

Australian Hierarchy at Vatican II

(written in 2007 by Thang Vu during his seminary formation towards the priesthood)

Part I: A Brief Survey of the Deepening Crisis in Relationships between the Catholic Church and Society during the Post-Tridentine Period

Impact of the world's events in Australia

In the midst of the deepening crises in the relationship between the Church and society during the Post-Tridentine period, namely: the Scientific Revolution (1543); the Enlightenment; American and French Revolutions; Restoration; *Risogimento* and the Modernist crisis, it is not suggested that the Church in Australia imported or affected – without any qualifications whatsoever – the dogmas and attitudes of mind of Europe and other parts of world. Nonetheless, Roman authority, and its own inclinations, influenced the Church in Australia to take a conservative direction. In particular, spurred by conservative ultramontanism, and concerned about the threat of secularism and anti-clericalism that was largely attributed to the growth of liberalism in Europe, the Church in the 18th and 19th centuries opted for the establishment, and maintenance of a unified and centralised Church.

Sectarianism and Ecumenism

In Australia, the Church Act of 1836 sought to treat all religions equally by providing financial aid to all religions. However sectarianism, which arrived with the convicts and settlers, was never far away and when the churches refused to give up their rights to run their own religious schools, the government of the day withdrew financial funding and declared, in the 1872 Act, that education should be *free, secular and compulsory*.¹ There has never been a state religion here and all religions have been treated equally before and after the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, when it ceased to be a colony. The strong sectarianism among Christian denominations in the eighteenth and nineteenth century abated in the twentieth century with the foundation of the World Council of Churches and then, for Roman Catholics, the Second Vatican Council and its embrace of ecumenism.

¹ Michael Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand: Religion in Australian History* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1987), 48-48.

Australian Catholicism

Perhaps, the primary influence on the dynamics of Catholic life in Australia, as a remote location in the Catholic world, was the piety and practices that flowed either directly or indirectly from the Council of Trent (1545-63): “[Trent] had a direct and long-term impact on modern Catholicism that in its pervasiveness transcended the immediate influence of any single person or any other happening in the period.”² Although the Council of Trent sought to reform manifold aspects of Catholic life, its primary aim was to highlight the gulf between the true faith of Catholics and the heretical diversions of the Reformers. That emphasis ensured that Catholics, for generations after Trent tended to define themselves over and against those whom they knew to be wandering in the paths of error. Australian Catholics shared with their sisters and brothers in other parts of the world a sense of living within a faith that was certain, clear, and comprehensive.³

On the other hand, the sense of certainty and finality that characterised the Tridentine settlement meant that Catholics tended to lack “a sense of history and a dynamic openness to change.”⁴ Such features also were as much a part of Catholic life in Australia, causing O’Farrell to remark that in its religious life in the early 1960s the church seemed stable and undisturbed, its authority structures, conservatism and piety little changed since the 1920s, firmly anchored in a clear and unquestioning faith, content to be self-contained.⁵

The development and establishment of the Catholic hierarchy in Australia in the latter half of the 19th century coincided with the intensification of ultramontanist sentiments. Australia’s first Catholic bishop, John Bede Polding, was consecrated in London in 1834. He was an English Benedictine monk, but most of the bishops appointed to shepherd Australian dioceses in the remainder of the century came from Ireland. In *The Roman Mould of the Australian Catholic Church*, John Molony argues that their nationality is misleading. Influenced by

² John O’Malley, *Trent and all That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 135.

³ Edmund Campion, *Australian Catholics* (Melbourne: Penguin Books, 1988), 93.

⁴ Edward Braxton, *The Wisdom Community* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 28.

⁵ Patrick O’Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, 3rd ed. (Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1992), 407.

