. This pattern was followed in part of the area later known as *Haberfield* but then known as the *Dobroyde Estate* immediately to the west of Leichhardt. The Dobroyde Estate constituted 480 acres and had been so-named by Simeon Lord after he had purchased it in 1805 from Lt. Nicholas Bayly, the original owner by grant since 1803. In 1825 Simeon Lord’s daughter, Sarah, married Dr. David Ramsay and, as part of the marriage settlement, the whole Estate was given to the newly-married couple. In 1860 David Ramsay died and subsequently each of his ten children received a portion of the Dobroyde Estate.

The first child to sell their portion of the Estate was Isabella Ramsay who sold her two portions in 1885. These suburban developments were advertised as the First and Second Subdivisions of the Dobroyde Estate when allotments in them were put up for sale in 1885. The former comprised the area between the southern ends of present-day O’Connor and Dalhousie Streets including St. David’s Road. The Second Subdivision comprised the area between present-day Alt and Wattle Streets including Walker Avenue. In both subdivisions blocks of land were 33 feet (10.06 metres) wide and 110 feet (33.52 metres) deep giving an area of 337.21 square metres. In the First Subdivision, single and double-fronted houses were constructed of brick or timber with slate, tile or iron roofs. While residential development occurred in the First Subdivision, it was slow to occur in the Second Subdivision possibly due to the presence of brickyards in the area. When residential development did occur in the early twentieth century, the size of the original...
allotments was altered to provide larger blocks possibly reflecting the impact of the Garden Suburb concept from 1901.

Land belonging to Louisa, Margaret and David Ramsay in the area comprising present-day Percy and Lord Streets and Hawthorne Parade between Marion Street and Parramatta Road was subdivided for residential development in 1887. This followed the development pattern of the First Subdivision of the Dobroyde Estate. Thus suburban development in the Dobroyde Estate in the late nineteenth century followed the pattern already established in Sydney’s inner-city suburbs with small blocks of land and a variety of housing both in the materials used and the design of the houses.

However an innovation in town-planning was to occur from 1901 when Richard Stanton of the real estate firm of Stanton & Son of Summer Hill purchased Margaret Ramsay’s portion of about fifty acres of the Dobroyde Estate. Apart from some late 19th century development, most of the Dobroyde Estate had remained a tract of almost virgin bushland hence the popular name given to it of Ramsay’s Bush. On the area between present day Waratah, Dalhousie and Ramsay Streets and Hawthorne Parade was developed the First Subdivision of the Haberfield Estate- Australia’s first planned Garden Suburb.

Haberfield’s historical significance has been recognised by heritage bodies of national repute such as the National Trust and the Australian Heritage Commission. According to the former, “Haberfield is the earliest Australian garden suburb characterised by architecturally distinctive single storey suburban villas in the Federation style” (National Trust Listing Proposal, May 1979) while according to the latter, “Haberfield was Australia’s first comprehensively planned and developed Garden Suburb, establishing a model for Australia’s suburban development in the 20th century” (Australian Heritage Commission, Listing for Nomination, April 1990).

Haberfield was developed by Richard Stanton, a Summer Hill real estate agent, through the Haberfield Proprietary Ltd. from 1901 to 1922. Wide streets were planned for two-way traffic with a tree on the road shoulder in front of every property, nature strips divided the road from the footpath, houses were set back at least twenty feet from the footpath providing enough space for a garden, blocks of land had standard dimensions of 50 feet wide and 150 feet deep (15.25 x 45.72 metres) although there were some minor variations, there was one residence per block of land as well as separate zones for residential and commercial areas with no secondary industry. The houses were architect designed and properties attracted buyers from a wide
Altogether there were five subdivisions in the Haberfield Estate. The first subdivision around Barton Avenue was opened in 1901, the second around Stanton Road in 1903, the third around Denman Avenue in 1905, the fourth around Tressider Avenue in 1910 and the fifth around Nicholls Avenue in 1912.

socio-economic spectrum.

Speaking of his syndicate early in their project, Stanton stated that “Their desire was to add to Ashfield a beautiful and desirable residential area and thus meet the growing requirements of the large number of people who were desirous of coming out westward to live in a pure and wholesome atmosphere away from the suffocating portions of the already over-built suburbs in the more immediate neighbourhood of the city.”

The outbreak of Bubonic Plague in The Rocks in 1900 no doubt reinforced the perceived need by many people to quit cramped inner-city terrace houses for a Garden Suburb environment. According to Stanton’s
This picture shows the idealized Garden Suburb property as depicted in the Haberfield Proprietary Limited’s publicity brochure of about 1913. Each house was of a different design so low-growing plants such as annuals were planted in the front garden so the facade of the house could be seen from the street.

publicity brochure, Haberfield The Garden Suburb, of about 1913, “This suburb, which is now more generally known as ‘The Place of Beautiful Homes’, was planned with the great objective of founding a purely residential locality.”

Allotments in Haberfield Garden Suburb were put on the market from November 1901 and the first houses were occupied in 1902. The establishment of Haberfield therefore post-dates Ebenezer Howard’s 1898 book and the ensuing foundation of the Garden City Association in Britain. However Haberfield predates the landmark British Garden Suburb of Hampstead (1906) and the Garden Cities of Letchworth (1903) and Welwyn Garden City (1920). Stanton himself denied being influenced by the British Garden City/Suburb movement. According to Stanton in 1915, “In those days, I had not had any English experience to guide me; it was about thirteen years ago- about the time Ebenezer Howard started in London . I had nothing to work on. I simply originated the scheme out of my own experience as a businessman”.

The paid-up capital of the Haberfield Proprietary Limited was initially
three thousand pounds ($6000) being three thousand shares at one Pound ($2) each. The company had a mortgage of seven thousand Pounds ($14000) with T & G. This money would circulate so that as houses were built and properties were sold, money would be available for more houses to be constructed. In this way the area was developed. Purchasers could borrow money from the Haberfield Proprietary Ltd. to buy their property. When the company ceased operations in 1922 purchasers still owing money to the company had to obtain a bank loan to pay off their debt.

The venture appears to have been a financial success for both Stanton & Son, the managing agents, and for purchasers of property in Haberfield. According to the c.1913 publicity brochure Haberfield The Garden Suburb “It goes without saying that the great work that is going on year after year is enhancing and very materially increasing the value of the properties in this neighbourhood. The land values have increased at least one hundred per cent since the inception of the scheme, and there is every possibility of a
far greater increase in the future”. Stanton & Son Ltd. embarked on similar ventures elsewhere and by 1924 had eight suburban offices and one in the city.

As the result of a campaign begun in 1974, the National Trust began to declare conservation areas in Haberfield from 1978. These National Trust listings were only advisory but legally-enforceable conservation principles were implemented in Haberfield by Ashfield Municipal Council from 1982. Three years later the Haberfield Conservation Area was gazetted by the New South Wales State government as part of the Ashfield Local Environment Plan. In 1990 Haberfield was listed on the Register of the National Estate.

The growth of population in Haberfield from the early twentieth century led to an increased need for churches. However the first church to be constructed actually predated the general residential development of the district. The Ramsay family were Presbyterians and consequently the first church to be built on the Dobroyde Estate was a Presbyterian Church-St. David’s in Dalhousie Street. It was opened in 1869 by Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh. In 1862 a school building had been opened and this had provided a temporary venue for religious services until the construction of a permanent church. No further churches were built until the development of the Haberfield Estate from 1901.

After the Presbyterians, the next religious denominations to construct a church in Haberfield were the Methodists and Anglicans. The Methodist Church was opened in Dalhousie Street in May 1908 and the Anglican St. Oswald’s (now the church hall) in Dickson Street in June 1908. The foundation stone for a Catholic Church in Ramsay Street was laid on 25 April 1909 by Cardinal Moran and the completed church blessed by him on 9 September 1909. Although of a rather simple design lacking ostentation, this church was of immense historical significance as revealed in the Freeman’s Journal of 16 September 1909, “The unique distinction of blessing the first church in Christendom under the patronage of Blessed Joan of Arc was performed by the Cardinal on Sunday last at Haberfield”. It appears that it was often the practice at that time to name a church after a recently beatified or canonised person unless some other name had already been selected. The first Mass in the new Haberfield church had been celebrated by the parish priest, Rev. Patrick Joseph Baugh, on 13 June 1909.

Joan of Arc had been born at Domrémy in France in 1412. She led the French forces against the English resulting in the capture of Orleans by the French in 1429. She was later taken prisoner by the Burgundians at Compiègne and sold to the English. She was imprisoned at Rouen, tried
Secular and religious firsts of Haberfield

St. Joan of Arc Church and Presbytery photographed at some time between 1909 and 1912. The presbytery was of a design typical of houses built during Australia’s Federation period.

The foundation stone was placed beneath the set of three windows on the facade of the building.

These three windows lit the main entry foyer of the church.

for witchcraft and heresy, and condemned as a heretic by Pierre Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais. On 30 May 1431 she was burned at the stake by the English at Rouen. Her ashes were thrown into the River Seine. In 1456 Pope Callistus III annulled the judgement and declared her to have been innocent. In 1909 she was beatified by Pope Pius X. In 1920 Blessed Joan of Arc was canonised as a saint by Pope Benedict XV. Her feast day is May 30 which was the date of her execution in 1431.

The site for the Haberfield church had been selected on 8 January 1909 and purchased by the Catholic Church from Richard Stanton’s Haberfield Proprietary Ltd. for eight hundred and five pounds ($1610). The church was designed by architects Messrs. Buchanan and Mackay of Challis House, Martin Place, Sydney and constructed by Mr. Hugh Moss of Campsie.

In 1913 plans for additions comprising a sacristy, sanctuary, transepts, confessionals and tower were prepared. These were designed by the
A statue of Joan of Arc was imported from France and donated by Mr. John Moloney of 116 Ramsay Street. The contract price for the additions was one thousand four hundred and thirty-eight pounds ($2876).

Work was begun in 1913, the foundation stone was laid in December 1913 and these completed additions were blessed by Archbishop Kelly on 17 August 1914.

With the construction of a new church in Dalhousie Street in 1954-55, the original St. Joan of Arc Church was used as a De La Salle Brothers boys’ school.

This closed in 1975. The former church/school and presbytery in Ramsay Street then became the property of Ashfield Municipal Council as the result of a land swap whereby the St. Joan of Arc parish gained Council land in Dalhousie Street in return for the Ramsay Street property.

In late 1979 Civil and Civic prepared a feasibility study for the future use of the former church/school. According to the Ashfield Municipal Engineer in his report dated 29 February 1980:

The Feasibility Study prepared for Council by Civil and Civic concludes that in the former Church building . . . is a valuable asset and suggests a restoration and conversion scheme for the building with any further future building attachments being designed in sympathy with the original style. The proposal indicated in Scheme 7 appears to be an effective and imaginative means of adapting the former Church building to meet Council’s basic requirements.
Proposed adaptive re-use of the building was publicised in The Glebe, a local newspaper, on 20 February 1980.

Despite this report, the former church/school was demolished by Ashfield Municipal Council in 1980 despite it having no plans or money to construct a replacement building.

This was reported in The Glebe of 26 November 1980:

Federation Place was officially opened in 1987. The Federation Revival design of its rotunda, constructed by Ashfield Municipal Council, reflects Council’s policy since 1982 to conserve and enhance the Federation character of Haberfield.
HABERFIELD TO GET ‘BIGGER BETTER COMMUNITY CENTRE’

A federation theme in the town square

HABERFIELD is to get a “town square” which will set off the area’s Federation suburb atmosphere.

The $150,000 project was formally adopted at a recent meeting of Ashfield Council.

Major features include a small Federation-type pavilion, parking for 30 cars and space for a future community building to be constructed without requiring changes in the earlier work.

The building will eventually go up on the car park.

Existing trees will be retained.

The town square will be a major gathering area for the people.

It will include broad flights of steps which can also be used for informal seating.

The steps will also change in levels for occasional performances and ceremonies at the square.

Fixed seating will be installed near trees (yet to be planted), and tables and chairs will be set up at one corner of the square.

Step-free access will be provided from Gillies Street to the main shopping area along Ramsay Street.

The lawn will be used for passive purposes only.

The garden will be a dense perimeter planting, to screen nearby backyards and fences.

Ashfield Mayor Lew Herman denies his council fouled up the plan to build a new Haberfield community centre which involved demolition of an historic building.

The building has been removed and still the council hasn’t a plan for the new centre.

“We know what we want,” Herman said, admitting that council won’t proceed until it hires a community development officer to chase government grants for its construction.

The site is the former Joan of Arc church school in Ramsay Street at the corner of Gillies Avenue, acquired several years ago in a land swap deal with a local church.

The council hired a civil engineering firm to give quotes on various projects.

A $½ million baby health clinic-library-community hall plan was decided on and demolition went ahead in spite of objections from local residents.

The council has now decided to go one better and is looking at a bigger, better centre which ranges in price from $½ million to $2 million.

But it doesn’t have the money, or plans, let alone preliminary drawings, and has decided to defer the entire project until the new officer is appointed to investigate the scheme.

Herman said: “We’re considering a two-storey structure including a gymnasium - basketball court as well … whatever way you look at it, Haberfield will end up with a far better community centre than it would have by renovating the old building.

The final outcome as reported in the Western Suburbs Courier, 13 March 1985.
Federation Place- *a pleasant but empty area compared to what might have been.*

**End notes:**

1. *The Dobroyde Estate* should not be confused with the *Dobroyd Point Estate.* The Dobroyde Estate was so-named by Simeon Lord who purchased the whole area now known as Haberfield in 1805. It was owned by members of the Ramsay family from 1825 until the early twentieth century. The Dobroyd Point Estate was developed as a residential area by the Haymarket Permanent Land, Building and Investment Company from 1909. It constituted the area bounded by present-day Boomerang and Waratah Streets and Hawthorne and Dobroyd Parades. Today, Dobroyd Point is a locality within Haberfield.

ii. Haberfield is in Ashfield Municipality.

iii. *The Advertiser* (a local newspaper), March 1902.


v. Stanton would have been referring to Howard’s 1902 publication *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*.

vi. Evidence taken by the Royal Commission on the Housing Conditions of the People in the Metropolis and in the Populous Centres of the State. Victoria, 1917. Evidence given by Richard Stanton on 23 March 1915.


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The eventual replacement of the 1909 St. Joan of Arc Church was planned as early as 1923 when a property, St. Kilda, was purchased at 93 Dalhousie Street by the parish for four thousand one hundred pounds ($8200). In a letter to Archbishop Kelly, the parish priest, Fr. Patrick Baugh, stated, “This new property is quite close to the site of the Girls’ Primary School and will be an admirable situation for the Church of the future.” In 1924 the Catholic presbytery was transferred from 112 Ramsay Street to St. Kilda although the Catholic Church itself stood at the corner of Ramsay Street and Gillies Avenue. In 1930 the former presbytery became the residence of the De La Salle Brothers who had established a Primary School in Haberfield in 1927.

The 1909 Catholic Church was the only church in Haberfield not located on the Dalhousie Street ridge. The Presbyterians, Anglicans, Methodists and Baptists all had properties fronting Dalhousie Street which gave them a prominence which the Catholic Church lacked.

In 1927 the Presentation Sisters opened a Primary School at 88 Dalhousie Street almost opposite St. Kilda. By constructing a new church on the site of St. Kilda, Catholic activities would be centralised in a more prominent location in Haberfield.

Late in 1948 the parish clergy took up residence once again in the Ramsay Street house beside the Church. St. Kilda was then demolished to enable the construction of the new St. Joan of Arc War Memorial Church. The foundation stone for the new church was blessed on 11 April 1954 by His Eminence Norman Thomas Cardinal Gilroy. Designed by architects Hennessy, Hennessy and Co., this building was constructed by J. C. Ewen and Co. The church was blessed and dedicated by Cardinal Gilroy on 8 May 1955. It was described in the magazine *Building, Lighting, Engineering* (24 August 1955) as “a striking addition to the post-war ecclesiastical architecture of Sydney” (page 22).

The façade of the ‘new’ church. The room to the left of the vestibule was to serve as a baptistry (*Building, Lighting, Engineering*, 24 August 1955, p.23) but is now used as a piety stall. The 1912 statue of St. Joan of Arc stands boldly in front of the tower.

The bell used in the ‘old’ church was transferred to this tower and, rather than being rung manually, was given an electrical mechanism. The room beside the tower is one of the three original confessionals two of which are

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1 Fr. P. Baugh to Archbishop Kelly, 23 September 1923 (Sydney Archdiocesan Archives).
2 For details, see Crow, V., Tours of Haberfield: Past and Present, Part Three, pp.249 & 254.
Secular and religious firsts of Haberfield

St Joan of Arc Church, Dalhousie Street, (Deakin Avenue to the right) Haberfield
(photographed in 2012)

St Joan of Arc Church, Haberfield, viewed from Deakin Avenue
(photographed in 2012)
still used as such. As well as the main entrance, the church has an entrance on each side. The “Working Sacristy” where altar boys donned their red soutane, white surplice, white collar and bow-tie is shown in the lower picture while the Priests’ Sacristy is on the other side of the building.

According to Wikipedia, in 2012, 57% of Haberfield’s population are Roman Catholic- “more than twice the national average”. This would be due to the strong foundations established by Catholic residents and their clergy in the early twentieth century and the influx of Italian immigrants from the 1950’s. Despite (or perhaps because of) physical, demographic and liturgical changes in Catholicism in Haberfield since the early twentieth century, ... Catholics remain a vigorous community.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haberfield,_New_South_Wales

Bibliography
Churches at War: then and now

Michael McKernan*

John La Nauze was a very good historian. The author of a two volume biography of Alfred Deakin, the expert on the constitutional conventions that led to the federation of the Australian colonies in 1901. He was 62 years of age when I first met him and must retire at 65. I was to be his last doctoral student; for me, a piece of amazing good luck.

‘It is a sensible decision to seek to enter this profession, Mr McKernan,’ Professor la Nauze told me. (An aside: it was always ‘Professor La Nauze’ and ‘Mr McKernan’. ‘There is a student here, he told me, who calls me “John”. He is such a nice young man that I haven’t the heart to correct him. But it is inappropriate; utterly inappropriate.’) Sensible to enter the profession. ‘You see being an historian means that you get better as you get older. Of what other professions can that be said?’ The implication was that I might possibly improve across the three years of my doctoral study; if I stuck with it over the long haul then I just might become an historian after all.

I started working on an aspect of the First World War in the days immediately after my first conversation with John La Nauze. This was early February 1972. Forty years on and again I am writing a book on the First World War, commissioned by the State Library of Victoria and the Victorian Government. But the way historians write about that war now, as compared to the way we wrote about it then, are utterly different.

Mind you, we were offered some clues even then. At an early meeting with John La Nauze when I had offered as my thesis topic ‘The Australian Churches in the Great War’ he had asked me whether I would be writing about small boys who had lost their fathers, or wives who had lost their husbands. His father, Captain Charles Andrew la Nauze, born 1882, was killed in action on Gallipoli on 28 June 1915. John, of course, had almost no memory of him at all. Or further down the corridor, Billy Hughes’s biographer, Laurie Fitzhardinge, born 1908, was explaining to me why men of his generation could not take the Great War as a subject of historical study. We were too close to it, he said, grew up with it; our older brothers were at the war. We knew the awful suffering and cost to our families. Or further round the corridor still, Sir Keith Hancock, born 1898, who admitted in his

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first book of memoirs, that for many years after the war he significantly lowered his age in case men said to him ‘I suppose you were at Pozieres or Bullecourt?’ His two brothers had gone to war and both had been killed. Keith Hancock’s parents refused him permission to enlist too and for long years he felt ashamed that he had not served.

These men were telling me that you could not write about the First World War if you did not deal immediately and comprehensively with a nation in grief, both during and after the war. Or the Second World War for that matter. I have now come to believe that you cannot separate the homefront from the battlefront. In the early 1980s, emboldened by the success of my book on the home front in the First World War, I wrote a book on the home front in the Second World War, I will speak of it, briefly, because even more so than my First World War book, it almost entirely leaves out of consideration, the war and the men and women who were fighting that war for Australia.

I would now argue that you cannot separate the homefront and the battlefront. Every man and woman who enlisted in Australia for the second world war had family, probably, and friends certainly. For every enlistment there might have been six persons intimately associated with the life of the enlistee. Parents, brothers and sisters, close friends. And then the circle expands. Work colleagues, church members, sporting team mates. If a million Australians enlisted, as they did, then six million Australians, that is the total population, were concerned for a known individual’s life and fate. Compare that with Australia in Afghanistan today. We may be perplexed by the war there and think about it when we hear of a casualty but it is not to the forefront of our thinking all day every day. So news of the progress of the war then was followed with passionate intensity. Every item on the news might bear on the fate of a loved one; most people would have multiple interests - a husband and a brother at war, two sons, one in the Pacific war, one flying in Europe. Homefront history must, I now think, also keep a sharp eye on what is happening in almost all theatres of war.

A bloke I had never met but got to know as Barry once baled me up in the ABC car park in Canberra. I had been talking on the radio about Australian POWs, he lived close by to the studio and wanted to continue the conversation. His older brother enlisted and was a prisoner. Six weeks after the war ended a telegram came for his mother. Barry heard her wail and, only about fourteen at the time, was quickly sent to his bedroom to be out of the way. Then Barry’s brother’s wife arrived at the family home, his sister-in-law that is, and the tears and the anguish reached a new level. His brother, of course, had died in captivity some years before but sadly in their ignorance
this family had been happily expecting his imminent homecoming in the joy of the outbreak of peace. The man who wanted to tell me his story had never got over the awfulness of that Saturday morning in Melbourne. His brother’s fate had been so much a part of his life since Singapore had fallen. It was the war that his family followed so closely and the hoped-for victory that would restore his brother to the family.

So why would you, like A.P. Elkin at Sydney university, try to measure and test homefront morale? There was a sense that too much bad news would frighten those left behind into a defeatism or a fatalism. As the awful news of 1940 (the fall of France and the battle for Britain) 1941 (the war in the desert going so badly, the destruction of British cities, the blockade) 1942 (the fall of Singapore, Japan triumphant through most of Asia) as this news was assimilated in Australia did Australians turn off the war to await, at best, a negotiated outcome? If they did not was it because almost every Australian was involved in a total, ‘all in’ war effort? An effort that can only be explained by the intimate relationship between the fate of the soldiers and the lives of the people at home. Despite the strikes on the waterfront and elsewhere, despite the grizzling on the homefront, despite the overfull cinemas and theatres, despite the footy and the cricket, despite the calumnies of those who seemed to believe that heroism could only be found among those facing the bullets, was John Curtin right about the strength of the nation? Even though he knew it was his job to keep the military up to the mark by constant vigilance, and those left behind to their tasks in the war by constant vigilance and preaching. Geoffrey Serle argued that John Curtin was a true casualty of war if ever there was one, by extension, I believe, worthy of a place on the Australian War Memorial’s Roll of Honour. But he was one of those left behind. The distinction between homefront and battlefront has not served Australia or its history of war well. There is change afoot, I believe, but that is another story.

So to a rethink of the role of the Australian churches in the great war. What I did then is available to anyone who might care to know. You might read the thesis but I doubt it. You could read the book, published in 1980, as Australian Churches at War. There was some battlefront material in it. Indeed I was the first Australian historian to look systematically and in detail at the work of Australian chaplains in the AIF. I had been told that Charles Bean had originally thought of a separate volume in his official war history on chaplains, YMCA representatives, and had even collected material for such a book. Certainly there was a significant holding of chaplains’ materials in the Australian War Memorial which I was the first historian ever to examine.
and which was an important find of materials for a novice doctoral student.

Some of the chaplains were clearly just silly men, or, being more kindly, men quite out of their depth. What to make of the silly fellow who thought there was too much bad language in the frontline trenches and who had introduced a pledge scheme in which soldiers pledged that no matter what the temptation, they would under no circumstances resort to inappropriate language. But many of the chaplains were better than that and some of them were magnificent. The Salvation Army chaplain, Bill McKenzie, perhaps the best known and best loved man in the whole AIF. The Catholic chaplain John Fahey from Perth, an Irishman originally and a man’s man. The Presbyterian Andrew Gillison, killed on Gallipoli, attempting to rescue a wounded soldier in no-mans-land, warned and therefore knowing that the Turks had the area covered with machineguns and rifles. A fellow Presbyterian chaplain, Andrew Merrington, from Sydney, wrote in his diary at the time, of Gillison ‘what decoration, posthumous or in the time of life, can surpass the glory of his death in pure, unselfish heroism.’

Yet it was a reviewer of Australian Churches at War, now my friend and an acclaimed historian, Bill Gammage, who has come into well-merited fame and some fortune, in the later part of his life for his award winning book The Greatest Estate on Earth. Writing in Historical Studies in 1981 Bill exposed the dilemma the chaplains faced in a way that I had failed to do in the book: ‘When a soldier told one chaplain that killing the enemy was like shooting a rabbit, the chaplain talked to him until he saw that the man realised what it meant to kill others. This was no doubt gratifying for the chaplain, but potentially lethal for a soldier likely soon after to face a Turkish bayonet – he would have done better not to listen. Few chaplains accepted the consequences of representing a contradiction.’ It is clear to me now that I did not understand enough military history to see the implications of what some of the chaplains were experiencing. Furthermore while treating the book seriously and generously Bill detected another weakness in my approach. ‘McKernan tells his story well,’ he wrote, ‘[but] he has blemishes and he has perhaps too little passion.’ Maybe I should have reflected more carefully and at greater length on John La Nauze’s initial question, ‘will you be writing about small boys who lost their fathers to the war.’

I think what I missed most, though, were the big questions. Again these might have been provoked by knowing better the story of the soldiers. How at Lone Pine the dead were lying so thickly on the floor of the trenches that soldiers were forced to stand on their bodies to continue the fight. How
at Pozieres the intensity of the shells was just so great that men lost their minds even before they were asked to leave their trenches to assault those of their enemy. Or to focus on the homefront in grief. Increasing numbers of women on the streets and on public transport in mourning black. Visible and permanent reminders of the universality of death at the front. I told of the awful job the churches had accepted on behalf of their clergy of delivering the telegrams throughout Australia telling of death at the front. A church leader asked who ‘was so fit to carry the sad news.’ But I wrote, ‘in many cases, of course, they entered the home as a stranger, with no knowledge of the deceased beyond his name, rank and number, and no knowledge at all of the bereaved who might rarely have been to church and who, perhaps, saw the clergyman as an opportunistic intruder or an embarrassing presence at a moment of private sorrow.’ Though, of course, it was not a moment of private sorrow. Clergymen began to refer to the government’s commission as ‘this dread duty’ or ‘this terrible ordeal.’ A son, many years later, wrote that the work ‘was extremely distressing’ and his father ‘never forgot how it hurt.’ But I might have focused on grief more directly and with greater sympathy.

Fundamentally, though, I needed to ask how it was that the churches were not destroyed by the war. I gave the structure of their response to the war: initial excitement that the war was a God-given moment that would purify and make more holy a society that had been corrupted by materialism and rarely gave place to God in daily life. People would now see their need of God and their dependence on him. They would be forced to see that only through reliance on God could nations and peoples be saved. This was expressed with greater or lesser force but it was the main initial response to the news of war. At the end of April 1915, but before the news of Gallipoli had come home, an Anglican bishop writing in the *Church Standard*, decried Australian apathy about the war. The war must deal Australians, he wrote, ‘a shattering and sledge-hammer blow,’ only then would Australians appreciate ‘war’s cleansing, its refining, its spiritual revelation.’ A Presbyterian suggested that Australians must die in war: ‘if with the brave fighters from the British Isles and Canada and India our soldiers mingle their blood . . . then sacrifice will hallow all our Australian life and we shall value our liberty and privileges.’ What precisely did he mean by ‘mingle their blood?’ Stand on the faces of their mates in the trenches at Lone Pine, for example?

