



MONASH University

Freedom in the Catholic Press
A case study of the *Melbourne Advocate*
in the 1960s

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Declaration

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Robert Allan Carey

November 1, 2019

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Abstract

A popular preconception of the Catholic press is of a series of house organs whose editors are tame vassals of officialdom. This thesis shows the Catholic press in a different light. It is an historical account of a “liberal project” by certain Catholic newspaper editors that emerged during the turbulent years of the 1960s. In that decade, the Catholic Church held a council of the world’s bishops, the Second Vatican Council, which undertook a renewal of the Church’s beliefs and practices. A spirit of openness encouraged by the Council prompted certain editors of Catholic weeklies in Australia and around the world to call for a more open dialogue in their newspapers and for a better representation in the pages of their newspapers of the diversity of views and practices within the Church. They argued that the cultivation of such an open, uncensored dialogue in the Catholic press was an essential requirement for a healthy and mature Church community. Among these editors was Michael Costigan, the associate editor of the Melbourne weekly newspaper, *The Advocate*. Costigan’s editorship between 1961 and 1969 was a prominent example in the Catholic press in Australia of an attempt to implement the liberal project and is the central case study of this thesis. Costigan was encouraged in the project by colleagues in the Australian Catholic Press Association who drew on a line of argument that pre-dated the Council and was seen in the writings of certain Catholic theologians and philosophers, as well as in the pronouncements of the popes. The thesis reviews these sources and weighs the strengths and flaws in the liberal project argument. It also considers the political context and the clerical culture, which presented a series of dilemmas and obstacles for the editors. These dilemmas were heightened in Melbourne because of alignments formed over the 1950s Labor Party split. The considerable opposition Costigan met to his editorial policies at *The Advocate* came particularly from supporters of one of the key actors in that split, the Catholic conservative B.A. Santamaria. The resistance to the liberal project and other,

subsequent historical influences ultimately led to its demise. The project's trajectory is traced in the thesis and its legacy evaluated. The thesis concludes with a consideration of how the project's ultimate failure casts light on the serious failures of accountability that have afflicted the Catholic Church more recently.

Acknowledgements

Steady encouragement and expert guidance are needed in equal measure to stay the course in writing a thesis. I have been fortunate in having had both.

Family members, friends and work colleagues have kept up their encouragement over a much longer period than they probably thought reasonable. I have greatly appreciated their walking alongside me, believing even when I had my doubts.

I have been very fortunate, too, in having had supervisors who are acknowledged authorities in the fields of journalism and political science. Particularly significant in getting this project off the ground was Associate Professor Margaret Simons, whose enthusiasm for my original idea played no small part in encouraging me to jump off the deep end. In 2009, she put me in touch with Professor Brian Costar at Swinburne University who, as principal supervisor, was equally enthusiastic and encouraging in this research phase. Associate Professor Simons was herself co-supervisor, until she was no longer able to continue in that position. Associate Professor Andrew Dodd generously took on the role of supervisor briefly, until circumstances necessitated moving my candidacy to Monash University. I received vital help at this juncture from Associate Professor Philip Chubb at Monash, who was a pivotal influence on the critical writing stage of the thesis and who took on the role of associate supervisor. Associate Professor Paul Strangio became the principal supervisor, and the thesis owes what rigour and relevance it has to his meticulous critiques. The untimely death of Philip Chubb in November 2017 dealt a painful blow to the Monash University community but, if there could be any mitigation of this loss, it was the reappointment of Associate Professor Simons as co-supervisor, who helped steer the project that she had first endorsed to a conclusion.

While my supervisors have guided my attempt to ensure a measure of academic rigour in the thesis, my sources have helped ensure the content was well

grounded in the practical experience of Catholic journalists. To that end, I have benefited from the input of a number of professionals in or connected with that field. First among these has been Dr Michael Costigan, formerly the associate editor of the Melbourne *Advocate* newspaper, who generously granted me over a five-year period a number of in-depth interviews. He not only assisted me in understanding the inside working of *The Advocate* but helped inform me about the culture of the Catholic Church in Melbourne in the immediate pre- and post-Vatican II era. Five other Catholic newspaper editors provided significant insights into the dynamics and history of their newspapers: Mr Kevin Hilferty (Sydney *Catholic Weekly*), Ms Elizabeth Rennick (*The Advocate*), Fr Bob Wilkinson (Adelaide *Southern Cross*), Fr Patrick Cunningham (Perth *Record*) and Fr Terry Southerwood (Hobart *Standard*).

One further Catholic editor is prominent in this thesis, Mr Brian Doyle (1915–2003) of the Sydney *Catholic Weekly* and the Brisbane *Catholic Leader*. Mr Doyle's papers have been preserved in a valuable collection in the Fryer Library (University of Queensland) and in a private collection in the care of his daughter Ms Catherine (Cassie) Doyle. I am very grateful for the ready access to these papers that Ms Doyle has generously given me.