Cardinal Paul Cullen, Archbishop of Dublin from 1852 to 1878, they were the “product of an Irish Church undergoing a thorough Romanisation at the hands of prelates trained in Rome, oriented toward Rome, and consciously seeking to shape the Church both in Ireland and Australia in the Roman mould.”⁶ O’Farrell counters Molony’s thesis by pointing out that most of the bishops’ time in Rome was spent in the Irish College, and their subsequent relations with the Vatican reveal an ambivalence toward papal authority. It was useful when it bolstered their own position, and relatively easy to ignore when it did not. O’Farrell concludes: “the fact was that to most Australian Catholics, the papacy, its politics and pronouncements seemed remote and irrelevant.”⁷

Historically, it is interesting to consider whether the Australian bishops embraced a stereotype similar to that of their American counterparts. According to O’Toole⁸ in almost every American diocese, the following pattern can be seen. A pioneering, missionary bishop, usually from Ireland, is followed by a number of successors who, with minimal central administration, struggle to build up the young diocese. In the early 20th century, a native-born bishop emerges, a “consolidator who brings the local church to organizational maturity and superintends its expanding impact the community at large.”⁹ The consolidator is a far greater centralizer than his predecessors, more firmly linked to the Pope and the Roman curia, and inclined, as his efforts bear fruit, to succumb to triumphalism. There are echoes of this stereotype in MacCarthy’s account of “James the Builder” O’Collins, and they become louder in Boland’s study of Duhig.¹⁰

⁶John Molony, *Roman Mould of the Australian Catholic Church* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969), 1.

⁷ O’Farrell, *Catholic Church and Community*, 217-8.

⁸ James O’Toole, “The Role of Bishops in American Catholic History: Myth and Reality in the Case of Cardinal William O’Connell,” *Catholic Historical Review* 77 October (1991): 596. Cf. for Australian situation Anthony Cappello, “Rome or Ireland? The Religious Control of the Italian Community,” *Australian Catholic Historical Society* 23 (2002).

⁹ O’Toole, “American Catholic History,” 597.

¹⁰ Patrick O’Farrell, “James Duhig,” *Australasian Catholic Record* 64(April) (1987): 215.

Molony acknowledges that Mannix was one bishop who did not get caught in the ultramontane currents in influence around the Church.¹¹ He seems to have been more influenced by the outspoken Irish nationalist bishop Thomas Croke of Cashel than the romanizing Cardinal Cullen.¹² Mannix assumed responsibility for the Archdiocese of Melbourne in 1917, the same year the Code of Canon Law was promulgated. He ignored some of its provisions, such as the requirement that bishop regularly conduct visitations of their dioceses.¹³ Santamaria claims that Mannix “unquestioningly accepted every decision clearly made personally by the Pope.... [but] this is not the same thing as saying that he accepted every piece of advice offered in the name of the Pope by Vatican diplomats.”¹⁴ Duhig too broke free of an ultramontane mould, as Boland recounts: “in fact, his refusal to conform to stereotype was his most significant ecclesiastical contribution to the Australian Catholic Church. Yet, did he have to become so involved in politics, education, - all education, not just Catholic – the arts, business, agriculture, oil, mining, urban development, racial prejudice, several wars, journalism...his Church was the Incarnation extended in every time in every place in every person.”¹⁵ Murphy rightly remarks that the bishop least influenced by Rome’s *modus operandi*, especially regarding controversial matters, was the Maynooth-trained Mannix.¹⁶ He represented a more nationalistic and Gallicanist strand of Irish leadership – a new generation, but unfortunately his age and his association with anti-communism seemed to rule this out.

¹¹ Molony, *Roman Mould*, 4.

¹² Michael Gilchrist, *Daniel Mannix: Wit and Wisdom* (Melbourne: Freedom Publishing, 2004), 2-3.

¹³ BA Santamaria, *Daniel Mannix: The Quality of Leadership* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1984), 148.

¹⁴ BA Santamaria, *Santamaria: A Memoir* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997), 17.

¹⁵ TP Boland, *The Ascent of Mount Tabor: Writing the Life of Archbishop Duhig* (Brisbane: Aquinas Library, 1986), 14.

¹⁶ Jeffrey J Murphy, *The Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II* (Queensland: Griffith University, 2001), 17-18.

Bibliography

'Still relevant? Vatican II Forty Years On ' ; <http://compassreview.org/spring05/2.html>;
Retrieved 30 July 2007.

'The Good Pope'; www.youtube.com; Retrieved 20 July 2007, 2007.

Abbott, W. *The Documents of Vatican II: Introductions and Commentaries by Catholic Bishops and Experts, Responses by Protestants & Orthodox Scholars*, ed. W Abbott. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966.

Alberigo, Giuseppe. *A Brief History of Vatican II*. Translated by Matthew Sherry. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006.