Then as the awful losses on Gallipoli and later in France began to become apparent clergy argued that you could only make sense of sacrifice with even greater sacrifice. ‘Wanted men, wanted more men.’ The test of
the moral worth of the nation appeared to be the rate of enlistment. When 21,698 Victorians enlisted in one month, July 1915, (the initial Australian offer for the entire nation in August 1914 had been 20,000 men) the clergy exalted but demanded to see a similar figure the next month. Archbishops and bishops, including Sydney’s Catholic archbishop, Michael Kelly, were quick to join the Universal Service Leagues that sprang up in 1915 to demand conscription. Most clergymen eagerly embraced conscription when it became a matter of choice for Australian voters and an Anglican minister in Brighton, Victoria, even argued that as Christ had been a conscript, compelled even unto death, to do what his Father demanded, Australians should also accept conscription.

And then when peace came to a ravaged, grieving world and nation, some clergy backtracked immediately. Speaking in Melbourne ‘Fighting’ Larry Rentoul, a Presbyterian theologian, reminded his listeners that war was ‘inevitably horrible.’ He rejected the view that war had a ‘morally and spiritually cleansing and purifying result’ because such belief was incompatible with Christianity ‘the kingdom of heaven does not come by external tour-de-force nor by any kind of external weapons or catastrophe’ utterly negating the churches’ central message in the first two or three years of the war.

The Catholic bishop of Sale, Victoria, the most reverend Patrick Phelan, had been born in Ireland in 1860, but went straight to Melbourne after ordination. He worked there, in increasingly senior positions, until elevated to the bishopric in 1912. The Catholics of Melbourne arranged for a service of thanksgiving as soon as they heard the news of the Armistice of 11 November 1918. It was a grand affair, a pontifical high mass, a celebration as joyous, possibly, as the cathedral had yet known. But Patrick Phelan was not in a forgiving mood as he mounted the high pulpit at St Patrick’s; the sectarian bitterness of conscription, the attacks on his church and on the Melbourne Archbishop Daniel Mannix had possibly poisoned his mind. He reported that the Australian contribution to the war was more noble because the men had enlisted freely: ‘their gift of sacrifice and life was a free gift; no cruel law dragged them from their parents and their friends’. Was it necessary, on this day of all days, to revisit the sores of conscription? Was it not a day for healing, for putting animosity aside?

But the bishop went further. When he spoke of the dead, of the 60,000 Australians who gave their lives at Gallipoli and in France, and in the desert, he reminded Catholic mothers that their sons, who had almost universally
received confession and communion before battle, were assured of salvation. The mothers of other Australian soldiers had no such consolation, the bishop explained. The war, he said, had shown ‘what little use [on the battlefield] was the Bible-reading clergymen who had no power to forgive sins’. Of course, the rest of them, they are all in hell, he might have concluded, but he left that last leap to the minds of his hearers and readers.

I was expected to provide John La Nauze with a piece of writing each week, on Tuesday night at the latest. He would read it, and we would meet to discuss it on Thursday morning, before morning tea and the traditional departmental seminar. Ours were quiet sessions usually, a gentle elaboration of the craft of the historian and quite a lot of reminiscence. That day he was in a rage. He was not sitting behind his desk as usual but pacing the room from the full length window to the bookcase on the opposite wall. He must have just read what I had written. How dare he, the professor demanded to know of the bishop, how dare he tell those mothers that their sons were lost to God. The arrogance of the man, the insensitivity, the utter ignorance. I knew he would not let the thing go; that the quiet scholar was condemning the bishop and all who thought like him to a hell of his making. Schooled and trained as a Catholic, told until the Vatican Council that there was no salvation outside the church, the bishop’s words had not leapt from the page for me as they had for Professor La Nauze. But then my father had not died in war. Will your thesis touch on that, he had asked, small boys growing up without their fathers.

It was the strength of La Nauze’s rage that impressed me. Here I had been given the perfect insight to the capacity of death in war to burn and fester even to the next generation. Here I had seen the depths of the revulsion of sectarianism of which ordinary Australians were capable. Here I had the perfect lesson of the need to write with passion, to engage the emotions. Yet I was too young, too inexperienced or too incompetent to see what my material demanded of me. Where my material was taking me.

I needed to ask, relentlessly, throughout the thesis, almost on every page, or at least have in the forefront of my mind as I wrote every page, how it was that the war in Australia had not destroyed the church. How was it that the people had not turned in revulsion from the church. Perhaps Archbishop Mannix was part of the answer. He so divided the Australian community that a clear majority of his own people had determined to stay with him out of loyalty and to fight back. Call us traitorous while our priests even now are walking the streets handing out the casualty telegrams? Call us
unpatriotic as our young men are even now dying in the trenches? Few Catholics then had the words or the positions of influence to fight back in these ways. Except the Archbishop of Melbourne who could take the fight right up to our enemies.

And in fighting so hard did he unify his opponents to ignore the wonky theology and the immature patriotism of those in the pulpits so that no word of criticism or dissent would be heard. The chaplains had glimpsed a new spirit among the soldiers. A spirit of unity, of sacrifice, of mutual interdependence. When a recently arrived chaplain asked his batman what was the religion of the other chaplain in the battalion the soldier replied: ‘there ain’t no religion here, Sir, we’re all brothers.’ And it is possible that he meant it. And the soldiers returned home, those of them that were coming home, and saw the awful divisions in Australian society, the depth of the hatreds between Christians and perhaps they despaired. Or perhaps they kept to themselves, sharing something precious that those who had not served had never glimpsed. But I do think that any account of the response of the Australian churches in the great war that may be written now would have to be organised around two mighty themes: grief and how it was that the war had not destroyed the churches.

It was 1990 and the first time that I had set foot on Anzac myself, but I thought I could navigate around a bit, from all that reading.

I walked along the Beach road until I came to a rough path with a sign directing me to Lone Pine. It was a moderate to hard climb for me but incredibly interesting. Half way up the road you come to Shell Green, a level spot, amid all these hills and gullies. Famously the Australians had played cricket there, for a couple of minutes at least, in the dying days of the campaign to convince the Turks that all was normal in the Australian lines. Shell Green is now a cemetery, larger than many on Gallipoli, for they are dotted on all sorts of places there. Wherever, in fact, the troops could find a bit of space. But Shell Green was made up after the war, you could tell that from the orderly rows of the graves, not lying higgledy-piggledy all over the place, as one burial party after another did their work at night, praying for safety from the shells, and probably praying for the poor sod they were burying too.

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reason I have never discovered they are set in the ground and if you want to read them carefully you will be stooping as you go. Taking a row at random, the third or fourth name along stopped me in my tracks. I remembered that perhaps I should have been looking for it, but to find it now so coincidentally was almost eerie. Here was the grave of Captain Charles Andrew La Nauze, the father of my university teacher, the man who more than any other showed me what it was to be an historian. Professor John La Nauze had his fourth birthday two weeks before his father died here, I remembered, but he never forgot.

But I suppose you know all this, I whispered in that darkened nursing home room. I imagine I am describing what is so familiar to you. I still did not know if he could hear me and if he was following what I was saying. There had been no indication from him at all when I had introduced myself to him once more and started to speak of my visit to the Shell Green cemetery. But the body moved strongly, or just the head really, he was indeed taking it in, and he let me know with certainty, that no, he had never been there and he would like me to go on describing his father’s grave as it had been in the April just gone. I spoke for a while of the beauty and tranquillity of the place, how it looked out across the sea from which the invaders had arrived, how well cared for it was, how honoured still was his father and all those others who lay there. But he had drifted off, surely by now, and I tiptoed out. I wrote to his wife Barbara, telling the same story and enclosing a photograph of her father-in-law’s grave but before she received the letter John La Nauze had died.
Fifty Years since the “Goulburn Strike”: Catholics and Education Politics

John Warhurst*

Introduction: Catholics and Education Politics
An experienced non-Catholic observer very close to political events, Labor speechwriter and historian Graham Freudenberg, has observed in 1977 that “the oldest, deepest, most poisonous debate in Australia has been about government aid to church schools”. Furthermore, thirty-five years ago he offered the damning opinion that: “The century old failure of the Catholic Church in Australia to achieve her principal social aim is remarkable testimony to the political incompetence of the bishops”.

The first aim of this paper is to put the Goulburn strike of July 1962 in context of the state aid debates. Secondly, I want to trace the story of Catholics and education politics over the fifty years since then. Finally, I want to reflect on how far the state aid debate has come and to ask where state aid for Catholic schools sits now.

I rely not on fresh historical research about the strike, but on some of the major secondary sources, especially those written by Michael Hogan, and my own broader perspectives on the Catholic lobby and Catholics in politics.

This is not just a narrow story about education policy and funding, but a broader account of the Catholic community and its various interactions with politics. This involves the structure and organization of the church, including the teaching congregations, the changing place of the church and its schools in society, Catholics, voting and political party politics, and contributions by other interested participants in politics and education debates.

A number of themes emerge, most of which can only be discussed briefly. These include the situation of the times, the education funding arguments advanced by Catholics, the strategies and tactics of pressure group advocacy and, perhaps most importantly, the pattern of government funding of Catholic schools.

1962: The Ecclesiastical and Political Context
The ecclesiastical and political context was tantalizingly poised. In 1962 Robert Menzies was in his thirteenth year as prime minister of a Coalition

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government, after his narrow victory at the 1961 federal elections. He was supported by the largely Catholic Democratic Labor Party which had formed seven years previously after the Labor Split of 1955. The DLP, keeping Menzies in office, was vocal in support of state aid. The Leader of the Labor Opposition was a Catholic, Arthur Calwell. Three of the four federal Labor leaders were Catholics. The other was the new Deputy Leader Gough Whitlam.

At the state level the Labor party was dominant in NSW, the most Labor of all states and had been in office since 1941. It was a very Catholic branch of the party. RJ Heffron had been the Premier since 1959, succeeding Joe Cahill, but he was to lose office to the Liberal Bob Askin in 1965.

John XXIII was Pope and the second Vatican Council took place from 1962-1965. A large section of the Australian Catholic community was at war with Labor over communism. The politics of the permissive society, in which Catholics played a large part, did not hit Australia till later in the 1960s. Five years earlier Rome had declared that the Catholic Social Studies Movement was not Catholic Action and the Movement lost the formal support of the Church and became the National Civic Council. The Archbishop of Sydney was Norman Gilroy and his auxiliary was James Carroll. Goulburn was part of the Canberra-Goulburn Archdiocese, headed by Archbishop Eris O’Brien.

The Goulburn “Strike”

The story:
Catholic education in the 1960s was in crisis as growing enrolments caused by population growth outran financial resources and school capacity. Very large classes and poor facilities were the norm. There were even rumblings of the church restructuring its commitment to education in some way, perhaps even dispensing with one or more levels of Catholic education. Yet the schools received little or no government funding and progress in attaining state funding was moving at a glacial pace. What support there was came indirectly from state governments in the form of bursaries and assistance with teacher training.

Some of the opposition was philosophical but some was personal. Sectarianism in society (that is anti-Catholicism and in return anti-Protestantism) was rampant and consequently the governments and political parties were extremely cautious about tackling this issue. They regarded state aid as electoral suicide because it would generate more opposition than support. Catholics were a big minority but a minority nonetheless. Catholics
within the main political parties, including premiers and prime ministers, had proved impotent on the issue over many years. Most Catholics supported the Labor Party but the 1950s Labor Split, weak though it was in NSW, had produced the Democratic Labor Party and begun the long road for Catholics away from Labor. Catholic lay militancy was in the air, though the bishops were locked into traditional forms of advocacy.

On Friday July 13 1962, Bishop John Cullinane, the Auxiliary Bishop of Canberra-Goulburn, authorized the closing of the six Goulburn Catholic schools for six weeks until the end of term, and instructed the 2,000 students to present themselves to the nearby government schools for enrolment, which they did on Monday July 16. The tipping point had been state government insistence over several years on improvements to a toilet block at a local Catholic primary school. Amid great excitement and furore 640 Catholic students were enrolled with considerable professionalism and good will but there was no room for the remainder. Some Catholic students from boarding schools marched en masse to their new schools under firm instructions of good behavior from their teachers. They were well-received, some of the government school teachers being themselves Catholic parents. It was the week of the Leaving Certificate ‘trials’ and some students were held back by the nuns.

Shortly afterwards, on July 22, the point made, most of the students returned to their schools, though some 10% stayed in the public system. The event itself, which attracted great media publicity, some of it extremely hostile, did not in itself solve anything by itself. Nor was it “masochistic” as academic Robert Parker described it years later. But it appears to have stimulated developments and progress was swift. There was no turning back.

Academic studies have been confident of the event’s importance. Sydneysider Michael Hogan describes it “the most spectacular demonstration of Catholic frustration in the history of state aid” and “a watershed in state aid politics”. Henry Albinski, an American visitor, saw it as a “sensational episode” and “an unprecedented manifestation of Catholic lay action”.

Looking back now from a Catholic perspective Geoff Joy, former director of the CEO in Canberra-Goulburn, describes it as “an explosion and a watershed in the state aid debate that advanced the movement to direct government grants both Commonwealth and State to non-government schools”. Sister Kerrie Cusack, now congregational leader of the Sisters of St Joseph Goulburn, who was one of the students who transferred to Goulburn High at the time, now recalls the strike as “both bold and attention-seeking”
and “an effective, non-violent protest”. “Behind it all”, she says, “was Catholic faith seeking justice”.

**Main Themes:**
Several general themes can be drawn from the story of what happened in Goulburn in 1962.

The strike, as the name suggests, drew on the direct action tactics of union-style industrial confrontation rather than the usual quiet diplomacy and behind the scenes negotiations practiced by the bishops. The mood was militant and the action was public. Critics objected to such a “menacing” approach to pressure group politics.

Lay Catholics, especially men it seems in this instance, played a considerable role, though the hierarchy was formally in charge. The decision to strike was taken by a public meeting of 700 Catholics after a preparatory meeting of 40 Catholic men called by Cullinane, the parish priest. This lay action was symptomatic of growing action among Catholic parents and friends organizations in several states.

Informal Catholic interaction with the political system was largely with the Labor Party because of the traditional ties, though that was in the process of changing, initially through the influence of the DLP. Catholics were rare in the Coalition parties and those that were complained of anti-Catholic prejudice.

Goulburn was a very Irish-Catholic town (36%) and this was a push by the whole integrated Catholic community, not just an education sector led by religious congregations and school principals. The state aid issue was a unifying factor within the Catholic community, though not all Catholics went to church schools, and a sense of injustice was pervasive.

The strategy adopted was emotional and symbolic. Enrolment in government schools was not seen as a long-term solution but a short-term tactic to draw attention to the issue of just and proper funding of Catholic schools.

The Opposition to funding of Catholic schools was resting on its laurels and was not as highly organized as it was to become once such funding became a reality. That was to lead to the political organization known as the Defence of Government Schools campaign right up to the High Court, where the case was finally lost.

This was a NSW state issue as there was no commonwealth funding, though state aid was soon to attract such federal government interest that state politics faded from the limelight.
Immediate Consequences, 1962-1975

The Catholic hierarchy returned to the negotiating table. The Cardinal, advised by Bishop James Carroll, approached the Premier. The NSW Labor government did not want to be seen to be stampeded by the strike. Later in the year it was returned to office at the 1962 state election. During 1963 it came into conflict with Labor’s federal executive, which supported indirect but not direct state aid.

In general Labor tied itself in knots. State aid threw it into crisis. Albinski’s described it as self-immolation. Since 1957, post-Split, official party policy had been opposed to direct state aid. Many state parliamentarians wanted to take the lead and respond to Catholic community pressure but they were repeatedly humiliated by the federal party organization, led by Joe Chamberlain, the federal secretary, who refused to budge.

There was just as much internal conflict within the Coalition parties as there was within Labor but their parliamentary leaders had more freedom to move. Liberal leader Robert Askin tried to take initiatives but was cautious and was initially rebuffed by his own party. Unlike the Country Party the NSW Liberals did not take a state aid policy to the 1962 state election. That came later.

The “simple Presbyterian” PM Robert Menzies took the political initiative in superb fashion at the 1963 federal election by offering federally-funded science blocks to all schools. Both sides of politics recognize that he outmaneuvered Labor, to use Gerard Henderson’s term. Sean Scalmer writes that Menzies “exploited the demonization of Labor’s internal structures, wooed Catholic voters with generous State Aid, and profited from the economic recovery”.

Until late 1963, according to Albinski, “successive Menzies Governments did and promised little indeed for private schools”, though small indirect steps had been taken by the federal government in the ACT since 1956. At the election there was a large swing against Labor and the swing was biggest in NSW. Labor lost 10 seats, seven in NSW.

This may have been NSW’s “DLP-type moment” at which Catholics moved to the Coalition. In 1994 John Howard recollected to Gerard Henderson that Menzies’ great genius was to unlock” the Catholic vote. According to Howard, “what really happened is that we got Menzies’ Catholics in 1963 for the first time in a really big way”.

The federal Labor Party, under Calwell, initially still refused to budge on direct financial assistance to church schools. Nevertheless, at the 1963 election Labor did offer a generous indirect aid package, including a big
Commonwealth scholarships program available to all students, public or private.

But the humanist agnostic Whitlam, who replaced Calwell in 1967, introduced needs based funding after coming to office in 1972. Whitlam fought the so-called faceless men that ran his party and had a furious dispute with his Federal Executive. His general view was that “only the impotent are pure”, so he sought a compromise. This solved Labor’s internal problems and offered a coherent approach to funding. The Catholic bishops as a whole did not accept the needs based approach, however, and looked like lining up against Whitlam, but Archbishop Carroll intervened with a last minute statement that both political parties had an acceptable approach to funding Catholic schools. It defused the issue and a majority of Catholic voters backed Whitlam.

Whitlam changed the politics of education funding forever though he did not end the state aid debate. Dean Ashenden calls it an education revolution in which money from the federal government “gushed into the Catholic schools and flowed to the state systems”.

Since the bishops wanted to lock in public funding as a right not a privilege, Whitlam agreed that the second, tiny component of the non-government sector, the high-fee independents, should get some money too. Suddenly the ancient taboo on “state aid” to church schools, dating back to the egalitarian and sectarian settlement of the 1880s, seemed obsolete. Everyone was in the money. Class sizes tumbled, teacher salaries rose, new schools were built.

Longer Term Developments, 1975-2012

Labor:
There have been two long periods of Labor federal government, 1983-1996 and since 2007. Labor governments and oppositions, including Bob Hawke and his Education minister Susan Ryan (1983), Mark Latham (2004) and Kevin Rudd and his Education shadow minister Jenny Macklin (2007) have wrestled with how to fund elite schools under a needs-based formula. Regular conflicts took place between Catholics and Labor over its interpretation of needs funding and the church’s precautionary support for largely Protestant elite schools. Catholics maintained solidarity and the principals of small Catholic parochial schools publicly stood by their GPS Catholic brothers and sisters. For example, in November 1983, 5,000 people protested in the Sydney Town Hall against the Hawke government’s plans to cut out recurrent funding to 41 elite Protestant schools, though there were no Catholic schools on the list.
Coalition:
The Howard era, including Education Ministers David Kemp and Brendan Nelson, played a significant role. Kemp introduced the SES system in 2001 as a formula for allocating Commonwealth funding, but Catholics did not join and continued to be funded separately. At Howard’s insistence Nelson bought Catholic involvement in 2004 for $300 million through the idea of “funding maintained schools”, that is, no one loses, (60% of all Catholic schools), which remains an element of public debate today.

The Church:
The church built considerable professionalism in the NCEC, created in the 1980s, and was well-served by its boards and staff. It installed powerful and politically-attuned NCEC Chairs, including the former head of the NSW Premier’s Department, Gerry Gleeson from 1990-1996, and Dr Peter Tannock from 1996-2001. It bolstered its political credentials by appointing leading retired political figures, including former NSW Liberal Premier John Fahey and former SA Labor Education Minister Greg Crafter. It gained a reputation for expertise and experience, and chairs such as Monsignor Tom Doyle, 2001-2008, developed a formidable reputation.

The ACBC accorded the education portfolio a high priority and chairs of the bishops committee have included Cardinal George Pell and Bishop Greg O’Kelly.

2004: Catholic Power
There were two illustrations during 2004 of how Catholics ‘do’ education politics. Both are examples of Catholic power, implicit or explicit.

Howard desperately wanted Catholics in the SES scheme to make it comprehensive and authoritative. He also recognized that when he came to office in 1996 for the very first time a majority of Catholics had voted for the Coalition. He sent his Catholic Minister for Education Brendan Nelson to seal the deal. Catholics agreed for a price to come inside the tent. Latham tried to limit federal funding to a hundred or so largely Protestant elite schools by cuts and freezes. George Pell, Denis Hart and the two Anglican Archbishops of Sydney and Melbourne, in an example of inter-church solidarity, objected to this so-called hit-list. Labor subsequently retreated by changing its policy for the next election.

Catholics and Education Politics Today

The Catholic Community and the Church:
The Catholic community is very different now; that includes its political
profile. It has maintained its numerical size (2011 Census) and strength as a political lobby nevertheless.

The church is also very different in composition, that includes its declining religious workforce, particularly relevant to education, and its more national organization, including the ACBC and NCEC.

Education:
The education sector as a whole has become much more expensive for the community to fund and faces many new issues, including technology, science, English as a second language, and disabilities, etc.

The Catholic education sector is now very different too, including the CEOs and the NCEC. Catholic funding for all but 60 schools is distributed by block grants through CEOs, which are then distributed according to needs. Other private schools are funded individually and their lobbies look enviously at the relative cohesion of the Catholic lobby. The NCEC reported that in 2011 71% of all funding for Catholic schools came from governments (on average 53% from the Commonwealth and 18% from state governments).

Government funding and politics:
There is bipartisan support for federal funding of Catholic education, despite some new opposition from some sectors of the Greens, especially in NSW. Catholic education funding is extensive and by that criteria the last 50 years have been successful. Of all the sectors in the church the education lobby has been most successful. Freudenberg’s negative judgement of the 1970s would have to be revised.

Funding has increased at both state and federal level but the federal funding has become the focus of debate about the funding of private schools. The arguments for funding by “right” (1962) have been adapted to “capacity to pay”. Public funding is no longer a right but follows the school’s own capacity to contribute. This is spelled out in the NCEC’s “Funding Principles for Catholic Schools” (December 2009) and in the NCEC Gonski submission in 2011.

The distribution of funds from all levels of government must be needs-based to take into account the general educational needs of students as well as the particular needs of children disadvantaged educationally by social, economic, geographic, cultural and physical factors. Needs-based distribution also should include consideration of the recurrent resources available to a school from private income.
Lobbying and Political Parties:
Education lobbying is largely administrative and bureaucratic. It is rarely militant, especially at the federal level. Where Catholic militancy occurs it is generally in other sectors, such as life and death issues, including abortion and euthanasia. Education advocacy is led by church bureaucrats and bishops rather than by lay Catholics. This takes place within a modern style of politics and policy-making which is common to many sectors.
The denominational composition of the political parties has changed dramatically. The entry of Catholics into the upper reaches of the federal Liberal Party has been remarkable. Tony Abbott, Leader of the Opposition, and Christopher Pyne, Shadow Minister for Education, illustrate this shift. They both attended Jesuit schools at which Bishop Greg O’Kelly, Chair of the Bishops Commission for Catholic Education has been the Headmaster.
The Catholic education lobby remains divided along three or four different lines (elite schools versus parochial; congregational schools versus CEO systemic schools; state and diocesan differences). Catholics are caught uneasily between a binary framing of the issue as a public-private one rather than a public-private-Catholic one. In this context the alliance with the Independent private sector is crucial.

Conclusion
The Goulburn peoples’ strike in 1962 is a world away from Canberra politics and advocacy in 2012. Hogan hypothesized that perhaps the state aid campaign, including Goulburn, was “the last hurrah for ‘Catholic’ politics”. That’s not quite right but it is an interesting proposition because Catholics are losing their distinctiveness and risk being submerged into broader Christian lobbying.

There is no such thing now as the Catholic community of old nor, if there ever really was, the Catholic vote. Catholic identity is increasingly blurred and the Catholic ‘brand’ has been damaged, though it still has some purchase.

Half of all Catholic students are in government schools. Catholic schools have become increasingly middle-class, with the working class disproportionately in government schools and many of the upper middle class attending elite private schools. Increasingly Catholic schools attract non-Catholic students (28% of all students in Catholic schools).

Bishops negotiate with governments on a professional non-partisan basis through their intermediaries, state CEOs and the NCEC. The political reputations of bishops and Catholic education bureaucrats vary. Some would
Fifty years since the “Goulburn Strike”: Catholics and educational politics

now be seen as favouring the Coalition, while others would be seen as inclined towards Labor.

Those involved in the Goulburn strike, if they were alive today, would recognize that they were part of the success story that is Catholic education. Not only are Catholic schools much better funded, despite having the lowest average level of resources of the three big sectors (NCEC), but like the whole education sector they probably provide better education. Dean Ashenden, for one, concludes: “Australian schools are a lot better than they were during the overcrowding and funding crises of the 1950s and 1960s …”.

In 1962 educational aspirations were at the heart of an aspirational church that still saw itself as a bit of an outsider. The Catholic community wanted to make its mark in the wider Australian community through professional advancement and education was central to this vision. In 2012 the Catholic community has achieved that goal and is definitely mainstream.

Government funding of Catholic schools is seen as just part of the furniture of Australian politics. The danger, if there is one, is the complacency that may follow if a belief spreads among Catholics that the flow of government money is endless and that the tap will never be turned off.

Furthermore, as Catholic education is at the heart of the church’s relationship with the federal government it raises the question whether it weighs on the minds of the hierarchy in its other dealings with government. After his recent retirement, for instance, Archbishop Hickey of Perth, for instance, was quoted as saying that he regretted that his worries about possible financial repercussions for the Church played a part in his not being more active in the public square. There is no such thing as a free lunch.

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VATICAN II AS I EXPERIENCED IT

Michael Costigan*

A memorable Roman autumn
Autumn is an enchanting time in Rome. By October the relentless heat of July and August, from which many of the Romans themselves flee, is only an uncomfortable memory. The days are shorter, often blessed by cloudless skies, with mild sunshine enhancing the golden glow of some of the ancient and modern buildings, especially in the late afternoon. The Romans, including the Pope and his court, have returned, the number of tourists has declined, the schools and universities are open for business and hot roasted chestnuts are on sale at street corners – or used to be in my day.

After living through nine Roman autumns as a seminarian and student-priest between 1952 and 1961, I welcomed the chance in 1963 to experience one more of those magical seasons, probably my last and certainly the most memorable of all.

I was there that year for the second of the four autumnal sessions of the Second Vatican Council, as a priest-reporter commissioned to cover the event for the Melbourne Catholic Advocate, of which I was the Associate Editor, as well as for three other Australian Catholic weekly newspapers.

With the Australian Catholic Historical Society marking the 50th anniversary this year of the opening of Vatican II by making that event the theme of several of the monthly papers scheduled for 2012, the Society’s President suggested I help to set the scene by painting a picture of what it was actually like to be at the Council.