Three notable historians were generous with their time and encouragement in helping me to define the territory at the beginning and in the course of this project: Dr Edmund Campion – whose significant contribution at the beginning of the project is acknowledged in the first chapter – Dr Margaret Press and Dr John Malony.

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This thesis records events and personalities in an era that has passed and, sadly, some of those who helped me also died during the course of my writing the account. My encounters with these people were dear to me and I record here their passing, with deep gratitude:

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Dr John Malony (RIP September 2018)

I have made every attempt to ensure the accuracy of information in this thesis. Errors that remain are entirely my responsibility.

Note on spelling

During the 1950s and 1960s *The Advocate* adopted elements of American spelling – e.g. “recognized”, rather than “recognised”. Late in the 1960s the newspaper appeared to revert to the preferred Australian spelling, “recognise”, which was also the style used in the earlier part of the century. In this thesis the original spelling is preserved in all citations.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Doors opening

In the 1960s, against the din of a new generation collectively letting its hair down to the sounds of The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, might also have been heard the creaking of hinges inside the Roman Catholic Church. In a kind of sympathy with the intellectual ferment of the age and the general mood for change, doors were being pushed open. Astoundingly, the catalyst for the changes about to be unleashed – which, depending on your point of view, were either to reinvigorate the Church¹ or to set it on a course of decline – came not from the bottom up, but from the top down. Credited with not only pushing open doors but with flinging open windows to let in fresh air was Pope John XXIII, who, although thought to be merely a caretaker pope (Carbone, 1997), made the unexpected announcement on January 25 1959, three months after his election, that he would call a general council of the world-wide Catholic Church leadership. In calling the Second Vatican Council – an “ecumenical” council – the Pope (who would not live beyond the Council’s first session²) took many people by surprise, notwithstanding that, in theological circles (especially in the field of biblical studies and liturgy) new, reforming ideas had been circulating for some years.

The Council, which opened in October 1962 with the first of four annual sessions, ultimately produced 16 major documents³ which would redefine the landscape of the Church’s vision and practice. For many Catholics, it was as if the Church had woken from a long sleep. Issues and questions hitherto out of bounds, or apparently settled, were put on the table: relations with other Christians, with the Jews and with non-believers; the relevance of traditional liturgical practices;

¹ References in this thesis to “the Church” indicate the Roman Catholic Church, unless otherwise indicated.

² John XXIII died on June 3 1963, before the second session opened. The fourth and final session of the council ended on Dec 8 1965.

³ Four “Constitutions”, three “Declarations” and nine “Decrees”.

the structure of the priesthood; the practices of religious communities; and the question of whether or how Catholic teaching might be adapted to modern life. And, for the first time in such a forum, the Catholic Church ventured, in an early document, *Inter Mirifica*,⁴ some proposals about how it should manage its internal and external communications, including the suggestion that the Catholic press had a primary role in “supporting and advancing public opinion” in the Catholic community (Second Vatican Council, 1963). *Inter Mirifica* became a rallying point for certain Catholic newspaper editors in Australia who sought to implement a new vision for the Catholic press which might make their newspapers more relevant to their readers.

One Melbourne priest, James Murtagh,⁵ captured the excitement in the lead-up to the Council’s first session:

The winds of change are ... blowing through the Catholic Church. I don’t think it is an exaggeration to say that we are on the threshold of a revolution in Catholic attitudes and policies in the Church’s confrontation with the world. The revolution has already begun. It may well be signed and sealed and directed at the Second Vatican Council and will mark the end of the Reformation Era. ... When the directives of the Council are handed down, they may well call for a considerable readjustment of attitudes and ideas and the deliberate re-setting of editorial sights in terms of “dialogue”. (“The Catholic Press in an Age of Dialogue and Public Relations”, 1961, p. 14)

Murtagh, a former Catholic editor and one of the founding fathers of Australia’s Catholic Press Association, was one of the first Australian editors to articulate the new vision for the Catholic press. How that vision took shape, flowered and marked the Catholic press, both in Australia and overseas, is the principal focus of this thesis. This chapter will define the topic and scope of the thesis, describe

⁴ *Inter Mirifica: Decree on the Media for Social Communications* (1963).

⁵ Editor of the Melbourne Catholic weekly *The Advocate* from 1951 to 1959.

its context and list the key questions addressed. It will also explain the research methods used and list the principal data sources.

Topic and scope

Any sort of change to the traditional Catholic newspaper represented a challenge to the expectations of many bishop-publishers and of many readers of those newspapers. The pre-Vatican-Council Church was characterised by a hierarchical structure of authority and obedience. In the manner of other large institutional organisations and governments, the Church relied on its officials presenting a united front to the world. This was an effective strategy for safeguarding the unity of teaching and the loyalty of Catholics to Church authorities. Priests and other officials were trained in absolute obedience to those authorities. A prime marker of the “good Catholic” was being similarly obedient to the Pope, centrally, and the bishops and the priests, locally. In such a context, a public exchange of ideas, where even dissenting views might be expressed, was not something which those charged with preserving Church harmony would instinctively encourage. Toleration of a free press that might encourage such dialogue within the Catholic Church was always going to be problematic.