Alberigo, Giuseppe *History of Vatican II. Vol 1 - Announcing and Preparing Vatican Council II: Towards a New Era in Catholicism*, ed. Giuseppe & Joseph Komonchak Alberigo. Maryknoll: Orbis Book, 1995.

Bedouelle, Guy. *The History of the Church*. London: Continuum, 2003.

Beovich, Matthew. "Personal Diary." (1965).

Boland, TP. *The Ascent of Mount Tabor: Writing the Life of Archbishop Duhig*. Brisbane: Aquinas Library, 1986.

Braxton. *The Wisdom Community* New York: Paulist Press, 1980.

Campion, Edmund. *Australian Catholics*. Melbourne: Penguin Books, 1988.

Cappello, Anthony. "Rome or Ireland? The Religious Control of the Italian Community." *Australian Catholic Historical Society* 23 (2002): 59-72.

Chadwick, Owen. *A History of the Popes: 1830-1914*. London: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Duncan, Bruce. *Crusade or Conspiracy? Catholics and the Anti-Communist Struggle in Australia*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2001.

Fouilloux, Eitenne *The Antepreparatory Phase History of Vatican II Vol 1* ed. Giuseppe Alberigo et al. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997.

Gilchrist, Michael *Daniel Mannix: Wit and Wisdom*. Melbourne: Freedom Publishing, 2004.

Hebblethwaite, Peter. *John XXIII: Pope of the Council*. London: HarperCollins, 1984.

_____. *Paul VI: The First Modern Pope*. London: HarperCollins, 1993.

Hogan, Michael. *The Sectarian Strand: Religion in Australian History*. Melbourne: Penguin, 1987.

Komonchak, Joseph. "Is Christ Divided?: Dealing with Diversity and Disagreement." *Origins* 33 (17 July 2003) (2003): 140-147.

Molony, John *Roman Mould of the Australian Catholic Church*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969.

Murphy, Jeffrey J. "The Lost (and Last) Animadversions of Daniel Mannix." *Australasian Catholic Record* 76(1) (1999): 54-73.

_____. *The Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II*. Queensland: Griffith University, 2001.

_____. "'Up To Jerusalem': Australian Bishops' Suggestions for the Agenda of Vatican II." *Australasian Catholic Record* 78(1) (2001): 30-45.

_____. "Of Pilgrims and Progressives: Australian Bishops at Vatican II (The First Session: 1962)." *Australasian Catholic Record* 79(2) (2002): 189-213.

_____. "On the Threshold of Modernity: Australian Bishops at Vatican II (The Third Session: 1964)." *Australasian Catholic Record* 79(4) (2002): 444-468.

_____. "Romanita Mark II: Australian Bishops at Vatican II (The Second Session: 1963)." *Australasian Catholic Record* 79(3) (2002): 341-363.

_____. "The Far Milieu Called Home: Australian Bishops at Vatican II - The Final Session: 1965." *Australasian Catholic Record* 80(3) (2003): 343-369.

_____. "'Sane, Advanced Conservatism': Australian Bishops at Vatican II - The Third Session Continues: 1964." *Australasian Catholic Record* 80(2) (2003): 219-247.

Murphy, X Francis; Cronin, F John & Smith, Ferrer. *The Encyclicals and Other Messages of John XXIII*. Washington DC: TPS Press, 1964.

O'Farrell, Patrick. "James Duhig." *Australasian Catholic Record* 64(April) (1987): 215-216.

_____. *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*. 3rd ed. Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1992.

O'Malley, John. *Trent and all That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

O'Toole, James. "The Role of Bishops in American Catholic History: Myth and Reality in the Case of Cardinal William O'Connell." *Catholic Historical Review* 77 October (1991): 595-615

Roncalli, Angelo. *My Bishop: A Portrait of Mgr Giacomo Maria Radini Tedeschi*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1969.

Rush, Ormond. *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles*. New York: Paulist, 2004.

Ryder, William. "The Australian Bishops' Proposals for Vatican II." *Australasian Catholic Record* 65 (Jan), no. (1988): 62-77.

Santamaria, BA. *Daniel Mannix: The Quality of Leadership*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1984.

_____. *Santamaria: A Memoir*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Stirling, Alfred. *A Distant View of the Vatican*. Melbourne: Harthown Press, 1975.

Vodola, Max. *The Council in History: John XXIII & Vatican II – Lecture I*. Melbourne: CTC, 2007.