My writings and diary
My memory of the 77 days I spent in Rome during that autumn is aided by the voluminous reports I mailed back to Australia and by a pamphlet subsequently published by the Australian Catholic Truth Society with the title Vatican Council Survey, in which I summarised those reports.¹

In addition, I kept a rough diary in an exercise book in which, usually before retiring late at night, I noted my daily activities in and around the Council. I also used another exercise book for notes taken at press briefings,


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for drafts of a few of my reports and for other reflections and comments. Altogether, there are 294 pages of untidy handwriting, not always easy for me now to decipher, in these two dog-eared volumes, which have luckily escaped my spasmodic and largely unsuccessful efforts to cull my papers.

Many people participating in or observing the Council kept diaries, one of the most celebrated, now published in English translation, being that of the French Dominican theologian, Yves Congar. Another diary that came to my notice, in Josephine Laffin’s fine biography of Matthew Beovich (1896-1981), is the meticulous daily record kept during the Council (and throughout his life) by that long-serving Archbishop of Adelaide.

My scrappy diary, of course, bears no comparison with the learned and astute observations of a Congar or with Beovich’s account of his gradual conversion from a conservative’s scepticism to a more moderate and pastorally sensitive appreciation of what the Council was about. Mostly my entries allude, sometimes in one or two words, to what I had done, where I had gone and the people I had encountered during each day. If they have value now, it is because some of those 294 pages offer a taste of the flavour of conciliar Rome as experienced by one fledgling religious journalist. I will draw on a few of those entries in what follows.

**A life-changing experience**

I have often said of those days spent at Vatican II, as in the article I contributed to a National Council of Priests’ publication in 1982, marking the 20th anniversary of the Council’s opening, that it was a life-changing experience. Ten years ago, when the opening’s 40th anniversary was commemorated, similar words came from Bishop Geoffrey Robinson, who described the Council as the greatest event in the Church in his lifetime, which had inspired his life over the previous forty years.

My only direct taste of the Council was of the ten-week session that took place 49 years ago, not of the opening session a full half-century ago nor of the two subsequent sessions, in 1964 and 1965. The Advocate had reported the first session from distant Melbourne, recounting events, like most of the diocesan Catholic Press around the world, with some difficulty because of our reliance on official sources at a time when tight control was exercised by the Vatican over the release of information.

This had not prevented news about the sometimes sensational occurrences inside the Council hall from eventually finding other outlets,

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by courtesy of some of the Council Fathers and advisers who believed in the Catholic public’s right to know. The process was aided in the English-speaking world by alert investigative writers like the ex-Jesuit Robert Kaiser and the Redemptorist priest Francis Xavier Murphy, alias Xavier Rynne. At the same time, an expectation about what the Council might achieve was being aroused by the pre-conciliar writings of theologically literate priests like Hans Kung, Riccardo Lombardi SJ and Edward Schillebeeckx OP.

**My reporting commission and accommodation in Rome**

It was Archbishop Guilford Young of Hobart who urged the Australian Catholic Press at its annual convention early in 1963 to be better represented at the Council’s second session. This led to the commission I received to attend.

The Superior General of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers, an American named Father Roland Huot SSS (1910-2006), generously offered me complimentary accommodation in his Congregation’s large head house, in Via G.B. de Rossi, near Rome’s Via Nomentana.

The quid pro quo for this wonderful hospitality was that every day when the Council was meeting I would drive the Superior General (who was
ex officio a Council Father), with a Colombian Archbishop and his priest-secretary, who were other house guests, and another resident theological adviser to and from St Peter’s Basilica. This put me behind the wheel of a new Fiat 1500, purchased by the Congregation for the occasion. My familiarity with Roman traffic after my previous long sojourn in the city had not disappeared, so that the task presented few problems. The good Blessed Sacrament Fathers also gave me the use of a motor scooter for my own needs when I was not acting as the chauffeur.

**Filling 77 days at the Council: how were those 77 days filled?**

Through Father Huot and my friend and superior Justin D. Simonds, Coadjutor Archbishop of Melbourne, who asked me to act unofficially as his theological adviser, I was able to attend the debates in the Council Hall, which took place in the morning. I used this privilege sparingly, only six or seven times, as I found that information about all that was said and done during these daily “Congregations” became readily available in multilingual briefings very soon after the Fathers of the Council, mostly clad in their choir robes, emerged from the Basilica not long after noon, providing gatherings of tourists and others with a colourful and much photographed spectacle.

One of my memories of time spent inside the Council Hall is of some of the robed bishops, the appointed periti (theological experts), the non-Catholic observers and others chatting over coffee in the two bars set up in two of the Basilica’s side chapels (popularly named Bar Jonah and Bar Abbas) while the speech-making continued. Others spent time in earnest conversation while strolling together up and down the Basilica, behind the tribunes where more scrupulous comrades sat listening, attentively or otherwise, to the Latin-language interventions.

By this time, the officials who had tried in the previous year to stem the flow of information from inside the Council had lost the battle. I can only praise the facilities made available to us accredited correspondents by the Council Press Office, under the direction of Father Fausto Vallainc, and by the American priest Father (later Archbishop) Edward Heston CSC (1907-73), in his role as the briefing officer for the English-language media.

Rather than listening every morning to a series of 10-minute speeches in Latin, I found it more profitable to rely on the summaries provided so promptly by Father Heston and in the meanwhile to spend time typing my reports in the Press Office, across the road from St Peter’s Square, or in exchanging thoughts and information with fellow correspondents. This latter highly educative activity was also pursued often during the day and
the evening in coffee bars and (usually cheap) eating places in the Borgo or Trastevere districts.

**An education in theology and journalism**

I attended all of the marvellous briefing sessions organised in the mid-afternoon for the media by the United States Bishops in their USO office in a basement at the Tiber end of the Via della Conciliazione. That year they were chaired openly and amiably by Father John B. Sheerin of the Paulists (1906-92), supported by an interchangeable panel of such expert priest-theologians as Gustav Weigel, Francis Connell, Thomas Stransky, Bernard Haering, Frederick McManus, George Tavard, John Long, Gregory Baum and Charles Davis.

I went as well to a few of the less enthralling media briefings organised by the UK Bishops and to the usually stimulating lectures delivered on the Council’s themes by Conciliar Fathers and theological advisers, often held in religious houses or seminaries where some of the participants were lodged. My diary reminds me that some of the lecturers included the following members of the Council: Cardinals Suenens, Lercaro and Ruffini, Archbishops Heenan, Laurence Shehan, Thomas Roberts SJ and Eugene D’Souza, and Bishops Holland, Wright, Dwyer and (Abbot) Christopher Butler. Among the priest-theologians at whose feet I sat, in some cases on several occasions, were Yves Congar, Karl Rahner, Jean Danielou, Henri de Lubac, Hans Kung, John Courtney Murray, Barnabas Ahern and Clifford Howell. It all added up to an extraordinary opportunity for a young cleric trained in the narrow Roman school of theology to receive a thorough re-education in the subject.

That time at the Council was also invaluable for the development of a novice journalist and editor. I met or formed friendships, mostly short-term but in a few cases destined to be enduring, with some of the other correspondents covering the event for either the general media or the Catholic press. I think of the Irish-American freelance writer and Latin American expert Gary MacEoin, whom many years later during one of his visits to Australia I introduced to Morris West, Desmond Fisher of England’s Catholic Herald, Donald Campion SJ of America, Robert Kaiser of Time, Milton Bracker of the New York Times, Michael Novak of Commonweal, Raniero La Valle of L’Avvenire d’Italia, Henri Fesquet of Le Monde, Rene Laurentin of La Croix and James Johnson of the Kansas City Star. Other Australian writers with whom I often exchanged views and Council gossip were the Rome-based Desmond O’Grady and Alan McElwain, who were both contributing material to the Sydney Catholic Weekly and other publications,
and the Marist priest Stan Hosie, covering the event for *Harvest* magazine.

**Management of a “School for Bishops”**

**What can I say about the actual business of the 1963 session?**

Each annual session of the Council had its own distinctive character, achievements, controversies and disappointments. The 1962 session had been a time of discovery, with the Conciliar Fathers learning from the progressive leadership provided by a few – the likes of Cardinals Suenens, Lercaro, Montini (soon to become Pope Paul VI), Doepfner, Lienart, Frings, Alfrink, Bea and Koenig, the Melchite Patriarch Maximos IV Saigh and the talented Bishop De Smedt of Bruges. The no less articulate leaders of the conservative minority included Cardinals Ottaviani, Siri, Ruffini, Larraona and Browne OP.

What others gleaned from all of these personalities in what has been called a “School for Bishops” was that they were not at the Council to accept passively what had been set down in advance under Roman Curia direction by the compilers of position papers. They had a voice and a vote – and the right and duty to make their voices heard. In this they had been encouraged by the man who convened the Council, Pope John XXIII, whose opening speech on 11 October 1962 and interventions during that opening session made it clear that he was serious about the need for change and updating in the Church and that he welcomed the challenging of some of the positions defended by those he labelled “prophets of doom”.

The outcome was that much of the material prepared in advance of the gathering was either rejected or completely revised, but not without a struggle. And the Council majority also agreed that they should have more say about the composition of the various commissions or committees working on the revising if not the complete re-writing of documents.

Returning in September 1963 under a new Pope, following Pope John’s death nearly four months before, the participants had a much better appreciation of what they were called to do. By this time it was apparent that a majority favoured a program of change or moderate reform. The fact that such a program still lacked the support of some important Council members of the old school meant that lively debating could be expected during the 1963 session.

**The first two documents issued**

In the discussions a year earlier the way had been prepared for the passage of one major document, the Constitution on the Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*). It had priority for the simple reason that the liturgical movement
was already well under way and had widespread support in the Church before the Council opened. Indicative of this was the successful International Liturgical Congress held in Assisi in 1956, which I had attended as a recently ordained Melbourne priest still studying in Rome.

The other document promulgated at the end of the 1963 session was the Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication (Inter Mirifica). There is an impression that the subject of the media received less attention at the Council than it warranted and that most of the Fathers were content to approve a document more noteworthy for its truisms than for any inspiration it might offer to people working in the media or for any encouragement it might give to Church leaders to respect and foster the People of God’s right to be informed and to take part in an open exchange of views on Church life and practices.

I was present when Paul VI promulgated these two documents on 4 December 1963. It is interesting to note in passing that it was Pope Paul who promulgated all of the Council’s sixteen documents – its four Constitutions, nine Decrees and three Declarations. The two issued in 1963 were followed by three at the third session, in 1964, and the remaining eleven in the 1965 final session. So the great Pope John XXIII did not have the chance to issue any of the conciliar documents, although his stamp and his call for aggiornamento influenced all of them.

**Development of Council procedures**

By the time of the 1963 session, the Council’s way of handling business had evolved. The number of schemata or embryonic documents had been reduced by elimination or amalgamation from around seventy to seventeen. Those exhaustively debated at one session were generally but not invariably ready for final discussion, approval and promulgation in the following year. This is what occurred in 1963 with the Liturgy Constitution and, less satisfactorily, the Media Decree.

With the debates in the Council becoming more theological in content, some of the journalists covering the event began to feel a little out of their depth. The representative of one news agency was heard to say: “Last year they told us nothing and we knew everything. This year they tell us everything and we understand nothing.”

The whole of October 1963 was spent discussing the pivotal draft Constitution on the Church. The main subjects considered in November were the drafts on the role of bishops and on ecumenism. The proposed document on bishops struck so much trouble that it was eventually dumped and fully rewritten, so that the interval before the promulgation of a completely new
text, the Decree on the Bishops’ Pastoral Office in the Church (Christus Dominus), was extended to 28 October 1965, during the final session.

The draft text on ecumenism fared better, although it too was subjected to rigorous and occasionally acrimonious attention.

While Archbishop (later Cardinal) John Heenan of Westminster, in the name of many Bishops in the English-speaking world and elsewhere, gave general support to the draft, Cardinal Norman Gilroy, with several other Australians, submitted in writing what John W. O’Malley in his admirable book *What Happened at Vatican II* calls a “scathing denunciation”. Gilroy wrote: “Is it really possible for an ecumenical council to say that any heretic has the right to draw the faithful away from Christ, the Supreme Pastor, and to lead them to pasture *in their poisoned fields*?” (emphasis mine). The use of terms like “heretic” and “poisoned fields” is indicative of the distance some of our Catholic Church leaders in Australia had to travel in 1963 before fully accepting the Council’s direction on ecumenism.

The main outcome of the 1963 discussions was the historic issuing a year later, on 21 November 1964, of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), the Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) and the Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*).

**On other issues and controversies**

Meanwhile, in a sometimes ad hoc way, other issues came to the surface at times in 1963, affecting the schemata that did not reach full fruition for two more years. The most important of these were the foreshadowed or possible documents on the Church in the Modern World, an unprecedented topic for an ecumenical council, on Revelation (with differences surfacing about the respective roles of Scripture and Tradition and the weight to be given to each), on Freedom of Religion and on Relations between the Church and other Religions, with particular concern over relations with the Jewish people.

Even the journalists who might have found the theologising occasionally baffling appreciated the news value of disputes and confrontation. Those at the Council that year found no shortage of reportable happenings with a conflict ingredient. My diary reminds me of several examples.

The first has to do with the key issue of episcopal collegiality, the co-responsibility of Bishops with and under the Pope for the whole Church. This was debated at length in the Council Hall over several days.

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The influence of a new Bishop

On 11 October, one of the assembly’s most junior Bishops, Luigi Bettazzi, ordained only the previous week as an Auxiliary Bishop to Cardinal Lercaro of Bologna, delighted many of his hearers when he demonstrated in a learned and witty fashion that collegiality was a traditional doctrine. Smiles greeted his assertion that the Council’s true innovators or radicals were those who opposed or questioned collegiality.

One impressed listener to Bishop Bettazzi was the conservative theologian Pietro Parente (who had been my Dogmatic Theology Professor at the Pontifical Urban University in the 1950s). In 1963 Archbishop (later Cardinal) Parente was the Assessor of the Holy Office, the deputy to one of the principal opponents of the collegiality movement, Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani. On 21 September 1964 Parente, possibly remembering Bettazzi’s maiden speech the year before, was to make one of the most crucial interventions at the Council. His supportive report on sections 22 to 27 of the proposed Constitution on the Church, dealing mainly with collegiality, ensured its comfortable passage in the final voting because it persuaded many, including conservative bishops and some of his former students, that collegiality as described in the text should have the Council’s endorsement.

The Moderators and Giuseppe Dossetti

Back in October 1963, however, the issue had remained alive and divisive. Before that session commenced, Pope Paul had reorganised the management of the Council, appointing four “Moderators” to preside over the gathering. They were Cardinals Suenens, Lercaro, Doepfner and Agagianian.

In the absence of a more precise definition of the controlling powers of the four, some Council members claimed they were exceeding their role when they decided to call for a kind of straw vote on several questions, including collegiality, raised by the Church document – four questions at first, five in the end.

There was also concern because a well-known priest from Bologna, Giuseppe Dossetti (1913-96), an unofficial adviser to Cardinal Lercaro, was coopted to act as Secretary to the Moderators. Dossetti had been a latecomer to the clergy, at the age of 45, but was already by then an acknowledged expert on ecclesiastical law. He had fought as a partisan during the war and had played a part in the Christian Democrat Government’s drafting of Italy’s post-war Constitution as a Republic.

The fact that Dossetti had some influence on the drafting of the October test questions for the Council riled those of its members who had issues about his appointment and his perceived left-wing orientation. In the end, after a
long delay during a period of growing tension late in October, the questions received strong positive support from the Council’s majority, while Dossetti either diplomatically withdrew or was asked to withdraw from his role as the Moderators’ Secretary.

Although this is not noted in my diary, I remember my fellow journalist Desmond O’Grady introducing me to Dossetti one day in the Council Press Office. I was not fully aware of his significance at the time, but I now know that for a time Dossetti was an important if intriguing background figure at Vatican II, whose activities, controversial in part to this day, receive many mentions throughout the great five-volume history of the Council edited by that other notable son of Bologna, Giuseppe Alberigo.

The Blessed Virgin Mary: no separate document
One of the most polarising controversies during the debate on the Church document concerned the Blessed Virgin Mary. A good number of the Conciliar Fathers wanted the Council to retain what the original drafters had intended – a separate document dedicated to Mary.

Some hoped for the definition of another Marian doctrine, preferably as Co-Redeemer with Christ or as Mediatrix of All Graces. Others argued, partly for ecumenical reasons, that a more low-key treatment of Mary and her role should be incorporated in the Constitution on the Church. The case for a separate document was put by Cardinal Rufino Santos of Manila (1908-73). The spokesman for integration within the Constitution on the Church was Cardinal Franz Koenig of Vienna (1905-2004).

In the end, the vote on 29 October favoured integration, although the winning margin was the smallest in all the Council’s votes. I was in the Council hall that morning and was conscious of the tense atmosphere, while my diary records that much was said about it at the US Bishops’ media gathering that afternoon.

The Mass Media
My diary mentions another occasion late in the session when conflict over the draft decree on the Instruments of Social Communication led to an open argument in St Peter’s Square. It happened on 25 November, only nine days before the Pope promulgated the Decree. In my brief notes about the media conference at the USO that day I wrote: “Bernard Haering spoke of a fight involving Bishops in the Piazza, over the circulation of a sheet protesting about the Communications Media schema”.

The diary observes in the same place that two Australians had been among those who signed this criticism of the schema’s shortcomings. They
were Bishop Francis Thomas of Geraldton and Auxiliary Bishop John Cullinane of Canberra and Goulburn. The circulating of this comparatively innocent attempt to improve the Decree shortly before it was due to be issued had angered the gathering’s organisers, led by Archbishop Pericle Felici, Secretary-General of the Council.

**Attack on the Holy Office**

An even more sensational confrontation had occurred on 8 November, when, in the diary’s words, there were “fireworks in the Council: Ottaviani versus Frings”. The occasion was a discussion on the ill-fated schema on the Role of Bishops, which had been defended by the conservative Irishman Cardinal Michael Browne, former Master-General of the Dominicans and Vice-President of the Council’s Theological Commission. Replying to the assertions of Cardinal Browne, an ally of Ottaviani, about what was seen as an exaggeration of the Theological Commission’s powers compared with those of the Council itself, the Archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Frings, delivered what John O’Malley (page 192) calls “his bombshell, an attack on the whole centralising tendency in the Church but specifically on the Holy Office.” There was applause in the Council hall (plausus in aula, according to the official record) when the German Cardinal described the Holy Office, headed by Ottaviani and later re-named the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, as having used procedures that “in many respects are inappropriate to the times in which we live, harm the Church, and are for many a scandal”.

The nearly blind Ottaviani gave a strong and emotional answer to this attack, reminding the Council that the President of “the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office” was the Pope himself. He spoke with a quivering voice of the Congregation’s carefulness in inquiring among experts before reaching and submitting a conclusion to the Pope about matters brought to its attention.

What adds piquancy to this episode retrospectively is that the theological adviser to Frings was the young German theologian Joseph Ratzinger, the future Benedict XVI and, before his election as Pope, for many years a successor to Ottaviani in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. One wonders if or to what extent Father Ratzinger had some involvement in 1963 in the sensational criticism by Frings of the powerful body he would one day lead.

**More polarising issues**

Three other polarising issues at the 1963 Council session were anti-semitism, religious liberty and the role of women in the Church.
The first two matters arose in 1963 when the schema on ecumenism was being discussed. Cardinal Bea himself, head of the Christian Unity Secretariat, raised the question about relations with the Jews. At the time, and in the following year, some of the Eastern Rite Bishops, led by the formidable octogenarian Melchite Patriarch Maximos IV Saigh, voiced concerns about the way in which a statement on anti-semitism might be misconstrued in the Arab world as the adoption of a pro-Israel stance.

In the end, the relevant passages were removed from the Decree on Ecumenism and, after revision, became part of the Council’s Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra Aetate). With its other sympathetic sections on other religions, including Islam, the Declaration was to be issued on 28 October 1965.

Religious freedom had also been raised in the Ecumenism schema, in a chapter introduced by the Belgian Bishop Joseph De Smedt. This subject also engendered strong debate. It too was removed from the Ecumenism Decree, leading eventually to the promulgation on 7 December 1965, the Council’s final day, of the Declaration on Religious Freedom (Dignitatis Humanae).

In 1963 I had the privilege of hearing several addresses on the subject by one of the principal architects of the Declaration, the American Jesuit John Courtney Murray, whose belated appointment as an expert at the Council on the vigil of the second session can be credited to Cardinal Spellman of New York as his major contribution to Vatican II. Another influential background figure in the area was my former lecturer and thesis moderator at the Pontifical Lateran University, Monsignor (later Cardinal) Pietro Pavan.

The laity: male and female
The Council’s second session had also seen the appearance of its first male lay auditors, including the English Jocist (YCW) leader Pat Keegan, who made history as a layman addressing an ecumenical council. But women were not to make their debut as official auditors at the Council until the following year. One of the first appointed was to be the Rome-based Australian high achiever Rosemary Goldie, who died in Sydney at 94 early in 2010.

While I had been excited when first entering the Council hall by the vision of all those rows of well over two thousand Council Fathers, most of them in colourful robes, I recall pondering on the totally male character of the event. Not only were all the participants male, but most were over fifty and all were unmarried. Leaving aside the Holy Spirit’s presence, one can surely be excused for wondering how such an assembly could legislate effectively for the millions of women, young people and married people
constituting the People of God.

Nevertheless, I must acknowledge in a penitential spirit that my own attitudes at the time were gravely in need of reform. This is revealed to my shame and embarrassment in my diary entry for 22 October 1963. I wrote: “At US Press Panel, discussion on women’s role in the Church. Suenens had mentioned this today. Hysterical dame next to me – the best argument against the idea is the people themselves who push it (she and the effeminate Father Tavard).”

May I be forgiven for this unjust and uncharitable outburst, perhaps scribbled in a fatigued state or when I’d had one scotch too many before hitting the pillow? I have no idea who my anonymous female neighbour was that day, but I beg her forgiveness now, while hoping all her reasonable aspirations will one day be met.

As for the Assumptionist priest George Tavard, he was a wonderful ecumenist who made a major contribution to the Church unity movement for a long period in his native France and his adopted USA until he died in his mid-80s in 2007. Father Tavard too is owed a profound apology from me.

Later on the same day, by the way, I record that I went to hear Archbishop Thomas Roberts SJ, formerly of Bombay, on “Modern Inquisitions”. My notes add that it was “sensational stuff”. Years afterwards, in London, this charismatic Jesuit offered me sound pastoral advice when I was about to leave the priestly ministry.

A tragic November

I have spoken at the beginning of this paper of the pleasure of being in Rome during that autumn. Those words apply more to what was a glorious October but less to November, largely because of what occurred in the world in what turned out to be a terrible month.

Friday 22 November had been a historic day at the Council. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy had received sweeping endorsement by the Conciliar Fathers. There was a jubilant mood at the US Press Panel in the afternoon. Many questions were asked about the ways in which the large-scale changes in liturgical practice would be implemented.

For a reason that is not clear to me after so many years, my notes about the afternoon media gathering include without explanation the name of Bishop Thomas K. Gorman of Dallas-Fort Worth. I have no idea whether or not the Bishop was there that day to answer questions about the liturgy or some other activity of the Council. It might have been that, as a former religious journalist himself, he liked to be in our company. Before becoming the Bishop of the Texan diocese he had edited and promoted Catholic
newspapers elsewhere. He died in 2006 aged 96. Whatever about that, it is strange if not eerie in the light of events later that day to find his name in my diary entry for 22 November.

At the Blessed Sacrament Fathers’ house that evening I was preparing, at the request of their Youth Group chaplain, to give a late-night talk on the Council to a group of young Italian parishioners.

This is what I wrote in my diary after returning from the talk, during which my and my audience’s concentration had been challenged by what we had all learned just before coming together:

**Friday 22 November:** The John Kennedy story is over, or has it properly started? At 45, the first Catholic President of the US was assassinated today (8pm, Rome time) in Dallas, Texas. The incredible, stunning news came to me from Father Stan Hosie, whom I was telephoning about 9pm. So, since my departure from Melbourne: Adenauer has retired; Macmillan has resigned; Kennedy has been assassinated; Diem has been murdered; there have been upheavals in Iraq; Italy’s Leone Government has fallen; and Archbishop Mannix has died. November 1963 will not be quickly forgotten.

The event cast a shadow over the remaining days of the Council session, leaving us all and in particular my American friends in the Press Office in a state of shock.

To offer a further taste of the atmosphere before and after 22 November I will quote a few more short entries written in the diary at different times during the whole session.

**Other diary entries sampled**

**Tuesday 10 October:** Tragic landslide today provoked by collapse of hydroelectric dam at Vajont, near Belluno. Estimated three thousand dead…..

At the US Press Panel, Father Weigel SJ was nasty to Father Connell CSSR over the latter’s outdated way of explaining papal infallibility and its objects….. Visit Pope John’s tomb and confess in St Peter’s.

**Tuesday 17 October:** To Marist General House for dinner. Guests included Cardinal Gilroy, Bishop Muldoon, Bishop Joyce (NZ), Archbishop O’Donnell, Archbishop Cody of New Orleans (the future controversial Cardinal Cody of Chicago), several other American prelates and our own Father Bell.

**Wednesday 23 October:** At US Press Panel I asked my first question: “Can part of the Office be said in Latin and part in English?”….. Paul Blanshard also asks a question.

**Friday 25 October:** Visit Cardinal Gilroy at 4.30. Spend an hour with him. Chat
about difficulties of journalists at the Council, the situation in Australia (election coming off etc.).... I informed the Cardinal, one of the twelve Council Presidents, that there would be no General Congregation on Monday! .... Back to Herder reception. Cardinal Marella speaks. Archbishop Young there. Meet Hans Kung again....

**Wednesday 6 November:** A day to remember. At about 11.40 am Sam Dimattina (a Melbourne priest-friend) informed me in the Press Office (as I emerged from the toilet) that Archbishop Mannix was dead.... At St Peter’s College, hear Congar on Ecumenism.

**Thursday 7 November:** I go on the back of his Vespa with my student-priest friend Bill Jordan of Melbourne to the Blue Sisters’ chapel for the 5pm Requiem Mass for Archbishop Mannix. Great turn-up of Bishops and others. Cardinal Gilroy celebrates the Mass and preaches. (I send a report back to Australia.)

**Monday 18 November:** Lunch with Desmond Fisher, the Canadian journalist Bernard Daly and the English theologian Father Charles Davis. Run into Father Tom Boland at the US Press gathering.

**Sunday 24 November:** To Propaganda Fide College for festive lunch for former students attending the Council (in various capacities). Met several Australian Bishops, also many companions of yesteryear... The old College choir, of which I was a member, reassembled and performed under the direction of our former Choir Prefect, now Archbishop Robert Dosseh of Lome, Togo. Photo of all the guests afterwards on the College soccer field. Met a number of present Australian Prop students, including Christopher Hope of Hobart and the recently arrived George Pell of Ballarat.

**Thursday 28 November:** Supper in pasticceria with Father Ralph Wiltgen. Tells me of his interview with Ottaviani, whom he found very charming and helpful. Worried by the alliance of the French and Germans at the Council. Considers that the German news agencies are managing the Council news coverage and invariably attribute most importance to interventions by German Bishops.

**Friday 29 November:** Go by scooter to US Press Panel and then interview Bishops Jimmy Carroll of Sydney and Joyce of New Zealand.... Meet Pietro Pavan, Pat Keegan and Fred McManus.... Watch Fulton Sheen doing a TV show in St Peter’s Square.... Go on scooter at night to the Domus Mariae to hear Kung on Ecclesiology.

**Sunday 1 December:** Paul VI says a Mass for Council journalists and greets each one... Attended symposium of International Catholic Press Union where Courtney Murray spoke. At final session of symposium I made a brief speech, with Cardinal Lercaro in the chair.... Went to Domus Mariae to hear De Lubac on Teilhard de Chardin.
The Australian involvement

During the Council session I had many meetings, mostly casual or unplanned, with members of the Australian hierarchy. I did have regular appointments with Guilford Young, who dictated a number of short pastoral letters about the Council for publication in his diocesan paper, the Hobart Standard. On one occasion I drove him to and from the Blessed Sacrament Fathers’ house, where he was a lunch guest. My diary says that on that day he looked tired and “underfed”. I also had discussions with Archbishop Simonds a number of times before the death of Daniel Mannix meant that he, as the old Archbishop’s successor, had to return in haste to Melbourne.

Before leaving for the Council’s opening session in 1962, the Australian Bishops had issued a Pastoral Letter titled What the Vatican Council Means to You. Dated 12 August 1962 and signed by the 34 Bishops (only one of whom, Broome’s former Bishop John Jobst, is still alive today) and also by Abbot Gregory Gomez of New Norcia, the letter is said to have been drafted by the theologian Thomas Muldoon, Auxiliary Bishop to Cardinal Gilroy. It summarises well the accepted teaching on the nature and history of ecumenical councils, looks forward to the expected denunciation of atheism and error at Vatican II, denies that it would be a Council aimed at “the re-union of the separated Churches with the See of Peter” and in general shows little knowledge of or sympathy with the true vision of Pope John XXIII. It ends on a triumphalist note, calling on the faithful “to unite in a special crusade of prayer and sacrifice that the Holy Spirit will bless and prosper all our deliberations”.

In some of my early writings about the Council I made the not very well informed comment that many of our Bishops were apathetic about the event or at least did not at first see why it was needed. Some, like Cardinal Gilroy, are said to have expected it to be over by the Christmas following the opening session.

I would have to revise those somewhat immature judgements about Australian episcopal indifference in the light of some of the research
done since the Council ended. Another corrective to those views is the information emerging about a number of Australia’s Conciliar Fathers in various biographical or autobiographical publications.

Guilford Young, of course, stood out among the Australian Bishops with his grasp of the issues and his enthusiasm for the event. Others who shared his positive approach included Frank Rush, at that time Bishop of Rockhampton and eventually Archbishop of Brisbane, James Gleeson, Coadjutor and later Archbishop of Adelaide and Lancelot Goody, Bishop of Bunbury and later Archbishop of Perth. All of these took the Council seriously both at its sessions and in their efforts to implement its decisions.

Archbishop Beovich of Adelaide and Cardinal Gilroy of Sydney, with their unflinching loyalty to Rome, where they had been fellow students, accepted in the end whatever the Council finally laid down, even if their natural inclination was to be hesitant about some of the decisions. The same can probably be said about the Australian who spoke most frequently in the Council hall, Bishop Muldoon, who had written theology textbooks mirroring the rigid position of the Roman school in which he had been trained. Unfortunately, two of the Australians, Archbishops Eris O’Brien and Justin Simonds, were so close to retirement and in such poor health that they were unable to make the kind of contribution to the Council and its
follow-up that men of their quality would certainly have made if the event had occurred earlier in their lives.

I am not sure that unquestioning acceptance of everything coming from the Council would have been the attitude of several of the Australian ultra-traditionalists, like Bishops Cahill of Cairns (a future Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn), Stewart of Sandhurst, Ryan of Townsville, Lyons of Sale and Fox, Auxiliary of Melbourne.

Revelations and research by Jeffrey J. Murphy and others
A quite different comment applies to one Australian Council Father who was prevented by age from attending the sessions in person. I refer to the absent Daniel Mannix, whose extraordinarily radical written critique of an early draft of the Constitution on the Church was recalled by Father Edmund Campion in his address in St Mary’s church, North Sydney, on Vatican II on 23 February 2012. This submission by Mannix, dated 22 February 1963, when he was a fortnight short of his 99th birthday, remained hidden for years until unearthed by the Queensland researcher Jeffrey J. Murphy and published, with some debatable conclusions by Murphy about Mannix’s supposedly unaided authorship, in the Australasian Catholic Record of January 1999.5 (The received view is that the main drafter of the submission was the Melbourne priest-philosopher Eric D’Arcy, later Bishop of Sale and then Archbishop of Hobart.)

Other articles by Jeffrey Murphy in successive issues of the ACR in 2002 and 2003 summarise many of the other fruits of his doctoral research into submissions made before and during the Council by other Australian Bishops. What he writes, even where his observations are open to challenge, is important as a corrective to any notion about our hierarchy playing a purely passive or inactive role at the Council. Murphy’s work supplements what others such as Father William Ryder SM, Robert J. Rice, Father Thomas Boland, Father Edmund Campion, Patrick O’Farrell, Kevin Walsh, Father Terry Southerwood, Archbishops James Gleeson and Lancelot Goody and others have written before and after him in the ACR or elsewhere.

It seems that there is much scope for further study about Australia’s participation in the Council, including the steps taken by the returned Conciliar Fathers to carry out its decisions. This could well be accompanied by a survey of the ways in which the next generations of Bishops, those appointed after the Council until today, have implemented its decisions or have tried to govern their dioceses in its spirit.

5 Jeffrey J. Murphy, The lost (and last) animadversions of Daniel Mannix, Australasian Catholic Record 76 (1999), 54-73.
Bishops McKeon and Jobst: sole Council survivors in early 2012

At the time when this paper was written (March 2012), only two of the Australian bishops who attended the Council (the two were at all four of its sessions) were still living. Both in their 90s now, having each retired many years ago, they are Bishops Myles McKeon, formerly of Bunbury, and John Jobst, formerly of Broome.

A number of years ago, Bishop McKeon gave an interesting account of his time at Vatican II in an interview published in the collection Voices from the Council (Pastoral Press, Oregon, 2004) together with other interviews by fellow Vatican II veterans. Ordained an Auxiliary Bishop of Perth in the month before the Council’s opening, he speaks frankly but amusingly of sharing accommodation in Rome with several older traditionalist Bishops, one of whom, Bernard Stewart of Sandhurst, he enjoyed baiting during dinner-table exchanges.

Although Bishop Jobst was not a speaker in any of the Council’s debates, he has revealed in his unpublished diary that at other later times he had at least twice asked a Pope (Paul VI on 18 September 1970 and John Paul II on 13 October 1988) face to face while on ad limina visits about the possibility of coping with the shortage of priests by ordaining married Aborigine men in his diocese. His requests were firmly rejected by Pope Paul and given a “non-committal” response by Pope John Paul, as were similar requests by bishops from other countries. Personally, I think it unfortunate that discussion on compulsory clerical celibacy in the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church, as distinct from the Oriental Rites, was stifled at Vatican II.

Interpreting Vatican II

As my intention in this paper was simply to describe what it was like to be at the Council in Rome nearly half a century ago I have not developed my thoughts here on the prolific and continuing discussions about the way in which Vatican II should be interpreted.

Leaving aside the extremist views of those on the one hand who think it was all a disastrous aberration and those on the other hand who welcomed it as opening the way for the jettisoning of essential items of Catholic faith, I discern two separate but connected debates between those groups of interpreters who are more deserving of respect and attention.

One is the difference of approach between those who consider that the collection of sixteen documents issued by the Council is really all that matters, that being the “real” Council, and those who like to speak of “the Spirit of the Council” and emphasise its importance as an “event” extending far more widely than the promulgated and less than perfect documents.
Perhaps we can refer to the upholders of the two schools of thought as the “Minimalists” and the “Maximalists”.

The other associated debate can be said to be between those who stress the Council’s continuity with all that preceded and followed its four annual sessions and those who think it brought about a rupture, welcome or otherwise, in the Church’s life, with an abandonment of much in Catholic practice and even belief that had existed previously.

If some of my observations in this paper have not already hinted at where I stand personally in all of this, I should admit here that, without in any way reducing the importance of the teachings in the documents, I see Vatican II not as an isolated episode in the Church’s history that is now over and done with, but as a continuing event. And I share with Edmund Campion a more optimistic opinion than many other commentators have expressed about the eventual or long-term fruits of the continuing conciliar process.

It has been well demonstrated by other commentators that much that happened while the Council was in session was the result of years of preparation. It was by no means the outcome of a sudden whim of Pope John, as his former secretary, Loris Capovilla, now a retired Archbishop, confirmed early in 2012. That the conciliar process continues is evident from, among other things, the subsequent and contemporary fine tuning or amending of some of its decisions and of certain pastoral directives issued from Rome or by the World Synod of Bishops in the years after 1965, most recently (and controversially) on the liturgy.

Much more will certainly be written and said about ways of interpreting the Council while the fiftieth anniversaries of its sessions and promulgations are being marked from now until late 2015. Books like Robert de Mattei’s recent history of the Council⁶ and pronouncements by powerful Church leaders like the Slovenian Cardinal Franc Rode and the Italian Cardinals Camillo Ruini and Giacomo Biffi, not to overlook Pope Benedict XVI himself, will undoubtedly continue to provide food for thought and debate on the subject.

**Fifty years hence: the Council’s Centenary in 2062**

One wonders how the Second Vatican Council will be viewed when its centenary is observed between 2062 and 2065. Perhaps historians will then conclude that Vatican II really began when the unfinished First Vatican Council was prematurely terminated in 1870; that the social teaching of a Pope Leo XIII was part of its preparation; that the anti-Modernist crusade in

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the time of Pope St Pius X was relevant to while having a less than positive effect on the preparatory process; that the process advanced in discernible ways from the pontificate of Benedict XV to that of John XXIII; that the implementation of the Council, its fruitfulness and the acceptance of its true message made real advances, in spite of setbacks, under all the Popes who reigned in the one hundred years since John’s death; that many of these advances were initiated and prompted by God’s people at all levels; and that the event had not really concluded back on 7 December 1965 but had finally been recognised as a source of spiritual nourishment to many.

One should not, however, venture too far into the realm of prophecy or speculation when addressing a gathering of historians.

After the 1963 session: a USA visit and the 1964 and 1965 sessions
On a long journey home from the second session through the USA in December 1963, with the approval of Archbishop Simonds I spent time with media friends and other Council veterans – episcopal, clerical, religious and lay.

In New York I visited the Jesuits at the office of America magazine and accompanied Cardinal Luis Concha Cordoba (1891-1975), Archbishop of Bogota, Colombia, to a performance by Albert Finney as Martin Luther in the play of that name. The conservative Cardinal happened to be staying with me in another house of the always welcoming Blessed Sacrament Fathers, in the heart of Manhattan. From all accounts after his return to Bogota, the Luther play did not improve his negative attitude to ecumenism.

In Washington I visited the three-week-old grave of John F. Kennedy and shared two breakfasts after Mass with the de facto Kennedy family chaplain, Auxiliary Bishop Philip Hannan – later Archbishop of New Orleans and then Atlanta. He spoke feelingly of the Kennedys and the grief experienced by the family and the nation. I also spent several hours at the Catholic University of America with the friendly Monsignor Frederick McManus (1923-2005), whom I had first met in Melbourne and again at the Council. As a specialist in the rare combination of liturgy and canon law, he was jubilant over the Council’s issuing of the Constitution on the Liturgy, to which he had contributed much as a peritus.

In Kansas City I was the guest of James Johnson of the Kansas City Star and met the editor of the diocesan Catholic Reporter, Robert Hoyt, who was preparing to launch the National Catholic Reporter in the following year. We discussed the Council and the future of the Catholic Press, including plans for the wonderful NCR. The Council was also the main theme of a stimulating conversation over a pleasant lunch shared with James Johnson.
and an official of the Kansas City-St Joseph diocese, Monsignor (later Archbishop of Washington and then a Cardinal in the Roman Curia) William Baum.

In Los Angeles I visited Disneyland, watched Archbishop Fulton Sheen on the Jack Parr Show and attended a memorial Mass celebrated in the cathedral by the traditionalist Cardinal James McIntyre (1886-1979) for the dead President.

On the homeward flight across the Pacific the plane touched down in Samoa, where, in the airport, I continued a discussion about the Council with my incidental plane companion, also returning from Rome, the relatively young Vicar Apostolic of Samoa and future Archbishop of Suva, George Hamilton Pearce SM. I reached Melbourne on Christmas Eve, exhausted but euphoric after the experience of a lifetime.

Although offered the chance to do so by Archbishop Simonds, I did not return to Rome for the final two Council sessions in 1964 and 1965, as the Advocate’s resources were stretched and in any case I knew I was now equipped to produce adequate reports on those sessions with the help of my new contacts and of airmailed copies of Bologna’s L’Avvenire d’Italia, the London Catholic Herald and Tablet, both Le Monde and La Croix from Paris and news bulletins from Father Wiltgen and the US Bishops’ media service.

Our paper’s coverage of Vatican II, the result of much burning of midnight oil, was well received and highly praised by, among others, Edmund Campion, who wrote in his book Australian Catholics that “in the Advocate Michael Costigan gave a more thorough day-by-day account of the Council than any other English-language diocesan weekly”.

Memories of my Roman autumn in 1963 will always be precious to me. The Council has continued to be very much part of my life in all the succeeding years. I do not expect that to change.

Copyright: Dr Michael Costigan, March 2012, with amendments in November 2012

Edmund Campion, Australian Catholics (Viking, Ringwood Vic, 1987), p. 204.
Fellow members of the People of God.
‘Fellow members of the People of God’…Perhaps I should start by explaining my use of this greeting. Some months ago I had to speak at a funeral in the chapel of a retirement home. The congregation was small but quite distinguished: three cardinals, one papal nuncio, monsignori, two of whom had been Vatican bureaucrats, priests, nuns, monks, lay leaders… As I prepared, I puzzled how to address them all – ‘Your Eminences, Your Excellency, Right Reverend and Very Reverend Monsignori, Reverend Fathers and so on’ seemed somewhat overdone in that setting. So it was with some relief that I chanced upon what I imagined was a happy formula: ‘Fellow members of the People of God.’

Afterwards, I began to wonder about that formula. And discovered – but had I once known this and forgotten it? It’s possible: I am an old man – I discovered that the phrase ‘People of God’ was once one of the battlefields of the second Vatican Council. There were those who wanted the Council to describe the Church by talking first about the hierarchy and only then about the rest of us. Others said, ‘No, we all share in the threefold mission of Christ as prophet, priest and king’; they managed to make the biblical metaphor of the church as the People of God the predominant image in the Council’s teaching on the church. When they came to write the document on the church, they devoted a whole chapter to this and put it ahead of the chapter on the hierarchy. So the emphasis is on community rather than structures of government, on co-responsibility rather than lines of command between rulers and subjects, on the Catholic people rather than on the institutional church.

If you look at the standard books on Vatican II such as Alberigo and Komonchak’s five-volume History, or Hans Kung’s Memoirs, or John W O’Malley SJ’s What Happened at Vatican II (the best single book, in my view), you won’t see much about the Australian bishops there. Perhaps that is because their expectations were low: Cardinal Gilroy told one of his seminarians that he thought it would all be over by Xmas – the Roman
authorities knew what was needed in the church and they would say what had to be done. Matthew Beovich, archbishop of Adelaide, was of the same cast of mind. During the first weeks of the Council he wrote in his diary, ‘For my part, I am a Roman, and in Rome I found a fount of inspiration, learning and piety.’ So, he wrote, he would support the draft documents put before them by the curialists.

They felt they had little to contribute. When the Vatican had asked them, in 1959, for suggestions towards an agenda for the Council, their responses were hurried and unenlightening. A biographer of Jimmy Freeman, then an auxiliary bishop, later a cardinal, might make much of his cry that a bishop’s life today was a bureaucrat’s life – could this change, please? An historian would notice the number of Australian bishops, provincial superiors and seminary theologians and canonists who wanted the doctrine of Mary as Co-Redeemer or Mediatrix of All Graces, to be defined as dogma. (When that came to the vote, the closest vote of the whole Council, most of the Australians, 66 per cent, voted against treating Mary as other than Co-Redeemer or Mediatrix.) In her biography of Matthew Beovich, Dr Josephine Laffin has a useful description of the Council, calling it ‘a school for bishops’. Yes – the closer you get to this story, the clearer you see that it is a story of learning new ways, of change, of development.

Well, you might say they had a long way to go; and that is true. When one of his priests told Cardinal Gilroy that he hoped the Mass might soon be in English, the Cardinal replied that he didn’t think so and that was the opinion of most of the other cardinals too. When Matthew Beovich reported to his priests after the first session, ‘The Mass is still in Latin,’ they cheered him.

On the other hand – with historians there is always another hand – in October 1963, when Cardinal Gilroy told the Council Fathers they should avoid phrases like the People of God because they were likely to be ‘completely unintelligible to the general run of the faithful’, in the same month, his auxiliary bishop and (I guess) speech writer got into the papers for the opposite. Henri Fesquet in Le Monde (25 October 1963) reported: ‘Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Muldoon of Sydney, Australia, surprised everyone with an amusing intervention. He had little use for the word laity. “The use of this pestilential expression,’ he said, ‘is a greater mystery to me than all the supernatural mysteries. Let it be replaced by the term ‘people of God.’”

Another story: Gilroy gets into the books (Alberigo Vol IV; O’Malley pp 218) as something of an old style Roman reactionary for a written submission
(which eleven other Australians signed) on religious liberty:

Is it really possible for an ecumenical council to say that any heretic has the right to draw the faithful away from Christ, the Supreme Pastor, and to lead them to pasture in their poisoned fields?

That was in 1964. Two years later, in full cardinalitial fig, the same Gilroy attended the installation as Anglican Archbishop of Dr Marcus Loane in St Andrew’s Cathedral. ‘To live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often,’ as John Henry Newman said.

Here’s another story of change- slow, maybe; incremental, maybe; but change, nevertheless. The language of bishops and their subjects came naturally to Cardinal Gilroy; it was the language he had grown up with, language reinforced by his years in the Roman seminary. He spoke too of ‘the necessary isolation of a bishop’ who could have few friends. When he came back to Sydney from South Australia, in 1937, to replace Michael Sheehan as archbishop with the right of succession, some of the clergy met him at Central Railway Station. In the old days they used to play cards with him and they were delighted that soon (for Archbishop Kelly was ancient) an Australian would be their archbishop. ‘Welcome back, Norman,’ they said. ‘Well done, Norman.’ ‘Good morning, Father. Good morning, Father,’ came the replies. Suddenly the air struck chill, as they realised that homo ecclesiasticus was among them.

Well, the years went by and the Council happened and that homo ecclesiasticus went off to the ‘school for bishops’ and when he came back he wondered how he should respond to all the new stuff he had been hearing in Rome. One night he had to make a speech in the cathedral presbytery farewelling one of the priests on the parish staff. Thinking about it, he came to realise what he must say... but, oh, it would be hard – to junk the language of the past, the language he had grown up with, the language expressive of his long life as a bishop, the language of rulers and their subjects. So he stood up to speak and as he spoke his sentences grew longer and longer, were weighed down by more and more subordinate clauses as he slowly approached the words he had determined to speak that night, until the moment came and his astonished priests heard him say those words: ‘You are my brother priests.’ ‘He that has ears to hear, let him hear.’ At least one of the priests who was there that night recognised that he had witnessed a conversion moment in the life of Norman Thomas Gilroy, Cardinal of the Roman Church.

So I am arguing tonight that we should give the bishops of the time a fair go. Products of Roman theology and enculturated in Tridentine seminaries
– I speak as a pre-Vatican II priest myself, ordained in 1961 – they had a lot of catching up to do. In time, change would come to the seminaries but it would be too late for them. In Peter Brock’s gentle account of his years at Propaganda Fide College in Rome, *Home Rome Home*, there is a telling story of how the man who taught the theology of the church used to tease them with what might be coming from the Vatican Council. At last he came into their classroom and distributed the Council document on the church: ‘Throw away your textbook [the textbook, or one very like it, that had fashioned generations of bishops]. This is our textbook now.’ When I read this, I thought of my own discovery of the Vatican II document on liturgy, published first as a supplement of what was then a new, radical paper, *The National Catholic Reporter*.

As I read it throughout a long, winter Sunday afternoon, my eyes grew wider and wider because I was recognising the theology that underpinned this life-changing document. It was the very theology Clem Tierney had taught us in his sacramental course at Manly. If for nothing else, Manly had prepared us for this part of the Council’s achievement. But what of the bishops? Who had prepared them? Think of Jimmy Freeman’s complaint of living the life of a bureaucrat. They had to learn on the job, at the ‘school for bishops’; and much of that was unlearning what they had been taught in the seminary. Fair go, I say.

Not all of our bishops were completely unprepared. Here’s a story I picked up just the other day. When Daniel Mannix was a very old man, nearing his century, one of the young Jesuits used to cross Studley Park Road from Campion House to say Mass for him, since he was now too feeble to attempt it himself. On the morning of 11 October 1962, however, a young Jesuit arrived to find the aged archbishop already vested for Mass. ‘I’ll be saying Mass myself today, Father,’ he said. ‘The Vatican Council is opening today. I believe in councils.’ So the Council opened with Mannix’s prayers.

Not only that… When, soon afterwards, the first draft of the Council’s document on the church appeared, a copy was sent to Mannix. It was written, you may know, by Roman theologians and curialists and when the old man read it he wrote a powerful critique of its theology. It smacks, he wrote, ‘more of a legal document that a spiritual proclamation of religious faith and least like an evangelical one; for it treats too much of the juridical aspects of the Church, which is almost exclusively represented as a juridical society rather than a participation in the sacrament hidden from the world in God’

And he wrote, ‘No other function is seen to be allotted to the laity in the Church than carrying out the commands of the Hierarchy.’
Look at the Bible, he wrote; it doesn’t speak like that; rather, it uses metaphors for the Church as house, people of God, holy people, kingdom of Christ, bride of Christ, branches of the vine . . .

This draft? I VOTE AGAINST, he wrote in capital letters.

It is a stunning performance from a very old man in the last year of his life. In Australian history there are more lives of Dr Mannix than of any other Catholic, with the exception of Ned Kelly. Yet none of them speaks of this final salvo. The reason is simple: when it was written it was sent off to Europe and disappeared from sight. Only in our own time was it discovered by a Queensland historian, Dr Jeffrey J Murphy, who published it in 1999. I’m happy to tell you that Mannix’s latest biographers, Jim Griffin and Brenda Niall, whose books are forthcoming, have been alerted to its existence.

I have spent perhaps too much time on the bishops and that may suggest to you that ‘Vatican II’ is all about the documents produced by the bishops and their advisers between 1962 and 1965. The documents are important, of course, they are useful, they are quotable. More significant, however, is what can be called the ‘spirit of Vatican II’ – which energised the documents and the men who wrote them and the conciliar church that received them so generously; but also a spirit that was there in the Church before the bishops came to Rome in October 1962, a spirit that had been a creative presence for a long time before 1962 and would go on growing, developing and creating long after 1962. You cannot constrict the Vatican II event between dates any more than you can constrict the Reformation event between dates. Nor can you limit the power of the spirit to the black letter words of the documents. ‘Vatican II’ is still going on.

‘The parish is where everything happens’ – John XXIII said that. So we are fortunate in having a history of a parish that explores this very question. A Vatican II parish – such is the parish Greg Dening wrote about in *Church Alive! Pilgrimages in faith 1956-2006* published in 2006. Yes, it is a history of Our Lady of the Way parish, here on the north shore of Sydney harbour (this parish) and it is quite unlike any other parish history I have ever read. I am so glad I wrote to Greg Dening in 2006 and told him how nourishing I had found his book; because a few years later he was dead, leaving unfinished his next book, a life of Father Jerry Golden SJ, once a curate at North Sydney. Dening had an international reputation as a scholar of indigenous and settler societies, he was an ethnologist of worldwide repute. So, as an ethnologist, he came and lived here with his wife Donna Merwick (herself no mean scholar) and he listened to what people were saying. Their voices
fill his book, which is their book as much as his. What these parishioners
told him was that they now felt free: free in conscience to do what they knew
to be right, free in mind to decide what they believed, free in spirit to set
their own agenda and free in their prayer lives. Catechism Catholicism this
is not; here is a religion for grown-ups.

Many of Dening’s witnesses, perhaps most of them, are women; he
certainly gives appropriate attention to their voices. Again and again he
hears them saying that what the Vatican II event gave them was freedom—
the freedom to be themselves. ‘Older women,’ he writes, ‘with deep memories
of who they were in the old Church, will talk of the enrichment of their
spiritual lives in the devotions of those days, but will exclaim: “I feel
free now!” Younger women scarcely believe the restrictions their mothers
experienced.’ (Dening)

The freedom they treasure is the freedom to be more fully Catholic, to
be more fully the Church. He writes: ‘The “Church” is what they live, day
in, day out. The Pope is not the “Church”, nor the Vatican, they will say.
The ‘Church’ is certainly not the bishops, nor even the parish priest. The
“Church” is their journeying selves.’

Speaking of women and freedom, it is surely a truism to say that the most
unfree women in the old church were religious sisters, nuns. Yet, as I’ve
argued elsewhere, they were the true makers of the Australian Catholic church
of the past; and, as Greg Dening argues, the most enthusiastic and dedicated
makers of the Vatican II church. Apart from anything else, the horarium
of their spiritual exercises could be fatiguing: morning prayers, meditation,
morning office, Mass, spiritual reading, examination of conscience, stations
of the cross, rosary, evening office, prayers after supper, night office (as
Erin White recalled in Women-Church magazine in 1987). One of the
North Sydney Mercy sisters reported that change came for them when they
acquired a holiday house at Newport and were encouraged to relax: ‘New
forms of prayer became common,’ she said. ‘Informal, spontaneous prayer
was a novel and fulfilling experience to those whose daily prayer consisted
largely of recitation of the psalms, as well as a multitude of novenas, litanies
and other pious devotions.’ So together they found new ways forward in
the Vatican II church. It wasn’t only prayer, although prayer was central to
this experience. Here I borrow evidence from Mary Rylko Clark’s Loreto in
Australia, published in 2009:

“They moved out of the schools and reinvented themselves in a diverse range of
occupations, they challenged themselves with on-going spiritual formation and
even in old age continue to meet the needs of those around them. All but the
very frail are involved in some form of voluntary ministry, ranging from spiritual direction, running prayer groups, visiting the sick, helping families with specific needs such as addictions, supporting asylum seekers with practical assistance and language skills, helping in schools with children who have learning difficulties and doing chaplaincy work in hospitals and prisons.’ (Mary Ryllis Clark, p 296)

Thus, being a new nun in the Vatican II church was more than a matter of eschewing veils and religious costumes; it was a re-creation of the original charism and of the gospel imperatives.

If you are doing history, you will find it helpful to identify periods by one of their dominant symbols. A good symbol of the pre-Vatican II church would be a mass rally or a religious procession (such as the annual Corpus Christi procession at the Manly seminary which attracted thousands of devotees). Such public displays of faith were almost totally organised, controlled and directed by the clergy. The laity, in Patrick O’Farrell’s phrase, ‘took what they were given’. Which is not to deny that they made a satisfying personal religion from what was on offer. They were recipients, however, not creators. The Catholicism of the pre-Vatican II church was passive, its symbol a mass rally.

By contrast, the symbol of the Vatican II church might be a small group. Small groups were in existence well before 1962, of course, but they looked forward to a future church. I am thinking of the Newman groups at the universities, the Young Christian Worker groups, the National Catholic Girls Movement groups, and the Campion Society. They put the Bible, especially the Gospels, into the hands of lay men and women, encouraging them to know the biblical Jesus; with their see-judge-act methodology they produced Christian activists who worked to change society, a process that expanded their minds and made them think for themselves; life in these small groups was an educative experience, opening them to new ideas and making them self-reliant; it loosened clerical control systems; and encouraged active participation in the liturgy where they were participants rather than attendees. Small group Catholicism is an apt symbol of the Vatican II church for here was Vatican II before the bishops went to Rome and recognised what was already happening. These small groups formed the Vatican II generation before the second Vatican Council met.

Of all these pioneers one of the most significant is The Grail. They came here in 1936, 15 years after their beginning in The Netherlands and they were a welcome alternative in the otherwise grey world of Irish-Australian Catholicism, for they spoke of the joy of being Christian. To women especially they held out the hope of a female-accented religion that set its own agenda,
bypassing the unsympathetic clericalism then prevalent. In their groups, summer schools and residential courses The Grail fashioned women to take control of their own lives and play their part in forming Australia’s social culture. They were pioneers of adult education, especially in Melbourne, where they could draw on a pool of noticeably lay talent. In Sydney, they served the wider church by taking over, in 1950, the Catholic Central Library in the heart of the city and making it a centre for contemporary Catholic thinking. Here, in magazines, books, lectures and discussions you could meet and identify the Vatican II ideas that would come to fruition in Rome a decade later. Sad to say, it was too good to last. Sally Kennedy tells the story in her book Faith and Feminism. The hard men of the Sydney archdiocese had their eyes on that prime piece of city real estate. They wanted it for a religious goods shop; and what the hard men wanted, the hard men got. They won, of course; but the Church in Sydney was the loser.

They didn’t stop The Grail, who went on to be, what they are still today, a vital element in the Vatican II church. Last year, 2011, they marked 75 years in Australia. At the celebratory dinner, more than one priest was surprised by the news of recent developments, as reported by Alison Healey. She told us that 40 years ago individual Christian women, not Catholics, had sought membership in The Grail and had been accepted. In the mid-1990s a group of young Lutheran women in Sweden, who had been involved in Grail programmes as a group, had asked for recognition as a Swedish Grail. This was granted. Then, in September 2011, after five years’ consultation and following actual experience in several countries, the International Assembly of The Grail had accepted a rewritten vision statement which expressly opened up the possibility of membership of The Grail to women of other religious traditions and on different spiritual journeys.

One of the best examples of the Vatican II church in action is the story of the Institute of Counselling. The Institute of Counselling? Is that a Catholic body? Yes, inaugurated in 1969, it grew out of the church’s Family Welfare Bureau and you may find it listed in church directories. But ‘Institute of Counselling’ doesn’t sound Catholic, does it? Not like the St Vincent de Paul Society, say, or the Aquinas Academy. What novel activities might be camouflaged behind that discreet nomenclature? Certainly the Institute for most of the time has flown under the radar of head office in the city, happy to live its life and do its work away from the gaze of the hierarchs. It was seldom mentioned in The Catholic Weekly. Parish priests hardly knew about it.

Its story starts with the boom in social work after World War II. Mary
Lewis, the Family Welfare Bureau’s first professionally trained social worker and a North Sydney parishioner, with her associates could see that much Catholic counselling was amateurish – it needed to be professionalised. And so, with another Vatican II initiative, the archdiocesan pastoral council as midwife, the Institute of Counselling came into being.

It had two guiding principles first, counselling is a skill and skills can be taught; but also counselling is a personality thing, so new attitudes and behaviour had to be formed, which was best done in small groups. Since students’ motivation was preponderantly religious – Matthew, Chapter 25, and all that – this would be spiritually transformative. At its heart, the Institute of Counselling was a pastoral initiative.

To mark its 40th anniversary, the leadership team commissioned David Bollen to tell its story. Opening Up was published in 2009. Like Greg Dening, David Bollen is a listening historian, attentive to what people are really telling him. So his book demonstrates believably that the Institute changed forever the lives of those who passed through it… indeed many of them would say it had enabled the biggest changes in their lives, particularly their spiritual lives. Two of Bollen’s sentences capture the essence of the experience: ‘The Institute was not a place of learning so much as a house of formation, life building and extending. It began and carried on in the spirit of Vatican II – more so, one may say, than many parts of the Church.’ This is history from below, the voices of people in the pews rather than head office history, which is written from episcopal archives.

The best archive for history from below that I know is a book called And the Dance goes on, an anthology of Australian Catholic women’s stories, 57 of them, published in 2005. To be sure, there is plenty of catechism Catholicism here, the well-loved devotions of the church of the mass rallies. But there is also evidence of something new. The Bible, for instance. Once upon a time, the Bible was a closed book for many Catholics, apart from the bits they heard read out at Sunday Mass. When the rector of Riverview set the Bible as an RE text for the senior years, parents complained: ‘Was he turning Riverview into a Protestant school?’ That was in the past. Now, everywhere you look in And the Dance goes on you find the Bible. Yes, the Mass readings, now attended to with new interest or studied at home with a commentary. Going on retreat, one of these women pops her Bible into her bag, alongside her toiletries. Another has the New Testament for bedside reading. Yet another is immersed in scripture through her membership of a prayer group. Everywhere: the Bible.

Everywhere too a pervasive sense of prayer. Catholics of the past said
many prayers; their prayer-books claim a central place of honour in any exhibiton of religious history. Well, they are here too: formula prayers and prayers of petition and the like. Also, however, there are glimpses of a constant communion with God – praying as a cast of mind, an awareness, a connection. Meditation in some form or other had become a necessary part of these lives, opening them to the Spirit, giving them a new dimension. Here is evidence to tease the imagination of any historian.

Finally, in this book you cannot miss the importance of small groups in these women’s lives. Small groups crowd into their stories: groups for meditation, for prayer, for charismatic praise, Lenten groups and women’s groups attached to the Sisters of Mercy or the Dominicans, a Cursillo group, a Paulian group, Vincent de Paul and the Family Apostolate and the Jesuits’ Christian Life Community groups. Everywhere you look there are small groups in this book’s Catholicism. It is a small group Catholicism. It is the Vatican II church.

History is what one person sees when he or she looks through a window onto the past. Tonight I have told you what I have seen and it may be different from what you see. Catholics have been through some tough times recently; it can affect your viewing. It’s worth remembering that the Vatican II church is a work in progress, two steps forward, one step back, failures and achievements mixed together in the church of sinners. I finished one of my books with a quotation from Blaise Pascal: ‘The worst storm is invigorating when you know your ship will reach the harbour’; and some thought I was being as foolishly optimistic as a poker machine player. So be it. Let me finish tonight with another quotation, this from a septuagenarian Mercy sister in Greg Dening’s book:

‘It is exciting to be living in the Church today. I now recognise the real achievement of Vatican II – and that the vitality of the “New Pentecost” envisaged by John XXIII lies ahead of us. In many ways, the Second Vatican Council is an event yet to happen – and we are part of making that come about.’

Fellow members of the People of God, the bread is still rising.

North Sydney: 23 February 2012 EDMUND CAMPION
VATICAN II AND THE DYING GASPS OF AUSTRALIAN SECTARIANISM

Benjamin Edwards*

This article explores the ways in which Vatican II contributed to the demise of residual sectarianism in Australian society. It surveys the nature of sectarian tension in the period leading up to Vatican II as well as points of ecumenical engagement and argues that the responses of the Australian churches to Vatican II accelerated the push of sectarianism from the mainstream to the fringe of Australian religious culture.¹

Sectarian tensions in post-war Australia

The 1950s were generally an optimistic and expansive time for the major denominations in Australia, with membership and resources stimulated by postwar prosperity, conservatism and the baby-boom.² While not marked by the sectarian violence of Britain and Ireland, there was a sectarian dynamic in Australian religious culture at this time, characterised largely by institutional rivalry, theological suspicion and distrust. This rivalry often spilt over from religious polemic into the public and political arenas, as the controversies over the establishment of a Catholic University, Anzac Day observances, precedence among church leaders – a ‘major’ issue at the time of the Queen’s first tour of Australia – and state aid for church schools all demonstrate. Protestants frequently worked together to oppose perceived Catholic aggrandisement or influence and the major pattern of inter-denominational relation throughout the 1950s was ‘Protestant co-operation, Catholic isolation’.

Protestant solidarity or unity was an important theme in Protestant propaganda and self-image in the 1950s. The ‘necessity and urgency of Christian unity’ became a rallying cry for Protestants as they combated what they saw as their major opponents of the era: Catholicism, secularism and communism.³ This Protestant coalition was forged not only from shared theological opinions but also shared political and ideological goals. Protestant leaders sought to portray Protestantism as a third way:

1 For a more detailed analysis of these issues see B. Edwards, WASPS, Tykes and Ecumaniacs: Aspects of Australian Sectarianism (Acorn Press, Melbourne: 2009).

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an alternative to what they considered to be the menaces of communism and the ‘totalitarianism’ of Rome. Protestant denominations co-operated both formally and informally in various ways: under the auspices of organs such as state councils of churches and through mission work, theological education, political lobbying, social work, campaigning together in support of Temperance and Sabbatarianism, and in evangelistic endeavours, such as the 1959 Billy Graham Crusade.

Across the sectarian gulf, Catholics were also crusading, not with Billy Graham, but with the help of B.A. Santamaria and ‘the Movement’, they were on an anti-communist crusade. For Catholics, this was the ‘Age of Mary’ in which Marian piety, in particular devotion to Our Lady of Fatima, was deployed to combat communism. Large Catholic rallies and religious processions, such as the 1951 Marian Congress in Adelaide, the 1953 Family Rosary Crusade and the tour with anti-communist rhetoric. These displays of militant and mobilised Catholicism raised the ire of Protestant commentators – uncomfortable with Marian piety and any flexing of Catholic muscle – and further stimulated the exchange of sectarian volleys by Protestant polemicists.

Political skirmishes, polemic and institutional rivalry were significant aspects of Protestant-Catholic sectarianism in the postwar era, but it was where sectarianism penetrated beyond institutional rivalry into personal lives that it was often most potent. One of the most significant ways by which sectarian division reached into Australians’ lives was through liturgical segregation. The rules preventing Catholics from attending worship in other churches, as well as the rules governing mixed-marriages, pronounced that the difference between Protestant and Catholic was so absolute that one could not enter into the church of the other. The Catholic injunction against inter-denominational worship meant that where friendships and family bonds reached across denominational boundaries – which occurred even in the most well-regulated families – many of the significant life events sanctified by religious rituals, such as weddings and funerals, were

4 *NSW Presbyterian*, 20 February 1948, p. 13; 16 January 1953, p. 11.
overwhelmed by sectarian complications. Liturgical segregation was a cause of considerable pain and angst in many families, raising emotions as well as difficult questions of conscience, identity and divided loyalties. All of this made sectarianism a painful feature of familial life.

The inability of Catholics to worship with Protestants wasn’t just a private matter. It also reached into the public religious sphere civic religion, such as Anzac Day commemorations, where it highlighted sectarian divisions in broader society. Another consequence of liturgical segregation was that Protestants and Catholics often relied on stereotypes and sectarian description in formulating their understanding of each others’ religious beliefs and practices, with the result that a large proportion of sectarian polemic was concerned with doctrinal and devotional matters.

Towards rapprochement
Despite the sectarian tensions having a general influence on Protestant-Catholic relations, some religious leaders were beginning to find that Protestant-Catholic co-operation could sometimes prove useful, especially for achieving mutual political interests and in providing a united Christian witness against the great evils of the era: communism, secularism and moral degeneracy. In their 1949 Social Justice Statement, the Catholic bishops of Australia urged Christians to ‘co-operate for education’, arguing that ‘too long have the enemies of God triumphed because of divisions among Christians.’ The sentiments weren’t only local ones. In 1950, Pius XII, prompted by fears of the threat of communism, appealed for Christian unity as a bulwark against the ‘godless ideology’, in his encyclical *Sempiternus Rex*.8

One of the most important instances of ecumenical co-operation in this period occurred in November 1951, when Protestant and Catholic leaders countersigned the ‘Call to the People of Australia’. ‘The Call’ was organised by the prominent Catholic layman, writer and diplomat Paul McGuire9 and Sir Edmund Herring, Chief Justice of Victoria, eminent Anglican layman and sometime chancellor of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne.10 ‘The Call’ was endorsed by the heads of the Anglican and other major Protestant

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churches as well as by the entire Australian Catholic hierarchy.\textsuperscript{11} ‘Never was a message more necessary or more timely’, declared The Methodist.\textsuperscript{12} The widespread endorsement of The Call is demonstrative of the seriousness with which the churches looked upon secularism and the perceived threats to social and religious order and stability in the postwar era.\textsuperscript{13}

Pope John XXIII’s 1959 announcement that a Vatican Council would be convened in 1962 aroused great expectations of ecumenical breakthrough. A major shift away from sectarian distrust and segregation towards ecumenical rapprochement was underway. In anticipation of an ecumenical breakthrough, Catholic and Protestant ecumenical enthusiasts commenced informal ecumenical engagements both prior to and during the years of the Council, and there were significant achievements that worked towards turning those ecumenical dreams into realities. A number of ‘first ever’ ecumenical contacts were made attracting interest perhaps as much for their novelty factor value as for their ecumenical import. In 1960 alone the Australian School for Ecumenical Mission was established, the first National Conference of Churches was held, the Australian Council of Churches announced its intention to establish an ecumenical institute, an inter-denominational ‘United Church’ was established in Darwin and plans were announced for the construction of a non-denominational chapel at HMAS Watson, the Vatican Secretariat for the Unity of Christians was established. Various symposiums, conferences and engagements were held between denominational leaders throughout the early 1960s, most significantly the meeting between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope in 1961. The wide range of ecumenical activities and associations of the early 1960s gave the sense of ‘better relations’ and this was reflected upon in media commentary and church documents.\textsuperscript{14}

A strong divergence of Protestant attitudes to ecumenism began to unfold in the late 1950s, which was to be of long-term significance, shaping responses to Protestant-Catholic inter-relations. Conservative evangelicalism, as embodied by Sydney Anglicanism, the Baptist Union and some elements of the Presbyterian Church, was hostile to ecumenical engagement with Catholicism. Within ‘liberal’ Protestantism – which had stronger influence among Congregationalists, Methodists and Presbyterians,

\textsuperscript{11} Catholic Weekly, 29 November 1951, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{12} The Methodist, 17 November 1957, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{13} D. Hilliard, ‘The Religious Culture of Australian Cities in the 1950s’, p. 410; D. Hilliard, ‘Church, Family and Sexuality in Australia in the 1950s’, p. 134.
as well as mainstream Anglicans—there was a greater willingness for ecumenical engagement, including with Catholics. These tendencies are generally reflected in the editorial stances of the respective denominational newspapers. For example, throughout the 1960s, the NSW Presbyterian took a progressive lead on ecumenism among the NSW denominational newspapers, calling for a retreat from ‘unthinking prejudice against fellow Christians’, and supporting ecumenical interaction, whereas press organs of denominations with stronger conservative factions would be less enthusiastic about the ecumenical cause, if not openly critical.\textsuperscript{15} In stark contrast to the sectarian stance of the Australian Church Record, Australian Baptist, Southern Cross and other newspapers of conservative evangelical opinion, the NSW Presbyterian was concerned about gratuitous sectarian opportunism. For example, regarding the commemoration of Reformation Day, the NSW Presbyterian cautioned:

There is however one danger in this revival in our Church of an emphasis on the Reformation. It lies in too narrow an emphasis being given to the day. Let this worthwhile reminder of our heritage be presented to the church community more as a recovery of Biblical truth than as an occasion for sectarianism.\textsuperscript{16}

Sectarian polemicists and conservatives both sought to arrest the ecumenical momentum that was gathering in the lead up to Vatican II. Conservative evangelicals opposed co-operation or unity with Catholics on the basis that this would downplay the significance of doctrinal differences or even worse cause or imply doctrinal compromise. They reminded their adherents at almost any available opportunity that the doctrinal differences between Protestantism and Catholicism were all pervasive and of the greatest significance, insisting that ecumenical co-operation was both impossible and futile without ‘unity in truth’ or ‘unity in spirit’.\textsuperscript{17} On 10 November 1960, the editorial of the \textit{Australian Church Record} saw the impending visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Fisher, to the Pope as ‘more likely to do harm to the Church of England and the cause of reunion.’ It argued that courtesy visits and mutual displays of goodwill were a distraction from ‘careful analysis of the points at issue’ and implied ‘a willingness to compromise over them’, all the while insisting that any doctrinal compromise would be at

\textsuperscript{15} NSW Presbyterian, 5 February 1965, p. 2; further examples include \textit{NSW Presbyterian}, March 23 1956, p. 2; \textit{NSW Presbyterian}, 25 January 1952, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{16} NSW Presbyterian, 19 June 1959, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{17} For example, \textit{Australian Church Record}, 1 March 1956, p. 10; \textit{Southern Cross}, 12 October 1961, p. 2; \textit{Southern Cross}, 3 March 1964, p. 5.
the cost of being false to the ‘deepest convictions of the Church of England’ and that this could not be justified by any complementary advantage.\textsuperscript{18} The same logic was applied by Archbishop Loane of Sydney in 1970, refusing to attend an ecumenical service during Pope John Paul VI’s visit to Australia.

This mentality contrasted with a more open attitude to ecumenism that was emerging in this period which was prepared to minimise doctrinal concerns. They instead emphasized the common elements of faith held by Protestants and Catholics, seeing ecumenical encounter as a means of deepening that commonly held faith, critically reflecting on one another’s beliefs and learning in this process. As well, they saw ecumenism as a necessary witness to a world that was in danger of succumbing to materialism and secularism:

Christians are beginning to realise that a divided Church cannot hope to overcome the world...Today, against the challenge of dialectic materialism that aims to capture the world, Protestants look at their unhappy division in a new light. And the great new fact of the last decade has been the coming into being of the Church of South India – a union of episcopal and non-episcopal Churches. It has really happened. And men are starting to believe.\textsuperscript{19}

\textbf{Winds of change blowing away sectarianism}

Pope John XXIII, who had summoned the Vatican Council and excited the Catholic world with the spirit of aggiornamento, died in June 1963 before the second session of the Vatican Council convened. His successor, Pope Paul VI, presided over the Council’s three remaining sessions. The third session of the Council, convened in 1964, was scheduled to deal with the topical and exciting issue of ecumenism and at its close in November 1964, promulgated the Council’s decree on ecumenism, \textit{Unitatis Redintegratio}. The aspirations of the Council, as expressed in \textit{Unitatis Redintegratio}, were ‘that ecumenical feeling and mutual esteem may gradually increase among

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Australian Church Record}, 10 November 1960, p. 2; It must also be noted that not all Catholics were enthused by the visit of Dr Fisher to the Vatican. Cardinal Bea, in 1960, spelt out the various concerns held about the impending visit, pointing out that some saw in the visit important preliminary steps to union, others saw it ‘more realistically’ stressing the importance differences of faith between Anglicans and Catholics, and others still held ‘a visit of this sort could achieve little or nothing’. See Cardinal Augustin Bea, \textit{The Unity of Christians}, B. Leeming (ed.), Chapman, London, 1963, p. 64.

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{The Methodist}, 12 April 1958, p. 8.
all men.’ Its spirit inspired many, making a profound impact on ecumenism throughout the Christian world. Thus, Vatican II was not only a watershed for the Catholic Church, but for the churches generally, it ushered in a new period of ecumenical journeying, co-operation and possibility. The decree began by declaring that ‘the restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council.’ The NSW Presbyterian, like other liberal Protestant press at the time, greeted these developments from the Vatican Council enthusiastically, seeing in the decree ‘great gains for the whole of Christendom’.

The decree recognised and engaged with the spirit of ecumenism that had flourished among Protestant and Orthodox Christians. The Council officially recognised and endorsed the participation of Catholics in ecumenical endeavours and encouraged Catholics ‘to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism’ under the guidance and stimulus of their bishops. Significantly, the Council decreed that in certain circumstances, determinable by the local bishop, ‘it is allowable, indeed desirable that Catholics should join in prayer with their separated brethren.’ This provided for a limited relaxation of official policy on liturgical segregation and also encouraged a more sensitive approach to inter-denominational dialogue, that gave ‘due regard to the ecumenical point of view’. It urged that theological education not be polemical. These changes represented significant shifts of institutional culture and outlook. As Dr Oscar Cullman, a Protestant observer at the Council, noted of the Decree, ‘This is more than the opening of a door; new ground has been broken. No Catholic document has ever spoken of non-Catholic Christians in this way.’

Throughout Australia many Christians enthusiastically took up the new ecumenical opportunities afforded by Vatican II. Significant ecumenical achievements were made in the decade immediately following the Vatican II decree on ecumenism, with an ecumenical ethos pervading religious culture and popular attitudes, eclipsing traditional sectarian rivalry and conflict as the norm for Protestant-Catholic interdenominational relations. Unitatis Redintegratio dispelled the cultural and institutional suspicion of ecumenism

21 NSW Presbyterian, 16 October 1964, p. 2.
22 ibid, pp. 349–350.
23 ibid, p. 352.
24 ibid, p. 353.
25 ibid, p. 338.
that had previously characterised official Vatican attitudes. There was a flourishing of ecumenical activity in the mid-1960s at both the institutional and local church levels, ranging from formal inter-denominational dialogues, to joint worship, charitable endeavours and local fraternisation.

Opportunities quickly emerged for ecumenical engagement between local worshipping communities. Ecumenical study programs, days of prayer and special ecumenical services, almost inconceivable just a short while before, were happening. For the first time, Catholic priests were permitted to attend ministers’ fraternal meetings as well as ecumenical services. As of April 1965, Catholics no longer faced penalty of excommunication for attending non-Catholic church services and Catholic clergy were even found preaching sermons in Protestant churches, and vice versa.26

Both Vatican II itself and the positive responses by so many other churches to the changes it effected meant that the traditional culture of sectarian rivalry rapidly transitioned to one of ecumenical rapprochement and co-operation in Australian religious culture. While the decline of sectarianism in broader society was also stimulated by other factors of socio-cultural change in the 1960s, the advent of Vatican II and the reception of its new possibilities by the various denominations meant that the churches themselves both contributed to and accelerated the demise of sectarianism as a mainstream phenomenon in Australia. Old barriers were crumbling, with the churches finding the courage to engage with each other and to address the realities of pluralism within the Christian household. This new spirit of ecumenical co-operation challenged the traditional nature of inter-denominational relations in Australia, undermining Protestant-Catholic liturgical segregation and sectarian rivalry. At various levels of church life – official dialogues and commissions, theological education, clerical fraternisation, political collaboration, local parish activities and public discussion and apologetics – ecumenism was embraced and flourished. The challenge for contemporary Christians is not to take this for granted for the pain of sectarian division was all too real for many Australians.

The personal dimension
As mentioned above, it was in the personal sphere that the impact of sectarianism was often most destructive. The story of Bruce and Ida McInley, which is one of a number of oral histories included in WASPS, Tyke and Ecumaniacs, seems to be worth repeating here. Their experience of sectarian pain and ecumenical healing is telling of the significant changes


122
in religious culture that occurred during their adult lives. Bruce, a Catholic, was born in 1922 and Ida, an Anglican, was born in 1923. Whilst neither Bruce nor Ida experienced any sectarian trauma in their childhood, their mixed marriage brought the pain and frustration of sectarianism into their adult lives.

When Bruce and Ida became engaged in 1950, they experienced the typical range of complications associated with mixed marriage:

We went to the basilica and we got . . . this priest, Fr Roach, and Ida and I were getting on in years, and we explained the situation to him, that we wished to get married, and so he said ‘Yes, you can get married in the Catholic church’, but I said ‘No, we’d like to get married in the Anglican church.’

‘You can’t marry her.’

That was the way it was, cut and dry: ‘you can’t marry her.’

This uncompromising, authoritarian rejection left them troubled. Ida recalls that they ‘took fifteen months after being engaged to decide how to overcome it.’ Whilst Ida had no hesitation about entering into a mixed marriage, she was unprepared to promise to have her children raised Catholic and so Bruce took longer to decide. Under the influence of a ‘staunch Catholic friend’ who counselled Bruce, ‘if you love her, that’s it’, Bruce decided to ‘give in’ and with the blessing of friends and family, the couple eventually married in the Anglican Church.

Whilst their marriage had the blessing of family and friends, the desire for the blessing of his [Catholic] Church continued to haunt Bruce. For Bruce, the legacy of contracting a mixed marriage and marrying ‘outside the Church’ was alienation from the sacramental life of his Church, which was to be an ongoing source of pain for him. Whilst he continued to attend Mass each week, he was unable to receive communion. Even though rules and policy concerning mixed marriage softened in the late 1960s and 1970s, Bruce carried the burden of his mixed marriage for over thirty years.

Eventually, in the mid-1980s, Bruce approached his parish priest about being married in the sight of the Catholic Church, ‘One day I told him the story and he said, ‘Look, leave it with me; I’ll get it fixed up for you. I’ll write off to the bishop.’ So what happened was that he finally got in touch with me and he said there was no problem . . . So he said, ‘Where do you want to get married, at home or in the church’, and I said we’d do it at home. Bruce and Ida were married again according to Catholic rites in a quiet ceremony at their home, thirty-four years after they were first married.
Their experience illustrates both the way that the pain of sectarian division lingered in their lives, as well as the significant changes that occurred within their own lifetimes that allowed for healing of that pain. The challenge to Christians today is not to take these ecumenical developments for granted and to continue to build upon that foundation of *rapprochement* and solidarity that was established in the 1960s.
Pope John XXIII announced his intention to call a general council of the church on 25 January 1959. I was a student in the Pontifical Faculty of Theology at Manly at the time, about to begin my final year. The study of councils had figured significantly in our courses on Church History, not in great depth, but with enough colourful detail from the wonderfully histrionic lecturer Thomas Veech to encourage anyone interested to consult the relevant sources. Indeed, we all had access to a basic primary source in one of our main textbooks, the *Enchiridion Symbolorum, The Handbook of Symbols, Definitions and Declarations concerning Faith and Morals*, edited originally by H. Denzinger in the mid-nineteenth century, and by Karl Rahner in the thirtieth edition which appeared in 1955 (the last edition before Vatican II). Our courses in doctrinal theology focused, as one would expect, on the great early councils of the fourth and fifth centuries – Nicea, Constantinople, Ephesus and Chalcedon – then took a leap across the centuries to the greatly changed world of the IV Lateran Council of 1215, then another jump to the Council of Trent in the mid-sixteenth century, the counter-Reformation council that continues to shape the modern church. Finally, there was considerable emphasis on the council held in the Vatican three hundred years later in 1869-70.

That first Vatican council came to a sudden end on 18 July 1870 when, in the midst of a great thunderstorm, the vote was taken on papal infallibility. The following day the Franco-Prussian War broke out, and a couple of months later Italian troops entered Rome undeterred by the token resistance offered by the Papal army, no longer the force it was in the days of Pope Julius II. The bishops, who had left Rome in the meantime, never returned, not to the council at least, for it was formally adjourned on 20 October 1870 ‘sine die’.

As theology students in the 1950s we were aware that the Vatican council of 1869–70 (or Vatican I as it came to be called) had left unfinished business, especially regarding the place of bishops vis-à-vis the papacy and the life and structure of the church more generally. I recall James Madden, President

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of the Faculty, saying that it could be recalled one day, and breaking into a characteristic laugh. The general conviction was that with the 1870 decree of papal infallibility, ecumenical gatherings were a thing of the past. Pope Pius XII had formally declared the doctrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on 1 November 1950, an exercise of papal infallibility, the first (and so far only) instance of its kind since the controversial definition of that doctrine in 1870. On the whole, the Curia in Rome and bishops and members of the church throughout the world considered that occasional papal definitions, along with regular papal encyclicals on lines established by Pius XII, would be the way of the future. But then Pius XII died in 1958, the avuncular Angelo Roncalli was elected pope in late October, took the name John XXIII, and in January 1959 announced his intention to call an ecumenical council.

John XXIII made his announcement at a ceremony at St Paul’s ‘without the walls’ on the Ostian Way, apparently without advising anyone of his intention in advance. In his opening address at the council in 1962 he said simply, ‘The first conception of this council came unexpectedly into our mind’. And he went on to recall that those present in St Paul’s that day were suddenly and deeply moved, as if illuminated by a supernatural ray of light. In his recent history of the papacy, Roger Collins comments that this might be seen ‘as a kindly interpretation of their shocked silence’ (Collins 2009, 484). Collins also records that John’s intention was for the council to be held at St Paul’s and be called Concilium Ostiniense, ‘The Council of the Ostian Way’. In other words, John wanted to take a modest step outside the Vatican into the great world beyond and to signal that the council would have a missionary focus, a Pauline rather than a Petrine stamp. But then the curial cardinals convinced him to choose the Vatican, their (and his) home ground, ‘for reasons of greater practicality’ (Collins, 483). So we speak now of Vatican I and Vatican II.

If the announcement of the council came as a complete surprise, there was nonetheless considerable evidence in the 1950s, making its way even into the narrow world of our Rome-based education at Manly, that significant change was afoot in theological, biblical and liturgical studies especially in France and Germany. Pius XII’s encyclical ‘Humani Generis’ had caused alarm in 1950 when its broad condemnation of ‘la nouvelle théologie’ reverberated through theology faculties especially in France. In the following years, leading French scholars such as Henri de Lubac, Yves Congar, Marie-Dominique Chenu and others, were removed from their university positions and forbidden to publish; and for a decade from 1951
the major German theologian Karl Rahner was also occasionally subject to censure and forbidden to publish.

As the 1950s moved on, however, there was a growing sense of confidence that the church had emerged from the age of fear and suppression that marked the anti-modernist campaign of the first decades of the twentieth century. For many at least the announcement of the council was the promise of a new dawn, particularly when it became clear that de Lubac, Congar, Chenu, Rahner and others hitherto under suspicion, would be involved in the council as ‘periti’ (expert advisers). On the other hand, the prospect of a general council did not initially strike much of a chord with the world’s bishops. By and large they asked for a tightening of the status quo, the condemnation of modern evils such as communism and for new doctrinal definitions especially concerning the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The council opened on 11 October 1962 and the first session ran to early December. Within a few months, a flood of books appeared. Among them, I read Xavier Rynne’s *Letters from Vatican City*, Robert Kaiser’s *Inside the Council*, Bernard Häring’s *The Johannine Council: Witness to Unity*, and René Laurentin’s *L’Enjeu du Concile: The Balance Sheet of the First Session*. On that basis I felt bold enough, from the far distance of Sydney, to write an article on the council, essentially a review of the first session, for the 1963 *Manly* magazine. This began as follows:

The contemporary Church is gripped by a sense of momentous possibility. … With the announcement of the Council in January 1959, we entered upon a new and decisive era in the life of the Church. …

If the idea of a Council had not been in people’s minds before this time … everyone now at least began to realise how opportune it was. For many years, important movements have been stirring in the Church. A new spirit of theological inquiry, the remarkable advances in biblical studies, the liturgical and pastoral movements, the catechetical movement, the renewed appreciation of the Church as the mystical body of Christ with the consequent realization of the place and role of lay people, the ecumenical movement opening windows to the separated Christian churches and beyond, the deepening sense of common hope and fear that the Church shares with the contemporary world: these, and many other factors, have given the Council its historic significance. (1963, 13-14).

(Many readers at the time would have reflected that there was an air of hopeful idealism in these sentiments, for it was well known that quite a few bishops and even the new pope, Paul VI, elected in June 1963 following the death of John XXIII, viewed the council with alarm, fearful that everything was getting out of hand.)
Three years later I had a brief close-up experience of the council when I was present in St Peter’s on two occasions at its final session in 1965. I had spent much of the summer in Munich where David Coffey, the now eminent Australian theologian, was a post-doctoral student in the University Faculty of Theology. In early September we drove south on a path to Rome, travelling by way of Trent, an appropriate place for a short visit en route to an ecumenical council. We also spent some days in Florence, the site of another significant council in the fifteenth century at which it seemed for a time that the separation between the Greek and Latin churches had been resolved, and resolved entirely on papal terms: recognition of papal primacy, acceptance of the *filioque* clause in the Creed, and the use of unleavened bread by the Greeks. But that quickly proved to be ephemeral.

David and I arrived in Rome in time for the opening of the final session of Vatican II. Armed with admission tickets Bishop Tom Muldoon had secured for us, we attended the opening Mass in St Peter’s and were present at a general meeting during the debate on religious liberty later in the week. We sat among the official observers, saw the great assembly gathered along each side of the immense basilica, listened to a succession of speeches long since forgotten, and met some distinguished participants. Cardinal Gilroy, who presided that day, was particularly zealous in detaining various confreres to whom he introduced us, all of whom showed signs of preferring to hurry off to lunch. And later in the day we were regaled with stories from Bishop Muldoon, not least about his triumphs on the council floor.

The record shows that Muldoon played a minor but relatively prominent part among Australian bishops at all four sessions of the council. Indeed he figures on several occasions, not too gloriously, in Yves Congar’s journal of the council. The meeting of the world’s bishops offered him a world stage and he loved it, speaking almost always in defence of a defiantly triumphalist standpoint. At that final session in 1965 he was concerned that the proposed declaration on religious liberty was far too liberal, especially in according other Christian denominations ‘the freedom to scatter religious errors of every kind in society’. And he ridiculed the proposal that the church should acknowledge its share of fault in its relation to other churches from the time of the Reformation. He also took part in the final debate on the document *Gaudium et Spes* (‘The Church in the Modern World’), speaking on marriage and the family and again on peace and war in the nuclear age, propounding in each case a form of aggressive conservatism. In all, Bishop Muldoon espoused a closed stand from beginning to end in defence of his
idea of the church. Away from the battlefield, however, he was a warm, open, and expansive host.

Following these largely personal reflections, I want to focus now on the topic of episcopal collegiality at Vatican II. This emerged as a deeply controversial issue in the debates on the much-anticipated document on the church (which eventually became known as *Lumen Gentium*). Indeed, in the words of John O’Malley, ‘collegiality would become the lightning-rod issue of the council’ (O’Malley, 163). O’Malley is a distinguished American Jesuit historian, and his scholarly and engrossing study *What Happened at Vatican II* (2008) will be my primary guide in considering this issue.

**II**

Vatican I is best known for declaring papal infallibility and for taking a stand against the modern world. Vatican II, by contrast, sought to effect internal reform of the church and engagement with other Christian churches, with other religions, especially Judaism, and with the modern world more generally. As a central part of its reform program, the council sought to develop a new approach to church governance based on the ancient practice of collegiality – the sharing of authority and responsibility – between the bishop of Rome and other bishops and the church more generally. For all its achievements, the council failed to win this battle with the Pope and the Roman Curia.

The sixteen documents of Vatican II manifest a pleasantly eirenic style in contrast with most past councils, which were so often taken up with condemning error and putting heretics or other dissidents in their place. But there is the danger that the calm and measured teaching of the council documents might be seen as so many platitudes – a danger, as O’Malley suggests, that their literary style might seem to encourage. His aim is to bring out the deeper significance of these writings by putting them in the wider context of argument that surrounded them and allowing ‘the high drama of the council and the profound, almost intractable problems implicit in it to surface;’ (O’Malley 2008, 3). There were, in his view, three underlying issues that ran through the council as a whole: (1) the circumstances in which change is appropriate and the arguments by which it can be justified; (2) the relationship in the church between centre and periphery, or, more concretely, between the papacy and Vatican Curia and the rest of the church (bishops in particular); and (3) the style or model for the exercise of authority in the institutional church (O’Malley, 8).

It is almost a truism to say that the issue of authority has been a central
concern at every church council beginning with the fourth-century council of Nicea (now Iznik in Turkey) to which bishops were summoned by the Emperor Constantine. (Sylvester, bishop of Rome, was then an old man and sent a couple of priests in his place; of the estimated 250 bishops present, no more than five were from the West). In just about every council from Nicea onwards the outcome has been fought over by contending parties, often with a good deal of vitriol, beard-pulling, and mutual denunciation, occasionally of a kind that would make a bad day in the NSW Parliament look like an afternoon tea party.

What was at issue fundamentally at Vatican II was the task of clarifying the status and role of bishops in relation to the pope, their authority in their respective dioceses and their status as a whole specifically as constituting a college in union with the pope. These were issues bequeathed by Trent and Vatican I where the focus had fallen almost entirely on affirming papal primacy and authority. The affirmation of these two councils was never in question at Vatican II. But, a large majority of bishops (as it turned out) wanted to go beyond them by placing their teaching in the context of long-neglected traditions and practices. Against this a small but influential minority insisted that any such attempt would be nothing less than an assault on the authority and prerogatives of the Roman Pontiff as defined by these earlier councils. Controversy on this issue rolled on between majority and minority parties within the council, between the council and the Curia, and between council and pope throughout the years of the council and beyond.

The issue came to a head in the debates on the several drafts that led eventually to the constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium (Christ the Light of all Nations). A focus on other documents, for instance Gaudium et Spes, the pastoral constitution on the church in the modern world, or the declarations on religious liberty or ecumenism, would bring out other important themes (and disputes). But all the other debates were shaped in one way or another by the controversy that swirled around the constitution on the church, especially the chapter on collegiality, for three of the council’s four sessions.

Popes have long been wary of councils, especially since the fifteenth century when conciliarism – the doctrine of the supremacy of councils over the pope – took hold in various quarters. Indeed, the problems that affected the papacy early that century could hardly have been resolved without the intervention of a council with authority to determine who, if anyone, was the legitimate pope. When the council of Constance met in 1414, there were three contending popes, each elected by a set of cardinals, each with a degree
of political support in different quarters of Europe. At its end, two had been deposed and the third, Gregory XII, having been recognised as pope by the council, agreed to resign. A commission of cardinals and others appointed by the council then elected a new pope, Martin V, in 1417. Constance also decreed that the pope was to convene councils on a regular basis. But that decree soon fell by the wayside. Popes have preferred to govern alone with the help of the Roman Curia.

Constance was in the air for a moment at Vatican II in fact when it became clear that John XXIII was dying. With his death imminent early in 1963, the opening of the second session was moved from May to September. According to Roger Collins, ‘there was concern in curial quarters that if [John were to die] while the council was in session, the assembly of some two and a half thousand bishops might interfere in the process of selecting the next pope, citing the election of Martin V by the Council of Constance as precedent’ (Collins, 484). (Pope Pius IX had similarly decreed in 1869 that his death would automatically terminate the first Vatican Council, again with a view to preventing council members from taking the initiative in electing his successor.)

At Vatican II the Curia had the upper hand, certainly at the beginning, for curial cardinals chaired and controlled the ten commissions and two secretariats responsible for drawing up the preparatory documents. But then, as everyone knows, the assembled bishops took control of the agenda. Beginning with the first session in 1962 they threw out, or greatly revised, almost all the original documents. That was not the end of the matter, however, for a lively struggle between curia and council continued over all the big issues under debate. The defining controversy, as already indicated, concerned the nature and structure of the church, especially the question of collegiality. Following the long but generally fruitful debate about the liturgy, the preparatory document (‘schema’) on the church came before the council towards the end of the first session. It was met with round after round of criticism. And within the week it had been sent back for a complete revision, with a virtually new document expected for the second session.

In reviewing the first session in the Manly article, I commented on the reception of the preparatory draft, perhaps with some hyperbole, as follows:

As expected, the document on the Church has emerged as the central concern of the Council. Perhaps never since the great Trinitarian and Christological debates of the fourth and fifth centuries has the Church been engaged in such important deliberation, for in this constitution the council is bringing to completion the work that was begun at Trent and the first Vatican Council. The extensive schema
discusses such fundamental topics as: the nature of the Church, the episcopacy and its relationship to the primacy of the Pope, the significance of the episcopal college, membership of the Church and its necessity for salvation, the priesthood and the religious state, the place of lay-people in the Church, Church and State, ecumenism, authority and obedience and the question of public opinion in the Church. Once again the document was criticised in the initial debates. The Council Fathers indicated that they were looking for a full scriptural and theological treatment rather than a scholastic or juridical document. (1963, 21).

The concluding observation in this passage is a mild rendering of the strong criticism voiced on the council floor. Bishop De Smedt of Bruges, for instance, denounced the draft document for its three ‘isms’: triumphalism, clericalism and juridicism. And Archbishop Frings of Cologne declared that it could not be considered catholic since it ignored the traditions of the Eastern church and took no account of patristic and medieval sources; limited in its outlook to the first Vatican Council and Trent, the draft failed to provide an adequate conception of the church as a whole.

When the council members re-assembled for the second session in late September 1963, they received a greatly revised document prepared by a sub-commission of bishops with the support of leading theologians, Gérard Philips, Karl Rahner, and Yves Congar in particular. Various topics in the eleven chapters of the original draft had now been set aside for separate consideration in favour of a more concentrated focus on the key issues. The new document, with an enhanced scriptural, patristic and pastoral approach, consisted of just four chapters: (1) the mystery of the church; (2) its hierarchical constitution, focused on bishops especially, with particular attention to episcopal collegiality; (3) the people of God, with an emphasis on the place of the laity; and (4) the call to holiness for all, lay and clerical.

A long and often heated debate – concerned primarily with the issue of collegiality and its ramifications – ran across the whole of the second session. This reached a level of high drama in the second half of October when the new pope, Paul VI, initially gave approval to the council to conduct an indicative vote on the chapter dealing with collegiality (as a way of gauging opinion in advance of a formal vote). Soon afterwards, the pope, under pressure from other quarters, withdrew the approval and had the ballot papers burnt. Uproar ensued, and a week later Paul VI reversed his stand once more, this time to gave approval for the vote on a revised set of questions (on the character of episcopal consecration, on episcopal collegiality as a matter of divine ordinance (not by papal delegation), and the reinstatement of the diaconate as a permanent form of ministry). The
ballot, taken on 30 October, showed very strong support for all the issues, something that could not have been predicted, as O’Malley says, from the interventions in St Peter’s (where the minority was strongly represented on the list of speakers).

The driving force for change in this debate, and the conciliar debates generally, came from a relatively small number of ‘transalpine’ German, French, Dutch and Belgian bishops (Alfrink, Bea, Frings, De Smedt, Léger (Montreal), Liénart, and Suenens). There was also the refreshingly outspoken Maximos IV Saigh, Melkite patriarch of Antioch (Syria), who insisted on speaking in French rather than Latin as a way of showing that there is more to the Catholic church than the Latin rite. The strength of this group did not rest simply on the overwhelming case for change in an institution still largely immured in a nineteenth-century adaptation of the Tridentine mould. More significantly, this group had a good command of biblical and patristic sources and the history of Christian practice from the earliest times and they could build on the significant developments that had been stirring in the church, and Christian scholarship more widely, from the 1930s. Furthermore, they had informed advisers on hand, notably Karl Rahner, Yves Congar, Edward Schillebeeckx, Joseph Ratzinger, and John Courtney Murray.

Along with the Italian term ‘aggiornamento’, the French word ‘ressourcement’ acquired particular resonance at Vatican II. This is the idea of a return to the sources in the scriptures and earlier traditions of the church as the primary criterion for the development of doctrine and practice. With their knowledge of the sources, the majority leaders could argue that they were the true conservatives at the council, able to draw new things and old out of the storehouse of Christian tradition. And they could point out that, for the core minority leaders, tradition meant going back no further than Vatican I or Trent. Eamon Duffy, the well-known Cambridge historian, put this wittily in commenting that ‘tradition had shrunk from being a cathedral of the spirit to a storeroom in the cellars of the Holy Office’ (Duffy, 2003, 60). On this basis the majority leaders put a substantial stamp on the council documents and eventually secured a vote over 90 per cent on key issues in the face of a tenacious and powerful minority (led by the Italian cardinals Ottaviani, Ruffini, Carli and Siri, Larraona from Spain, and the Irish Dominican Browne).

The issue of collegiality was how to reconcile the definition of papal primacy with a sharing of authority with bishops specifically and more generally with the whole church as a community of communities across
the world. Proponents of collegiality argued that this was in no way a new or dangerous idea, that it was in fact the rediscovery of a dimension of church organisation and Christian life that had existed for a thousand years in conjunction with the primacy of the bishop of Rome. But this tradition, they argued, had been increasingly pushed aside in the West in favour of a narrow emphasis on papal primacy from the eleventh and twelfth centuries in the wake of the formal split between the Christian East and West. Subsequently, in the social and political conditions of medieval and early modern Europe, the papal leadership role came to be formulated in terms of an absolutist monarchical structure. This reached a pinnacle in the definition of papal primacy and infallibility in 1870 and was further cemented in the ever increasing centralisation of the church under successive popes in the twentieth century. In popular terms, all authority resided in the centre, and bishops had become, in effect, no more than managers of branch offices of the Vatican.

The indicative vote showed clearly that most bishops at Vatican II were satisfied that there was no conflict between the ancient observance of collegiality, when the bishop of Rome was ‘primus inter pares’ with other patriarchs, and the doctrine of papal primacy. Nor did they think that collegiality would lead to conciliarism. What they sought was primacy balanced by collegiality, papal authority situated more effectively within the church as a whole. As Maximos IV put it in debate at the council, ‘The primacy makes sense only within the perspective of collegiality’. On in Joseph Ratzinger’s words, writing in *Concilium* in 1965, ‘the concept of collegiality, along with the office of unity which belongs to the Pope, signifies the element of variety and adaptability that is fundamental to the structures of the church and may be realised in many ways … for the church is an ordered plurality’ (Linden, 2009, 156).

The sustained response of the minority was that collegiality and primacy (which they understood in strong monarchical terms) were by definition irreconcilable. As Cardinal Ruffini argued, drawing on the Petrine text in St Matthew’s gospel, Christ built his church on Peter alone, not on Peter and the other apostles: there could be no biblical basis, therefore, for episcopal collegiality. In short, the idea was a novelty, a diminution of papal authority, in conflict with the teaching of the first Vatican Council. (There was also the view that change was unacceptable for it could imply that the church had been at fault in some way.)

The indicative vote late in the second session showed that ‘in principle, collegiality had achieved secure and central status as a way the church
operates—or is supposed to operate’ (O’Malley, 184). But that did not mean that its critics would give up the fight. In the period leading up to the third session in 1964, the text underwent further revision on a range of issues as it moved towards its final form of eight chapters. Again there was a focus on the question of collegiality, generated in part by the late arrival in May 1964 of thirteen suggestions from Paul VI offered ‘in order to prevent as far as possible future erroneous interpretations of the text’. After some unease, the responsible commission incorporated the suggestions, demurring only on a couple of points, especially the proposal that the pope should be recognised as ‘responsible only to the Lord’. For as the review commission pointed out, in being responsible to the Lord, the pope is responsible to revelation and tradition, the church, and the definitions of previous councils (O’Malley, 202).

The third session of Vatican II, which Paul and many others had hoped would be the last, opened on 14 September 1964. Yet another drama concerning collegiality was soon to unfold. On the previous evening, 25 cardinals, 16 from the Curia, had sent a confidential memorandum to Paul VI arguing that episcopal collegiality posed a mortal danger to the church by undermining its monarchical structure. For this reason they urged the pope to take the topic off the agenda, submit it to a commission of theologians of his own choosing, suspend the council indefinitely after the third session, and recall it for a fourth and final session only when this matter had been settled once and for all. Finally, they foresaw catastrophe if he did not take immediate action on his own authority without consulting the council. Paul VI had his own serious reservations about collegiality (or what it might mean in practice – for already Maximos IV and others had canvassed specific proposals for its implementation). He was not pleased, however, to be confronted in this way; more importantly he was unwilling to proceed on the lines urged by the minority group for it would have meant disaster for the council. In the weeks that followed he was to receive a flow of memoranda for and against the proposal. Still hesitant when the vote on the relevant chapter drew near, Paul VI asked Pericle Felici, the council secretary, whether it would be advisable to postpone it. Felici advised that that would be unwise, and the final vote on the troublesome chapter went ahead on schedule at the end of September.

On the way to that point there had been 39 votes on specific items in advance of the vote on the chapter as a whole, an unprecedented reception for any other topic at the council. But at each stage the majority support for collegiality remained firm, over 90 per cent. The subsequent vote on the
constitution as a whole took place many weeks later at a formal ceremony on 19 November 1964. The result was an overwhelmingly supportive, with 2160 in favour, just 5 against. It might have seemed that a new order in the exercise of church authority was now in prospect. Collegiality had finally secured not only the support of the majority hitherto, but the support of almost everyone who had opposed it at the vote on the chapter earlier in the session. But by then the idea had become a dead letter in the document that sought to affirm it. What had changed in the meantime?

By the time of the final vote on 19 November, a supplementary ‘Preliminary Explanatory Note’, highly juridical in character, had been added to the document. This took place on 16 November, many weeks after the debate in the council. The Note, it soon emerged, came directly from the Pope Paul VI, although Felici would say no more than that it came from ‘the highest authority’. Writing about the Note soon after the council, the young theologian Joseph Ratzinger commented that, while it did not change the meaning of the document, it was ‘a very intricate text’ marked by ambivalence and ambiguities, which tipped the balance in favour of the primacy’ (Ratzinger, 1966, 114-16; cf. O’Malley, 244).

Every reference to collegiality in the document had long been accompanied by an immediate emphasis on the authority and prerogatives of the Roman Pontiff, as illustrated in the following typical paragraph:

> Just as by the Lord’s will, St Peter and the other apostles constituted one apostolic college, so in a similar way the Roman Pontiff as the successor of Peter and the bishops as the successors of the apostles are joined together. The collegial nature and meaning of the episcopal order found expression in the very ancient practice by which bishops appointed the world over were linked with one another and with the Bishop of Rome by the bonds of unity, charity, and peace; also in the conciliar assemblies which made common judgments about more profound matters in decisions affecting the views of many. The ecumenical councils held through the centuries clearly attest this collegial aspect. … But the college or body of bishops has no authority unless it is simultaneously conceived of in terms of its head, the Roman Pontiff, Peter’s successor, and without any lessening of his power of primacy over all, pastors as well as the general faithful. (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, chapter 3, section 22.)

This, and similar statements in Lumen Gentium, failed to convince the vocal minority group. What made the difference was the addition of the ‘Preliminary Note’. Cardinal Siri exclaimed, ‘Everything is all right. The Holy Spirit has entered the council. . . . The pope has dug in his heels, and only he could have done it’ (O’Malley, 244). The upshot was that those who
had opposed collegiality, or indeed any change from Vatican rules, had a basis on which they could, and would, interpret chapter 3 as a reaffirmation of the status quo. There would be no going beyond Vatican I in this regard.

This is certainly how the pope himself saw it. Speaking after the promulgation of decrees at the end of the third session, Paul VI expressed his particular pleasure in regard to the constitution on the church. Specifically he stated that ‘the most important word to be said about the promulgation of that decree is that through it no change is made in traditional teaching’ (O’Malley, 245). Members of the council may have interpreted this remark in different ways. Many among the majority who supported collegiality may have wondered about the long departure from the traditions of the first centuries of Christianity. Furthermore, the Pope avoided the term ‘collegiality’ altogether in his address. He spoke firmly of the church as ‘both monarchical and hierarchical’; the thought that it might be ‘both primatial and collegial’ did not make an appearance.

In the first session of the council in 1962, John XXIII intervened at just one point on a procedural matter to allow for a rule of closure on debate. That was when it seemed that the debate about the liturgy would go on forever. With Paul VI, intervention on substantial matters became a regular occurrence. This was occasioned sometimes by a delegation from the minority group urging him to intervene, more rarely by a delegation from the majority group. More commonly, it seems, the pope himself took the initiative, beginning with the debate on the church in the second session. From this point ‘the procedural issue under all procedural issues was the role of the pope himself’ (O’Malley, 185). Paul VI, a learned and generally liberal man, would go over documents with a ‘red pencil’, editing them as he went, something unheard of in the history of councils. At critical points he simply took controversial issues off the agenda, closing off debate and reserving them for papal decision. This was the fate of four major topics at Vatican II: priestly celibacy in the Latin rite, the prohibition on artificial contraception, the reform of the much-criticised Roman Curia and, indirectly, the future of collegiality.

At the Council of Trent in the turbulent sixteenth century priestly celibacy was an item for debate on the agenda. At Vatican II the scheduled debate was ruled out (initially by John XXIII and subsequently by Paul VI). The council decree on the ministry and life of priests reaffirms the discipline for priests of the Latin rite in an idealistic and unexamined way. In 1967, two years after the council, Paul VI released an encyclical letter on priestly celibacy, reaffirming the discipline, turning a blind eye to
deep and manifest problems in the priesthood, and ignoring the evidence of longstanding and continuing abuse. It is not that problems surrounding celibacy were unknown in high places. Denied the opportunity to speak on the topic at the council, Maximos IV immediately addressed a letter to the pope in which he told Paul VI that he was obliged in conscience to insist that the problems the Latin church faced in this matter had to be acknowledged openly and not buried as a taboo: ‘Most Holy Father, this problem exists and is daily becoming more serious. It cries out for a solution. . . . Your Holiness knows well that repressed truths turn poisonous’ (O’Malley, 272). The great scandal of clerical sexual abuse was in the offing.

The question of birth control remained in the background for most of the council only to burst into prominence at its end in the discussion of marriage and the family, a topic of some importance in the document ‘The Church in the Modern World’ (*Gaudium et Spes*). This was set running initially by Cardinal Suenens and then by papal intervention. Everyone knew that a papal commission had been established to consider the issue as ‘a question in dispute’ and that debate at the council had been ruled out. In this situation the proposed text of Gaudium et Spes took a cautious approach: it neither affirmed the teaching of recent popes explicitly, nor did it say anything in conflict with that teaching. The approach was to emphasise the goodness of married love along with the affirmation of children as the fulfilment of that love (this rather than the traditional teaching on the primary and secondary ends of marriage). As for the number of children a couple might have, the text proposed that this was a matter for their judgment ‘governed according to a conscience dutifully conformed to the divine law itself . . . and submissive toward the Church’s teaching office’ (*Gaudium et Spes*, section 51).

This was not enough for some council members who pressed for an explicit statement affirming the teaching of recent popes. Others were equally insistent that the text should remain unchanged, for on the pope’s own ruling a decision on birth control rested with the papal commission, not the council. But the issue was broken open when, in a speech to the council, Cardinal Suenens made a dramatic appeal for a change in church teaching. Reproved by the pope, Suenens stepped back. But then the crisis erupted anew when Paul VI, acting under pressure, indicated that the council document must include an explicit rejection of contraception in terms expressed by Pope Pius XI. Faced with resistance from the council over several days, and amid growing uproar and publicity in the world media, the pope himself now stepped back, advising that his intervention should be seen as a recommendation, not a command. The council committee responsible
for *Gaudium et Spes* responded by modifying the document with a footnote referring to the teaching of recent popes, but stood firm in not including an explicit condemnation of artificial birth control. Paul VI indicated that he accepted their decision, and the vote went ahead with no more than minor opposition. This particular crisis, in the second last week of the council, had been resolved. Three years later, on 25 July 1968, Paul VI set aside the report of his commission of experts on birth control and issued the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, giving rise to a notorious and unresolved crisis in authority.

In dealing with the reform of the Vatican curia, Paul VI announced soon after his election that some changes could be expected. But he quickly allayed curial concern with the assurance that the reforms would be formulated and promulgated by the Curia itself. Tensions between the council and the Curia ran high at many times in the years 1962 to 1965, above all in the wake of Cardinal Frings’ attack on excessive centralism in the church and specifically his criticism of the Holy Office towards the end of the second session. But time and power rested with the centre. In an address at the end of the council in 1965, Paul repeated substantially what he had said about the Curia in 1963: ‘There are no serious reasons for changing its structure’ (O’Malley, 283). By this time he had also decided that the implementation of the council’s decrees would rest with the Vatican congregations. A few days later *Osservatore Romano* published the papal document setting out the modest reform of the Holy Office, the sometime Roman Inquisition, henceforth to be known as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Finally, Paul VI effectively sealed the future – or non-future – of episcopal collegiality in a document, issued on the opening day of the final session of the council, in which he established the Synod of Bishops (*Apostolica Sollicitudo*). This initiative, taken without consultation with the bishops, a symbolic stroke of unmistakeable intent, caught the assembly and even the conciliar commission on bishops completely by surprise. The initial response was generally positive, but it soon became clear that the Synod was strictly an advisory body with no authority beyond the little the pope might concede to it. In short, in O’Malley’s assessment,

> Whatever the merits of *Apostolica Sollicitudo*, it was an expression of papal primacy, not of collegiality, a word never mentioned in the text. It was a preemptive strike by the center . . . (2008, 252–3). On the center-periphery issue the minority never really lost control. It was in that regard so successful that with the aid of Paul VI the center not only held firm and steady, but, as the decades subsequent to the council have irrefutably demonstrated, emerged even stronger. . . . The creation of the Synod of Bishops severed collegiality, the doctrine
empowering the periphery, from institutional grounding. . . . Collegiality, the linchpin in the center-periphery relationship promoted by the majority, ended up an abstract teaching without point of entry into the social reality of the church. It ended up as an ideal, no, match for the deeply entrenched system.

Fifty years is a long time in the life of an individual, a short time in the long history of Christianity. The documents that emerged from the council were significant achievements in their time, and one can expect that some of them will remain significant for time to come. Is there any person of good will anywhere in the world who would not welcome the opening words of Gaudium et Spes (addressed to all of good will) with their echo of the ancient Roman playwright Terence:

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way affected, these too 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. For theirs is a community composed of human beings. (Gaudium et Spes, section 1).

Along with achievement, however, there was the failure occasioned by the power of a centre that held only too well. The prospect of a form of institutional authority that would be collegial as well as primatial collapsed at the council and seems to have disappeared entirely in the exercise of papal authority ever since. Perhaps the idea was a change too far and impossible given the loss of earlier traditions and the dead weight of practices and power relationships that go back to the split between Christian East and West and the terms set by the beleaguered councils of Trent and Vatican I. Even so, it might be that Vatican II has sown the seed of collegiality, that it is growing quietly in hidden places, and that its time will come in a future age. But for now, the great unresolved issue of authority at the second Vatican Council and the other critical issues reserved for papal resolution at the time seem only to have become more deeply intractable and damaging for the church and the world of which it is part.

References


MEMOIRS BY AUSTRALIAN PRIESTS, RELIGIOUS AND EX-RELIGIOUS

James Franklin*

Autobiography is history from the inside. Real history – how events appeared to those who took part in them. That is not to say that memoirs are always true, or fair, balanced and unbiased. As Clive James says, “all attempts to put oneself in a bad light are doomed to be frustrated. The ego arranges the bad light to its own satisfaction.”1 Nevertheless, what people say about themselves is at the historical front line – the primary evidence of what it was really like to be there.

The article selects some interesting parts of a few of the memoirs by Australian priests, brothers and nuns. And by ex-priests, ex-brothers and ex-nuns, who sometimes write the most dramatic stories. Perhaps ex-religious can speak more freely than those still under vows. Or maybe to write a gripping autobiography requires a strong fascination with oneself that does not fit ideally with the mental attitudes appropriate to permanency in religious life.

I have included simply what I find interesting. But I have looked especially at the accounts of first commitment to the religious life, in the hope of understanding the huge wave of vocations around the 1950s and the sudden receding of that wave. Another theme that emerged of its own accord is the extraordinary separation between life “inside” a religious order and what was going on in “the world”.

The range of views on religious life arranges itself naturally according to how angry the writers are about their time “in religion”. Let us start at the angry end of the spectrum. Readers should correct for any bias resulting from that; those with more positive stories will be heard later.

Ex and Angry
John Hanrahan, author of From Eternity to Here: Memoirs of an Angry Priest, plainly should never have persisted with his “vocation”. That is clear from every page of his book. For example, he writes, at about the midpoint of his training, “Poverty was no problem, but the vows of chastity and especially obedience were becoming increasingly difficult, especially when I considered successive superiors devious morons.”2 Certainly, the intelligence of his superiors is called into question by their decision to allow

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him to proceed to ordination.

Hanrahan joined the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Juniorate at Douglas Park in 1953, aged 13. Already he complains about the Christian Brothers who taught him in Albury: “But I think I ran away to become a priest partly to escape the sadists, who wielded their tailor-made straps with rampant piety.”

Out of the frying pan, into the fire. In the Juniorate and Novitiate, there were no straps, but he found more sadists:

Apart from rules, Father Master was passionate about humiliation (ours) and loved acting-out. One day he came onto the sanctuary to perform Benediction. He approached the altar, and went into a ritual of his own. As sacristan, I knew I was approaching some scrabbled moment of destiny. Father Master raised the altar cloth and peered under it. He searched that vase of hydrangeas. He peered into them. He raised the skirts of his chasuble and probed the pockets of his religious habit. He knelt down and raised a piece of the sanctuary carpet. He turned to us with an Orson Welles’ shrug.

‘OK, Brother Hanrahan, I give up. Am I getting hot or cold, or are you going to let us in on the secret of where you have hidden the monstrance so I can expose the Sacred Host and the rest of us interested can get down to worship?’ In my rush from the sacristy I dropped the sacred vessel and bent a couple of the gold spikes.

Another very garrulous complainer is Chris Geraghty. It takes him two volumes to cover the period to not long after ordination – the first is Cassocks in the Wilderness, set in St Columba’s Seminary, Springwood, and the second The Priest Factory, about St Patrick’s, Manly. The first explains what it took for the seminarians to get involved in the local community – a bushfire: at one point they were side by side with the young Communists saving the hall of the Eureka Youth League. The Priest Factory has ten pages of abuse of Bishop Muldoon and an account of taking the anti-Modernist oath in 1962.

It is interesting to compare Geraghty with Paul Crittenden, a near-contemporary of his at Manly, later Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sydney. His memoir Changing Orders has thirteen pages on Muldoon’s faults, but they are not as colourfully rude as Geraghty’s. He does say that the skills he learned in organising and money-raising as Muldoon’s curate in Mosman came in useful later when he was Dean of Arts at Sydney University.

Heaven, Where the Bachelors Sit is Gerard Windsor’s widely-read and highly coloured story of life in the Jesuit Seminary. He makes it clear that
the vow of chastity was never going to suit him. Another unhappy-Jesuit memoir is titled *Give Me A Child When He Is Young.*

One last troublemaker. Morris West was born in 1916 and joined the Christian Brothers who had taught him, at the age of 13. He writes, “On my part, the decision to join the Congregation was an act of fugue. For the Congregation it was part of a programme called ‘fostering vocations’, but in fact, as I see it now, a seduction of the young and immature into a choice which they were quite unready to make.”

... in the Congregation I  had my first experience of techniques designed to wash the human brain and bend the human spirit. They were practised by my novice-master, who, though he is long dead, I still regard as an ignorant and coarse man, psychologically maimed, anti-intellectual, spiritually blind, who did grave and sometimes irreparable damage to many of the youths in his charge.

He humiliated them with gross penances: shaving their heads, sentencing them to extra field labour, making them take meal after meal on their knees. He bullied them at lecture time. He tyrannised them with spiritual fears: damnation in every sexual thought, double damnation for every impulse of pride and revolt.

West proceeded as far as teaching in schools but had the good sense to leave in 1939, just before his final vows. “My departure was timed for the hour when students and masters were in chapel. The Brother Provincial gave me a cool handshake and a reminder – somehow almost comic in the circumstances – that I was still under vows until their term expired at Christmas.” He joined the Army, married, wrote a novel (about life in a religious order, what else?), divorced and requested an annulment. It was refused and thus he became officially excommunicate on remarriage.

Then he created trouble. Big trouble. The best-selling novel in the United States in the year of the Vatican Council, 1963 was not Mary McCarthy’s *The Group* nor J.D. Salinger’s *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters,* but Morris West’s papal wish-fulfillment fantasy, *The Shoes of the Fisherman.* And that followed his huge success in 1959 with *The Devil’s Advocate.*

Perhaps the work of Morris West and Graham Greene should be seen as important in preparing the public mind for “the spirit of Vatican II”, at least in the English-speaking world. As is clear from the history of the Soviet Union, making the old order look ridiculous is an important prelude to changing it. (Edmund Campion recalls acquiring an addiction to Graham Greene in Manly Seminary, of all places.)
Of nun memoirs, the most negative is a much later one, Colette Livermore’s *Hope Endures*. She joined Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity in 1973 and left eleven years later, having worked with the very poor in Manila, Papua New Guinea and Calcutta. She argues that the order did not take care of the physical and mental health of its own sisters.¹²

**Balanced views?**

Now let us hear from two ex-religious who took a reasonably balanced view. They have criticisms of the long period they spent in religious life and are glad to have left, but they say they generally enjoyed it and that most of their fellow religious were good and dedicated people.

Paul Brock was the son of the editor of the *Newcastle Sun* and school captain of Marist Brothers, Hamilton, in 1959. Like three of his siblings and the two immediately previous captains of the school, he entered religious life, in his case joining the Marist Brothers. He writes (much later) of his sense of vocation at that time:

> The overwhelming idea that kept burning in my brain and which galvanised my decision to enter religious life was a saying that St Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit order, used to repeat to the young Francis Xavier … The telling saying used by St Ignatius was a quotation from the Bible: ‘What doth it profit a man if he gains the whole world, yet suffers the loss of his own soul?’

Why struggle to achieve and gain things here on earth if life is really fundamentally a preparatory testing ground to see if we could avoid being condemned to a life of eternal pain and misery in Hell, and graduate to an eternal afterlife of happiness in Heaven? Why waste time pursuing the normal aspirations of things like physical possessions, marriage and ambition? Therefore it seemed to me far better to pursue a life of self-denial through the religious vows of poverty, celibacy and obedience and, as a result, have more assurance of gaining Heaven. Furthermore, I was living within an environment where I was constantly being told by priests, nuns and brothers that the finest thing that anybody could do with his or her life was to give it all up to God as a priest, nun, or brother.¹³

(Compare Edmund Campion: “What I remember [from Riverview] is the men who taught us by their lives the moral absolutism of that saying of Jesus about the world having nothing that compensates for losing one’s soul.”¹⁴)

Brock lived as a brother for fifteen years and says of his fellow brothers, “Notwithstanding the tiny minority of Brothers whose covert acts of wickedness ended up being exposed and condemned by the courts, by and large my memory of the Brothers I knew and lived with is of very fine men...
of integrity, generosity and whole-hearted commitment to the education of the boys and girls, young men and women they served as teachers.” After several years with the thankless task of teaching poetry to the ungrateful masses at St Joseph’s, Hunters Hill he left the Brothers in 1975, concluding, “In retrospect, I should have realised from my earliest monastic years that I was really not cut out for a life long commitment to celibacy.” He married twice and had three daughters, and a successful career as an academic in education and then a policy adviser in education in Canberra and Sydney. In 1997 he was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease. Most sufferers die within three years, but his form of the disease has been much slower to progress and he continued working from a wheelchair. He is more forthcoming than many ex-religious on his subsequent faith situation. He writes:

By the time I was diagnosed I no longer believed in a personally interventionist deity. I think it’s illogical, for example, to thank God for the survival of one person in a car crash that killed all the other occupants … But I remain a spiritual person … I am still as much driven today by the essential truths of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount as ever I was during all my years as a devout practising Catholic.

Cecilia Inglis’s memoir opens in 1981. She is in the office of the Mother Superior of the Mercy convent in Singleton. She is about to leave after thirty years of religious life. It takes the reader a few moments to realise that she is not in the office to say goodbye to Mother Superior. She is Mother Superior. Her book Cecilia: An Ex-Nun’s Extraordinary Journey was published by Penguin in 2003. It is well-written and she is an attractive personality: interested in lots of things and in people, able to work on self-knowledge and reinvent herself, in some ways tough but never self-satisfied.

She was born in 1935, the seventh in an Irish-Catholic working-class family in Newcastle. An elder sister became a Mercy nun and a brother became a priest. At sixteen she decided to become a nun. She writes:

There was that sense of ‘calling’ I had – a vocation to save the world, or at least my corner of it. There was the Jesus of the Gospels that I loved to imagine: sitting among His disciples, at weddings, tired by the well, having compassion on the hungry and tired multitude, talking about the ways His father in Heaven cared about us. I think I wanted to share this Jesus with other people who didn’t know Him.

There were also those feelings of peace and devotion during the family rosary, at morning Mass, and during retreats. I looked forward to living in a place where
this devotion was cherished and nourished, and where people cared about each other.

On the other hand, religious life was a drastic choice. It meant leaving behind family and friends, and everything familiar – even the clothes I was used to. It meant wearing all this funny black stuff, being locked away behind walls, and I couldn’t even imagine what I’d be doing all day there. Her account of her eighteenth birthday (14 February 1953) explains what they did do all day:

That day I rose at 5 a.m. when the bell clanged out…

I got up, but not with the leap exhorted in the novices’ guide – ‘as if the bed was on fire’. I struggled out, still three-quarters asleep, and splashed my face with cold water … I got dressed as quickly as I could organise myself. Voluminous undies, a bra and singlet, black stockings fastened to my newly acquired lace-up corset, a long black half-petticoat … So far, as required for the sake of modesty, I had been dressing under my calico nightie … though the screens were still closed around my cubicle …

I only got one clean coif and veil a week. I didn’t have to worry about it covering my crowning glory because my hair was cut off the previous September at my reception as a novice …

I moved very quietly when I pulled back the screens around my bed and left the dormitory, as we were still in the Great Silence. This was a very solemn time from night prayers till the end of Mass when the whole house was in profound silence … stories were told – perhaps apocryphal – of saintly nuns in the olden days who lay on the floor all night with broken hips rather than break the Great Silence.

Most of the nuns were already kneeling in the stalls along the sides of the chapel waiting for the prayers to begin. There were about thirty-five or forty of us … I faced the altar, and the folded high seat of the stall stuck into my back. It was uncomfortable – probably meant to be – but not uncomfortable enough to keep me awake at this time of the morning … Sometimes the sister behind me would give me a poke in the back when I looked in danger of rolling right out of the stall into the aisle.

I was supposed to be meditating, but I was not quite sure what that meant, so I was always glad when the 6 a.m. Angelus bell rang … We sat on the high stall seats, faced the centre, and said the Office – Prime, Terce, Sext and None – all in Latin … When Office finished we filed out of the chapel – still in complete silence – to the community room for the ‘lecture’. This was a ten-minute or so gathering where the novice mistress could correct us for anything … For instance, she might think we were not walking quietly enough in the Great Silence, or she
might have noticed some sisters not keeping the ‘custody of the eyes’ (that is, eyes cast down at all times). Then she read from The Lives of the Saints ... I liked storytime, and sat and listened with my eyes down, concentrating on my sewing …

Mass in Latin was always the real beginning of the day, and on special feast days we had singing too … I loved the singing. Some sisters, especially the music teachers, had exquisite voices and the harmony would swell to fill the chapel … There was no singing on the day of my eighteenth birthday, however, as it was already Lent – the season of silence and penance preparing for Easter, when my parents would be permitted to visit me. I saw them last on Boxing Day for three hours when they came by train from Newcastle.

After Mass I went back to the dormitory to make my bed and tidy up before breakfast. [we’re still not up to breakfast!] … Breakfast was cereal with milk, which often tasted slightly off because the day’s milk had been mixed with the day’s before … cold toast and a little butter … we ate in silence … After breakfast we did my charge (chores …) …. By nine o’clock we were ready for the proceedings of the novitiate to begin. There were talks by the novice mistress on religious life, study of the rule of our Order, meditation, and learning the customs to be observed.

We broke for ‘lunch’ … No biscuits today, and Lenten silence was everywhere until recreation time at 4.30 p.m. … On this day I walked close behind Sister Julie and whispered, ‘Today’s my birthday!’ as we went up the steps to the novitiate. She half-turned to me and whispered, ‘Happy birthday!’ and we both had a quiet grin – until we ran slap-bang into the novice mistress. She said nothing but froze us with a look …

Before the 1 p.m. dinner there were more prayers … It was my turn to read in the refectory – a real ordeal … At a sign from Reverend Mother – a tinkle on her small bell – I began to read from the assigned book. Today it was on the life of Saint Therese …

Then it was back to the novitiate for the afternoon of study, music practice and private spiritual reading … At 4 p.m. I went to have a cup of tea again. Today there was fresh bread and jam – a real treat for hungry young people. By 4.20 I was back in the chapel for Vespers before recreation, when Mother suggested a walk around the farm, and we were free to walk and talk as much as we liked. We sauntered along in threes – ‘No twos, please!’ – and at last I could legally tell people it was my birthday. We laughed and joked as we walked, and in spite of the stresses of silence and regimentation, life was good among my friends. Our friendships were meant to be general, however, not exclusive, so there were no ‘best friends’.
Recreation was short but we always packed a lot into it, and let off steam. We went to Office again at 5.05 … After Office we had a lecture again – another story from The Lives of the Saints. Some of the stories were a bit weird … At study between six and seven o’clock we had set topics and time flew till the bell rang for supper … I was hoping it wasn’t just beetroot as it sometimes was, but was relieved to see bowls of salad with cold meat on the table … I joined [the nuns in the chapel] to struggle with evening meditation till night recreation began at eight o’clock. This hour was my favourite time of the day. I’d talk and laugh with the others as we sat and did our sewing or some other craft …

Promptly at nine o’clock the night prayer bell rang out and we all went into immediate and deep silence. We’d go back to the chapel for some more Office (called Compline) and a litany of the saints … By nine-thirty I was changing my shoes for slippers … I fell into bed as fast as I could because I was always tired, and knew 5 a.m. would come all too quickly.

At 10 p.m. the lights went out.21

Inglis – or Sister Mary Scholastica, as she then was – with minimal teacher training, was given a mixed kindergarten-first class of 75 at Tighes Hill.22 She learned to cope with and like teaching and became a high school geography teacher. She graduated from Newcastle University with study on top of a full teaching load. But eventually, following her mother’s death, she became severely depressed. She was admitted to St John of God Hospital Burwood and had sixteen treatments of ECT. Someone new took over the treatment and after stopping the ECT, asked if she thought she should leave religious life. She says “The idea of leaving had never occurred to me.”23 She recovered and went back to the convent. By then the major changes in religious life resulting from Vatican II were well under way. She was all for them, and took to counselling work and generally interacting with the wider community. At one point she is looking after a friend’s small boys while the friend is away. The boys barge into the bathroom and see her topless. One of them says “My mummy’s are only little ones. You’ve got big fat nippies.” She shoos them out, falls about laughing, and comments that she didn’t know whether she had big ones or not as she’d never seen other women’s breasts. She became Mother Superior at Singleton but had had enough after a while, among other reasons, because of conflict with more conservative nuns. She left and obtained dispensation from her vows.

She had a hard time at first, with glandular fever, living alone, a long struggle to find a job, and a conviction for shoplifting. She got a teaching job and gradually sorted it out. She found a good husband through an ad
in the paper, after some gruesome experiences on the singles scene (“a lot more toads out there wanting to be kissed than handsome princes”). Some psychotherapy was helpful. She concluded from it that her father was more important to her than she had realised, and she hints that a wish to please him was significant in her decision to enter the convent. Here she explains to the therapist something about how different things were in the convent:

I told him how the superior opened our letters, and had the right to read or even withhold them from us, both the letters which arrived for us and the letters we wrote. How we had to ask permission to write a letter. Permission might be refused, and if it was permitted, you were given just one sheet of paper. You then put your unsealed envelope and letter on the superior’s desk for posting. This was a humiliating way for grown professional women to live, but again it was just the way it was.

(It should be appreciated that “the way it was” was due not just to immemorial custom and the decisions of superiors but to the provisions of the 1917 Code of Canon Law, which decreed the censorship of letters, travelling in twos, eating separately from “seculars” and not attending the funerals of family members. Archbishop Kelly in Sydney insisted that nuns should not visit their dying parents.)

A rather similar story is by Eileen Jones. She was born in 1927 and grew up poor and poorly educated in Coogee. After some jobs and a near-engagement to a non-Catholic man who refused to marry in a Catholic Church, she joined an order of nuns (which she does not name but is the Brigidines). She was then just over 30 so needed a dispensation. Two features in common with Inglis’s story are the role of choral music as an attraction of the religious life; and the problems of harsh decisions by superiors when she needed something, especially, in her case, treatment for serious medical conditions. She obtained a PhD in psychophysiology and left the order aged almost 70.

Happy Souls
What is needed for a fair view of religious life is stories from, for example, ordinary parish priests who had their ups and downs but mostly just got on with their work and were overall happy with their lives. There are some such memoirs, but they are hard to find – they are published by small presses and not found in most libraries. Maybe they are not especially well written. Maybe the reading public wants something more salacious.

One example: Kevin Condon was born in Ireland in 1932 and grew up on a poor farm. He gained a scholarship to high school, which he says came
with a tacit expectation of joining the Dominicans, an expectation which was reinforced by a talk from his uncle, a Dominican prior. Although he is clear that that was unreasonable pressure, he says he has no regrets. He was sent off to Australia, which he was happy enough with though he would have preferred Nigeria. He was generally happy with everything he was ordered to do later, such as being parish priest of Wahroonga. His superiors seem to have been generally cooperative with him too. He is obviously blessed with a positive personality and a knack of getting on with people; though he does see himself as lacking in self-confidence, and soon after arriving in Australia he took a written course in “positive thinking” advertised in a newspaper (without telling his superiors). As to celibacy, he mentions some challenges but keeps to it and thinks it worked well for him, though he is against it being compulsory.

Another priest happy enough with his lot is Noel McMaster. From suburban Melbourne, he joined the Redemptorist Juniorate in Galong in 1954. He describes a style of training somewhat similar to Morris West’s but less severe. While agreeing it was narrow, he is less concerned by it. He describes himself at that time as “phlegmatic, callow, casual”, personality traits no doubt useful in the context. After some years teaching at the seminary and as an army chaplain – activities he sees as worthwhile but not entirely suiting him – he found more fulfillment in the Kimberley as parish priest of Kununurra and later Halls Creek. He came to see the typical church style of operation as somewhat out of tune with aboriginal culture and spirituality. That and his liking for the liberation theology of Juan Luis Segundo were factors in certain tensions between him and successive Bishops of Broome, but there was no serious falling out and he completed his mission successfully.

A different kind of story is the very detailed account of study in Rome in the Sixties by Peter Brock, younger brother of Paul Brock. It includes this story about canon law and the separation of clergy from laity. The very pious Italian spiritual director at Propaganda College explained to the students how pastorally broad-minded he was: once when cycling through the countryside he was approached by a young woman who asked him to hear her confession. Canon law of course did not permit a priest to be alone with woman – confession could only be heard with the two separated by a wire grill. So, he upended the bicycle and heard confession through the back wheel.

A positive nun memoir, very focussed on the inner life, is Mary Lalor’s *The Inner Road*. In 1928 when she was six, her mother died, soon after
giving birth to the last of ten children. Her father remarried and had six more children and she helped care for them. At the age of sixteen she discovered a vocation to the contemplative life. Her father refused to allow that but did permit her to join the Sisters of Charity, which her elder sister, aunt and great-aunt had already joined. She completed the novitiate and taught primary school for some years, but retained her feeling that she was called to a contemplative order. She was allowed to join the Carmelite Monastery at Parkes in 1955. Although happy there, she felt in 1973 an “inner instruction” to live a Carmelite-like life outside the monastic setting. She left and founded a community in a shared house in inner-city Melbourne to pursue “Carmelite contemplative life in an open setting”. That proved to be the foundation of a small order. Throughout, most of the text is not about these facts of what she did, but expressions of her love for God and especially of her devotion to Mary, such as:

Beloved Lord, Father All-Holy, Jesus Lord, Holy Spirit, I desire to do as You have said: Rest in our oneness, so that I may become more completely love, more completely light, for Your Glory and the good of my brothers and sisters.

Mary, you tell me also: Rest in our oneness. O thank you!

Obviously it is such thoughts that fill her mind most of the time.

Finally, my two favourites

The first is Banished Camelots: Recollections of a Catholic Childhood: A Celebration and a Requiem, by John Redrup. Its account of boyhood between the wars combines a fine recall of detail with a sense of the child’s point of view without too much adult reinterpretation. It includes a very positive, even starry-eyed, view of his years in the Marist Brothers’ Juniorate in Mittagong, 1932-37. He recalls his reaction to the recruiting talk at his school by the head of the Juniorate. He is aged 11:

As Brother Hubert told the story, his Juniorate seemed to me to combine the best features of all the English Boarding Schools I’d been reading about for years past in Magnet, Gem, Champion, Nelson Lee, Boys’ Own, and Chums. There were playing-fields for every conceivable sport, a dam for swimming in and illimitable surrounding bushland in which to adventure. To be sure, Brother Hubert made no mention of Billy Bunter-style dormitory feasts … but my imagination amply corrected that oversight.

I’m sure that the gentle Brother must have spoken of the more serious and spiritual aspects of training for a Marist Brother’s life and of the subsequent vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience that would serve to separate new disciples utterly from ‘the world’ that I’d hardly begun to be aware of; but I
suspect that I absorbed little of this side of his message. What I did carry away … was the notion that God determined whether a boy should become a Marist Brother by granting him the privilege of a ‘vocation’ … In that class-room, on that day, I decided that I loved the Marist Brotherhood and that God wanted me to become a Marist Brother.36

He is too young at that time to join, but after a while the Brothers visit his parents, then hard-hit by the Depression. His father is not keen but agrees, saying to him, “The Brothers have explained to us that if we allow you to follow your wish and go to their Juniorate at Mittagong, you’ll be assured of a finer education than perhaps we could otherwise afford to give you.”37

He did enjoy the Juniorate, even if conditions were not quite as he had originally imagined them. His account of the daily regime resembles that of Cecilia’s in the convent, except that it starts at 5.30, there is a lot more farm work, and there is a usual school day – the boys all study for the Intermediate and Leaving Certificates and high academic standards are expected. He writes “I developed a deep affection for the prayerful round of life that the Brothers maintained at their Juniorate. Until the storm-clouds of adolescence began to gather, I could still picture no better life for myself than to join their calm Order and doubts about my vocation never entered my head … a large part of our vocation, I feel sure, stemmed from frank hero-worship.”38

Of course, with teenaged boys, you still needed discipline. It worked like this. A series of coloured Monthly Behaviour Cards were given out, and too many pink or red ones meant days taken off the annual 10-day holiday at home. Points were lost for faults on the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Friendships</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>Unkindness</th>
<th>10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breaking Silence</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Irreverence</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disobedience</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Unpunctuality</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inadequate effort</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bad language</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of frankness</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Poor Demeanour</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un-sportsmanship</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Untidiness</td>
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 does all this seem to suggest that the average Junior felt oppressed? Certainly not I … I regarded our playing-field as reassuringly level, the boundaries clearly marked, and the goal-post luminously clear and firmly-set.39

But he does criticise one aspect: the prohibition of special friendships, which he believed badly affected his ability to make lasting friendships in later life.40
He completed the Leaving Certificate in the Juniorate, but was told that he was too young to join the Novitiate and would have to repeat the year. The disappointment added to a summer holiday with girls around, and he found his vocation had disappeared. He became a radical university student, a senior journalist on *The Age*, and a consultant to UN development agencies.

My last example is François Xavier Gsell’s *The Bishop with 150 Wives*. Gsell was born in Alsace in 1872, apprenticed as a cotton-spinner, joined the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and studied in Rome with Eugenio Pacelli (later Pope Pius XII). After a dispiriting time in administration in Randwick, he spent a few years in Papua before being appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Northern Territory, charged with re-founding the Church there. He did so with success but was keen to move on to strictly missionary work among aborigines. In 1911 he established a mission at Nguiu, Bathurst Island (the mission fictionalised as Mission Island in the movie *Australia*). Naturally conditions were very difficult, but he made it a success. In contrast to the failures of recent times in those regions, he ran a peaceful settlement with economic activity, including agriculture and a sawmilling business. His book shows a close attention to aboriginal culture, of which he often takes a sceptical view. For example, he describes the
perfect communism of aboriginal society, and adds that like communism in Europe, that does not imply equality, since everything is run in the interests of the Party (that is, the elders). 42

Actual missionary success was slow. There was not a single adult convert up to the time he left in 1938. But in 1921 there occurred this remarkable event, the first of the incidents that give the book its title:

Little Martina belonged to the Maolas tribe and she came from the north of the island. An intelligent, lively little girl and quite clever at small tasks, she was not, perhaps, distinguished from other little ones about the mission …

There came to me a hairy anonymous man who said, “I have come to fetch my wife.”

“And who is your wife?”, I asked.

“That one,” he said, and he pointed to Martina.

Nothing could be done, I knew. No one might challenge the law of the tribe. No one had ever thought of doing so. Martina, not yet baptized, must go with this hairy, anonymous man and be lost in the sad company of tribal women, slaves, owned body and soul by the men of the tribes … the light we had tried to direct towards little Martina would be darkened for ever …

But now a most extraordinary thing happened. Martina said, “No, I will not go with that man.”

I am astonished, and to myself I say, “But the little one may not resist the tribal law … Can I resist a strong custom of these people? I cannot.” … as her little fingers clutch my cassock she cries, “Oh, help me, Father. Do not let me go with this old man who is ugly. Please, I want to stay with the Mission …” … the little one accepts her fate and, trying to stifle her sobs, she goes with that man to begin a life which, I know, has less joy than that of the lowest beasts of the forest. The incident passes …

But in five days’ time Martina is back. The man has taken her to his district, more than forty miles from the Station … She has resisted her man and he has driven a spear into her leg to drive a right spirit into her small body; and then, when it was dark, she has escaped …

It is evening, and they come – an ugly mob of muttering, gesticulating tribesmen – and they are at the Mission gates. Martina is in my arms; she believes, poor little one, that I can save her … I am deeply distressed and call on God to help …

“You,” I said, “have come a long way: and so you are very tired. And also, you are very hungry. But come, you are welcome and there is flour and tobacco for you … they eat their fill, and they smoke, and then they sleep. …
I pray that God, now, will guide me … There comes to me an idea. I will buy Martina from these men. But this is not the custom. For payment – tobacco, flour, calico – they will lend Martina to any unscrupulous brute who may desire her, but … they will not sell her …

Now I proceed with great cunning. On a long table in front of the Mission House, … I place a good blanket, a sack of my best flour, a hatchet of good-quality steel, a mirror, a handsome teapot, some gaily coloured beads, a pipe and some good tobacco, some yards of brightly patterned calico, some tins of meat and pots of treacle. It is all worth perhaps two pounds sterling … tribal custom, often so inexorable, makes the price these sleeping men must pay when they awaken a high one, but my table carries for them untold riches …

My guests are early risers and I, hidden behind a fence … watch them approach … At once they see my stall and they crowd near it chattering like monkeys, gazing at my merchandise longingly …

Finally, I say carelessly to hide my deep anxiety, “It is all very easy for you: you may have everything … the calico, the flour, the tobacco … but in return, you must let me have the girl … The men are struck dumb with astonishment …

They begin a discussion in low, urgent tones … they can be severely punished by their tribal elders if they make this bargain … they may win the enmity of spirits … on the other hand, would they, they ask themselves, be wise to let such a windfall slip by? …

Although the council seems to sit interminably, at last it ends and now there comes to me that hairy anonymous old man who claimed Martina as his wife, quite justly according to native law. His face seems slit from ear to ear in a grin as he approaches.

“Everything is good,” he declares happily. “We sell the girl, but there is a condition: you must keep her for yourself always; she must not be passed on to any other man.”

Martina grew up a Christian with the nuns and chose a Christian husband from the Mission; she had five children and eventually died of leprosy. Gsell bought another hundred and fifty betrothed females in the years following.

As Bishop of Darwin in the 1940s, he was ultimately responsible for the Catholic Church’s share of the policy of child removal of “half-castes”, now called the Stolen Generation. He has this comment:

But, I may be asked, is it not cruel to tear these children away from the affectionate environment of their homes? The question is naïve. What homes and what natural affection have these little ones? Yes, if they had families, and if they
were surrounded by that love and affection family life offers to the young even amongst primitive peoples, it might be cruel. But these creatures roam miserably around the camps and their behaviour is often worse than that of native children. It is an act of mercy to remove them as soon as possible from surroundings so insecure. After that, I think, they must be kept at school until they marry, when they can establish a home …

A remarkable footnote to this story: on 23 Oct 2012 the new member for Arafura in the Northern Territory Parliament, Francis Xavier Kurrupuwu, paid tribute to Gsell in his maiden speech. Mr Kurrupuwu is named after Gsell and is Martina’s great-grandson.

Final remarks
The selection of memoirs that has been published has some biases. As mentioned, there are more by ex-religious than religious, especially in easily available books, which gives a certain negativity of tone to the selection. There is a general shortage of nuns’ stories.

There are none by an abuser of children (although there is a partly autobiographical book by an alleged abuser).

Also lacking is anything much from the more distant past, before the 1930s. Apart from Gsell, the only one I have seen that goes back to “Around the Boree Log” days is Archbishop Duhig’s string of anecdotes (starting on page 1 with the housekeeper at his first presbytery who “cooked fish better than anybody I have since known”, and continuing with the importance of a good horse in a priest’s life and his successes in buying real estate, and an interview with “the then-famous duce”).

One of the most dramatic effects of Vatican II was the collapse of vocations. That has often been taken by conservatives as a sign of the evil effects of the Council. In the light of the stories above, it may well be asked, was the decline of vocations a good thing or a bad thing? It is true that very many people benefited from the ministries – sacramental, educational, nursing – of the vocations of earlier times, so there is much to regret in the decline. But it is clear from the stories that before 1965, many people joined religious life who should not have done so. That should be taken into account when discussing the high level of vocations at that time.
List of Memoirs by Australian Religious and Ex-Religious

Bishops
James Duhig, Crowded Years (Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1947).
Julian Porteous, Caught in the Stream: Looking Back on the First Fifty Years (Book House at Wild and Woolley, Sydney, 1999).

Priests
Brother Andrew MC [Ian Travers-Ball], What I Met Along the Way (Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1987).
Ernie Smith, Miracles Do Happen: A Priest Called Smith (Collins Dove, North Blackburn, Vic, 1993).
Maurice O’Connor OSA, Never a Dull Moment (Augustinian Press, Brookvale, 1997).
Kevin Condon OP, Here I am Lord: Memories and Musings of a Wandering Dominican (Information Australia, Melbourne, 2000).
Peter Brock, Home Rome Home (Spectrum, Melbourne, 2001).
Len Thomas, Free to be Priest (Spectrum Publications, Richmond, Vic, 2005).
Tim Norris, Golden Priest, Wooden Chalice, ed. Tess Livingstone (Connor Court, Ballan, Vic, 2005).
Noel McMaster CSsR, From Coburg to the Kimberley: A Narrative of Lifelong Learning in Catholic Faith and Ways (David Lovell Publishing, Kew East, Vic, 2010).

Priests: Other Autobiographical Material
Memoirs by Australian Priests, Religious and Ex-Religious

Giuseppe La Rosa, Diece anni tra gli Italiani in Australia, ed. Domenico La Rosa, Barbara McGilvray, (Domenico La Rosa, Italian Historical Society of NSW, Petersham, NSW 1995).


Ex-Priests

Michael S. Parer, Dreamer by Day: A Priest Returns to Life (Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1971).

Ian Guthridge, Give Me a Child When He Is Young (Medici Publications, Port Melbourne, 1987).

Greg Dening, Performances (Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1996), ch. 1?

Gerard Windsor, Heaven, Where the Bachelors Sit (University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1996). [ex-novice]

Jim Madden, This Turbulent Priest: The Story of a Priest and His Church (J. Madden, Summer Park Qld, 1999)


Paul Crittenden, Changing Orders: Scenes of Clerical and Academic Life (Brandl & Schlesinger, Blackheath NSW, 2008).


Robert Crotty, Three Revolutions: Three Drastic Changes in the Interpretation of the Bible in One Lifetime (ATF Theology, Hindmarsh SA, 2012).

Brothers


Ex-Brothers

Morris West, A View From the Ridge: The Testimony of a Pilgrim (Harper Collins, Pymble, 1996)


Nuns

Ex-Nuns
Colette Livermore, Hope Endures: An Australian Sister’s Story of Leaving Mother Teresa, Losing Faith, and Her Ongoing Search for Meaning (William Heinemann, North Sydney, 2008).
Margaret Bolton, Not Another Nun Story (Ginninderra Press, Adelaide, 2010).

Nuns and ex-nuns: other autobiographical material
Some unpublished memoirs are summarised and extracted in Anne O’Brien, God’s Willing Workers (UNSW Press, Sydney, 2005), including those of Sr Bernard Haughey DOLSH, who taught in an aboriginal school in Bowraville 1919-50 (pp. 212-14), Sr Marcellus Baraguay RSM of St Patrick’s Business College (pp. 219-20) and Sr Dorothea Hanly SGS, written in 1945 (pp. 186-9).

End notes
1 C. James, Unreliable Memoirs (1980), 20.
3 Hanrahan, From Eternity to Here, 16.
4 Hanrahan, From Eternity to Here, 59.
7 Ian Guthridge, Give Me a Child When He Is Young (Medici Publications, Port Melbourne, 1987).
9 West, View from the Ridge, 6-7
10 West, View from the Ridge, 32.


Without intending anything negative by the comparison, the phenomenon of multiple vocations in families could be compared to copycat suicides, in the sense that early teenagers can make dramatic decisions about their lives and do so in imitation of others. A study of vocations in families is Beverley Zimmerman, ‘She came from a fine Catholic family’: religious sisterhoods of the Maitland diocese, 1867-1901, *Australian Historical Studies* 31 (115) (2000), 251-272.


Inglis, *Cecilia*, 71-84.

Inglis, *Cecilia*, 100.

Inglis, *Cecilia*, 175.

Inglis, *Cecilia*, 208-9.

Inglis, *Cecilia*, 325.

Inglis, *Cecilia*, 294.


Noel McMaster, *From Coburg to the Kimberley* (David Lovell Publishing, Kew East, 2010), 16.


Lalor, *The Inner Road*, 56.

Lalor, *The Inner Road*, 141.


Redrup, *Banished Camelots*, 245.


Redrup, *Banished Camelots*, 279.


43 Gsell, 80-86.
44 Gsell, 154-5.
46 John I. Fleming, *Convinced by the Truth: Embracing the Fullness of Catholic Faith* (Connor Court, Ballan Vic, 2010)
47 James Duhig, *Crowded Years* (Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1947); it can be compared with his biography: T. P. Boland, *James Duhig* (University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1986).
LOOKING BACK ON THE WAY WE WERE

Pat Mullins*

While visiting a parish last year I overhead a young woman berating the parish priest about changes to her experience of church. She complained loudly enough for me to hear, ‘The Church has never changed in 2000 years. Why NOW!’ At the time, I was doing research into how we in the Australian Church spoke about marriage from the turn of this century. This research led me to the pages of The Australasian Catholic Record, a journal which since its first publication in 1895 has continued to today, having only a brief period of inactivity at the time of the first World War. Continually, I was distracted from the purpose of my research by light-hearted enjoyment, and at times, horror, at reading of the concerns of the Church in the times of our grandparents and parents and in my own past. The words of the complaining young woman and the pleas of those who call us back to the ‘good old days’ continually came to mind.

From the pages of The Australasian Catholic Record in 1924 comes a description of its vision of its early role, as a permanent organ [of the Australian and New Zealand church] to deal with domestic problems, to enshrine its history, to reflect its learning, to help its clergy in the pulpit and the confessional, to aid them in the general revision of theological studies . . .

To this end, up until the 1970s (when the changes of Vatican II had begun to be absorbed), several pages of each issue of The Record were devoted to the anxious questioning of priests, on moral questions, who used a non-de-plume to prevent any betrayal of confidence.

The Australasian Catholic Record

In 1902, baptism was seen as necessary for salvation. The lawfulness of the use of chloride of mercury to dilute the water was questioned, in the event of babies being baptised in the womb, should they not survive the birth. The same year, a suspected impoverished priest asked for permission to take up the collection at the church door as the devout entered the church, since many escaped before the normal collection time.

In 1911 the question was raised as to whether it was lawful for an owner to appeal to the land valuation court, although he knew his land had not been taxed above its true value. The answer was that such a man was not guilty

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*Mrs Pat Mullins of Coorparoo, Qld, brought up ten children and was awarded a PhD in theology from the Brisbane College of Theology. This article is reprinted with permission from the Australasian Catholic Record, vol. 75 (1998), 323-5.

of injustice simply by reducing the value of his property by one-fourth or one third, provided such a course was commonly adopted by local owners generally.

The question of how to interpret the meaning of the word attend in a decree, which called for priests to be suspended if they attended race meetings, evoked a response of one and a half pages in 1925. It was explained that a priest, looking on at the races from a neighbouring hill or from the windows of a house in the vicinity of the racecourse, could not be described as attending the race meeting, but the question of scandal arose if he sat on the fence. Where a moderate bet at cards or billiards could be tolerated, ‘betting on the horses’ was named as ‘unbecoming the clerical state’ and ‘could easily undermine their [the priests] spiritual life and seriously distract them from what ought to be their principal occupations’.

‘Worried Pastor’, also in 1925, raised the issue of ‘the increasing tendency of our Catholic people to take part in . . . socials, concerts and bazaars in aid of Protestant churches . . . even going so far as to enter their children for a Protestant Queen Competition’. The same year, the ‘more or less general use of wireless communication’ brought to the fore the question of whether ‘listening in’ to broadcasts of Protestant sermons incurred censure. The respondent to the question wrote that listening in could not be named as attending, and that there was no specific law regarding the wireless, since when the law was given, the legislator ‘could hardly have foreseen, much less have intended to prohibit positively, this extraordinary method of wireless communication’.

In 1926 the question was asked of what a priest should do if, while performing a mixed marriage in the sacristy, he bears the strain of music proceeding from the choir gallery. Ecclesiastical legislation prohibited singing and playing of the wedding march at a marriage of mixed faith. The reply to the question appeared to be made by a musician who saw it as ‘not good to create a scene and sensations, such as the catastrophic collapse in mid-career of a glorious wedding march’.

Legislation surrounding marriage provided the substance for many questions. In 1938, a priest asked whether it was permissible to have ‘what is called a “Kitchen Tea”, in a local hall during Lent, a time when the church frowned on the celebration of marriage. The reply noted that ‘our competence, alas! does not reach the “Kitchen Tea” in the local hall’.

Indicating the progress of society, a priest inquired in 1939 whether it was forbidden to place electric lights inside the throne of exposition in order to illuminate the monstrance. The contentious question was bridged in 1940
of whether knitting could be called servile work and therefore was forbidden on Sundays. The response ran to seven and a half pages, resulting in the conclusion that if a woman was by profession a knitter, knitting would be for her servile work. If the knitting were complicated and artistic, it would then fall into the category of embroidery and crochet-work, which were not servile work. If, again, were a woman not to knit, she might risk committing sin, say by the harmful reading of novels, then to knit would not be a sin, being necessary to put ‘fidgetiness and irritability to flight’ in ‘this age of nerves’. Should, however, a woman knit a stocking simply to get the knitting done, this would be servile work, but would be mortally sinful only after three hours.

A sign of the times appeared in *The Australasian Catholic Record* of 1941 when a priest asked whether the installation of a burglar alarm or a steel tabernacle would violate any liturgical laws. In 1943 again when the question was raised as to whether a busy working girl might do her laundry on a Sunday without fear of sin. The question also arose of whether absolution was valid in the case of a person who regularly went to confession, deliberately choosing a deaf priest.

*The Record* of 1949 saw an impassioned plea from a priest on behalf of the dairy farmers in his congregation who, having done half a day’s tiring work before they were able to come to the second Mass on Sunday, found the need to have breakfast. Therefore they could take Communion only at Midnight Mass on Christmas Day or during the off-milking season. A priest in the 1952 issue raised the question of the right to refuse Communion to women who used lipstick which he saw as ‘unbecoming’. He also berated the so called hats of fashion, which did not adequately cover the head, being little more than an ornament. The respondent said such extreme behaviour on the part of the priest could be justified only if the use of lipstick were classified as immodest.

The question was asked in 1962 under what circumstances could priests carry women passengers in their cars. Two causes were then given under canon law, necessity and charity. The moral theologian replying noted that ‘some frankly honest purpose must exist for a priest to have women passengers in his car. Would not the intention of the Fathers of the Council have been to forestall any dangers to the virtue of the priest, and to prevent the gossip of idle tongues and the consequent harm to his reputation?’

I commend the constancy of the staff of *The Australasian Catholic Record*, who have maintained a periodical for such a long and changing period of our history. A browse through pages of the Church’s publications,
if only in Australia and only in this century, would convince the most
c sceptical that we, as church, have changed almost beyond recognition. We
will continue to change, and must do so, because if we remain unchanged in
a changing world, we will simply be irrelevant.
**Book review:**

*Australia's Oldest Consecrated Catholic Church: St Benedict's, Broadway*

Author: Mills, Lyn, with contributions from Fr Michael de Stoop, Steven Miller, Lauren Haumesser, Karla Whitmore, Greg Howard
ISBN: 9780646580579 (pbk)
Purchase: $29.95 Direct from the Parish, enquiries@stbenedicts.org.au or order on line at www.stbenedicts.org.au ($10 postage)
Co-Op Bookshop: on-line or in-store at Broadway

Reviewed by Edward Waters*

A photograph of a nineteenth century Chippendale slum is one of the most striking images in this amazing book. It helps us to perform the almost impossible task of imagining the Sydney in which St Benedict’s, Broadway, was built and consecrated. Australians today often shy away from pageantry, but for the poorest of the poor Australian Catholic community who lived in the slums around Broadway in 1862, the pageantry of the consecration of St Benedict’s and of the liturgies celebrated there were uplifting. Lasting almost eight hours, the consecration was a sensory explosion of incense, brocade and chant that combined perfectly with the Gothic revival architecture of the church building to transport attendees into a world set apart from the struggle of existence for Catholics in Chippendale and Broadway.

This book not only captures perfectly the environment in which St Benedict’s was built, but also the challenges of changing environments that it has withstood over the years since its consecration. The sense of historical continuity that the church has preserved despite physical, liturgical and cultural change comes through clearly in the book. Perhaps no change was ostensibly as great as the closure of St Benedict’s school in 1981. For a century, the students of religious sisters and brothers had formed the core of many of the activities of the parish, including the choirs. Many of St Benedict’s longest tenured parishioners are ex pupils of the school, and it was their school days that led to maintain an association with the parish. The closure of the school therefore presented a real challenge to the parish’s survival.

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However, the thread of continuity that keeps St Benedict’s present linked to its past is not absent here. When the University of Notre Dame took over the old school buildings, its students began forming the same connection to the church that the adolescent pupils of yesteryear did. Notre Dame students now sing in the choir, and continue to marry and attend the parish after their
graduation. The importance of education to providing a link to participation in the parish continues as a real part of the St Benedict’s story, when it was feared it might be lost.

The book also highlights architectural continuity. St Benedict’s was built in Gothic Revival style to a design by the celebrated ecclesiastical architect Augustus Welby Pugin, but on several occasions, redesign of the church was required. Somehow the integrity of the original design was retained, and St Benedict’s remains one of Australia’s finest examples of the Pugin style. The book describes in detail the internal and external modifications to the church, including cataloguing in photos of extreme beauty the accoutrements of the sanctuary and the stained glass windows over the years.

In many other ways the book also highlights St Benedict’s continuity with its past. In part this may be because of St Benedict’s succession of long serving administrators, including the vibrant Fr Terence Purcell who did much to maintain the musical, architectural and liturgical traditions of the parish. Some of the former priests and some of the most prominent parishioners of St Benedict’s are described in detail in the book. As so many of the priests and parishioners went on to have important roles in the Australian Church (one parishioner became the first Australian cardinal) the book is also a who’s who of Australian Catholic history.

This description of the book should not be taken to mean it is a dry historical read; almost every single page of the book contains high quality, striking photographs, and the book is so visually enticing that it is almost tempting to look at rather than read it at times. Through its combination of photographs and historical accounts, the book does appropriate homage to the beauty and personalities of one of Australia’s most significant churches, and should be on the shelves of any Sydney-sider who is interested in the city’s churches or heritage.

Perhaps the best reason to buy this book though is that by doing so, one contributes in a small way to maintaining the wonderful building that the book is devoted to. Like all old buildings, St Benedict’s requires constant maintenance, and with stonemasonry and related skills becoming less common, this only becomes more expensive. Proceeds from the sale of this marvelous book go towards ongoing restoration work at St Benedict’s. When reading this book and taking in the beauty of St Benedict’s, those who buy this book can take some satisfaction in the fact that in doing so, they have helped to maintain this unique church.
Book note

Botthian and Amphian: De La Salle Brothers In Australia 1864-1867

Br Rory Higgins fsc,

Published by the De La Salle Brothers, Australian Province 2011.
Available at The Record for $49.00

This major work places the story of the Brothers of the Christian Schools within the context of the local and regional histories of the communities served by these men during the nineteenth century. The study has an international setting too with an investigation of the mission of Jean Baptiste De La Salle, and the later expansion beyond Europe to North America, India and Singapore. Schools in Calcutta and Agra were to be the link between Singapore and the fledgling foundation in the Swan River colony later known as Western Australia. While eventually (1906) the De La Salle Brothers opened a school in Armidale, NSW, it was to be another ninety years after Botthian’s departure before the Brothers finally established a school in ‘the West’ despite ongoing efforts by Bishops Griver and Gibney to re-establish a foundation in colonial times.

The Brothers, Botthian and Amphian, were domiciled with Bishop Griver and the priests and travelled out to their separate schools. In 1950 Michael Mannix of Wembley, then ninety eight, could recall being taught by these men who also developed the Catholic Young Men’s Society and supported the fledgling St Vincent de Paul Society.

The title of the book conveys the thrust of the story which also embraces far flung schools in the northern and the southern hemispheres. The dust cover created by a member of the Institute in the Philippines, links the main protagonist, Botthian Schneider to the origins of the Order and its approval by Benedict XIII in 1725 of Jean Baptiste De La Salle and his outreach to the marginalised.

Through the research, analysis and interpretation provided by the author in this study, the reader gains a sense of mission of two particular men endeavouring to live out their commitment to the Institute; but doing so proactively and not as mere neophytes. Br Rory has brought his material together in a compelling narrative. The reader meets those men as the Brothers, or those others who had been appointed priests or bishops. The reader is not being restricted to an analysis of the institutional church without regard for the human frailties, strengths or social attitudes relevant to the times.
The authoritarianism, unacceptable now, that permeated the Catholic hierarchy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and impacted upon the management of the convents and monasteries according to the strictures of Canon Law and each Congregation’s Constitution, is placed in context. The pressure for adaptation to better meet the needs of pioneering conditions whether in America, on the Orient or in Australia as faced both by local bishops their clergy and the Brothers, is well examined by the author. The absorbing narrative loses none of its pace in meeting this test. Archival material is used very effectively and author research unearthed a number of documents pivotal to a more complete understanding of several issues within the Institute’s rich international history with a focus on colonial conditions in Western Australia.

In drawing on public and private archives and collections for photographic material, the author has provided an engaging pictorial record of the era, including previously unpublished photographs and sketches. The sacrifices and the initiative shown by these resolute men are well captured in the resources marshalled by the author, and give the reader a strong sense of conditions of the time. The sandy stretches designated as streets that led towards the Bishop’s ‘palace’ where one classroom was located are captured as is the Fremantle Presbytery (demolished 1915) where Brother Amphian was thought to have taught and then later visited to offer weekend catechetical lessons.

A long standing member of the De La Salle Brothers and successful classroom practitioner, Br Rory Higgins, a Master’s graduate from the University of Sydney, lives in the Philippines where he is Novice master for the Brothers’ region of Asia and the Pacific.

The author has consulted archives nationally and internationally as well as communities of De La Salle Brothers during this research and the readers of this fascinating volume will be pleased with the final result. Sr Frances Stibi pbvm from the Archdiocesan Archives of Perth and archivists from the New Norcia, the Sisters of Mercy and the Christian Brothers, and the State Library are among those whose generous involvement has been identified by Br Rory.

Notes by Clement Mulcahy, Past President,
Royal Western Australian Historical Society.
BOOK NOTE

*Melbourne Before Mannix: Catholics in Public Life 1880-1920*

Patrick Morgan

Connor Court Publishing, $29.95, October, 2012.

Mannix’s many biographers have combed through his half century in Ireland, searching, often in vain, for clues which might explain his public behaviour in Australia. Understanding the decades in Melbourne before he arrived throws more light on what he inherited from the Melbourne Archdiocese, how he fitted in, and what he changed. The Archdiocese under his predecessor, Archbishop Carr, is an impressive story in its own right. Melbourne led the way in Australia in its emphasis on lay initiative, and in starting up Catholic institutions on a national scale.

Most of Mannix’s biographers have understandably placed him in a political context in Australia. But his primary location was in the Catholic Church. Viewed from this perspective he looks a less dominant, though still outstanding, figure, one who was feeling his way. From 1913 he had to handle many changes in his life simultaneously.

Mannix changed the style of Melbourne Catholicism after he arrived by eschewing the prevailing Jansenist emphasis on personal moral issues. He disagreed on many public issues with Melbourne’s clerical and lay elites, and appealed over their heads to ordinary Irish Catholics. Instead of admonishing his flock for their moral failings supported them, and led them to face out towards the wider community. Previously the emphasis of those writing on Mannix has been to focus on the intense public squabbles he had with the Prime Minister Billy Hughes and with those who supported conscription. But the picture of him leading a united Catholic flock needs to be modified. There were marked internal differences between Catholics, just as there were marked differences in the public realm.

*Right: St Benedict’s, Broadway. Photo: Scott Mills (see book review page 167)*
Coadjutor Archbishop Justin Simonds of Melbourne and Bishop James O'Collins of Ballarat outside the Council Hall (St Peter's Basilica) after one of the morning sessions of Vatican II, October 1963. Photograph by Barontini & Giuliani, Roma.

See VATICAN II AS I EXPERIENCED IT by Michael Costigan page 83.