Nevertheless, there was a move in the 1960s among Catholic editors in Australia and the United States to push for a more open dialogue in their publications and for more independence in their making of editorial decisions. While undeniably loyal to the Church, some editors were ready to challenge any authorities who wished to censor information the editors felt readers were entitled to. They began to resist any attempts by those authorities at limiting the editors’ ability to stimulate open conversations. They argued that this was the Catholic press’s very role. In the minds of these editors, the changing times made the argument for a more liberal Catholic press the more compelling. As the Council loomed and, later, when the Council Fathers began their deliberations, the editors’ overseas news feeds gave them a privileged view of the intellectual and pastoral ferment of

the times and of the new ideas that were challenging old orthodoxies. They were convinced their readers needed to know about these developments. Such an outlook came not only from a journalistic instinct but, indeed, appeared at the time to be encouraged at the highest level of Church authority. The popes themselves seemed to be in favour of such openness. Without there being any central coordination or blueprint for action, these editors began to define a new purpose for their newspapers and to encourage a more open debate in their pages, canvassing topics that had been, hitherto, out of bounds.

This thesis will describe this movement as the “**liberal project**” of Catholic editors and is its central topic. It was not a formal project and certainly not an official one. There was no organised movement and no clearly defined program, and it certainly did not represent a universal approach by Catholic newspaper editors. At the same time, there was such an alignment of views among these editors, in Australia and the United States – as well as a notable body of authoritative opinion which supported their views – that the existence of such a liberal project can readily be argued. This thesis will make such an argument by describing the main outline and theoretical foundations of the project, as well as its historical origins and key sources. It will also describe the conflicts that arose between editors and proprietors, as the limits of editorial freedom were tested, and make a final assessment of how the project fared in Australia and overseas. While it cannot be said that the aspirations of the liberal editors were carried forward by the editors who followed them, this thesis will show that their efforts to implement their liberal project nonetheless constituted a significant movement in the history of the Catholic press.

Case study

The story of the Catholic press in the 1960s was not one of continuing strife. Nine out of ten pages in Catholic newspapers – perhaps 99 out of a hundred – provided little fuel for controversy among Catholics or for anxiety on the part of

the publisher. Nevertheless, there would always be the unseemly squabble between two Church organisations, the unorthodox utterances of a theologian or the misbehaviour of a cleric, which gave the editor pause: were these matters about which readers had a legitimate right to be informed, even if some boats were rocked? Catholic editors differed in the degree to which they were willing to rock boats: not all subscribed to the liberal project or, if they did, they kept their heads down. But at least one Catholic editor in Australia chose not to take the safe path: Michael Costigan, the associate editor at Melbourne's Catholic weekly, *The Advocate*. Costigan, a newly ordained priest who had just returned from completing a doctorate in Rome, was appointed as the de facto editor in November 1961 and continued in the role until 1969, when he resigned from the priesthood. After a period of settling in to a responsibility which he said was unexpected, Costigan chose to go into battle for an editorial independence which, according to his lights, sought to serve both the Church's interests and the interests of good journalism.

Costigan's relatively short occupancy of the editor's chair, at a newspaper with a 94-year history, has been acknowledged as a singular moment in the history of the Catholic press in Australia (Campion, 2011), and a case can be made out that *The Advocate*, during the latter part of Costigan's editorship, was in the vanguard of the liberal project in Australia. The singularity of the liberal project at *The Advocate* arises in particular out of the circumstances of the Melbourne Catholic Church, where its leaders had aligned themselves more closely than in any other state with secular political causes. In Melbourne, the challenge presented for anyone wishing to implement a liberal project was more readily apparent, and the tensions which the project generated rose more quickly to the surface. The significant moments of Costigan's editorship will be presented, therefore, as the principle case study in this thesis.

The tensions in Costigan's editorship brought into sharp relief the question of what the role of a Catholic newspaper was. While the necessity for a Catholic

paper in every diocese had rarely, if ever, been disputed, no comprehensive definition of its role had ever been formulated nor, certainly, officially endorsed. The question of what was the Catholic paper's purpose produced a variety of answers, many incompatible. The clash of opposing views came into sharp relief at *The Advocate*, particularly in the way in which Costigan and his colleagues confronted the influence on the newspaper of one of the most divisive political activists in the Catholic Church at the time, BA Santamaria. Santamaria's influence on Church leaders in Melbourne and his impact on secular politics had been profound during the 1950s and, while his political aspirations had been essentially thwarted by the time of Costigan's editorship, his influence on the Church hierarchy and Church politics in Melbourne remained all pervasive.⁶

The *Advocate's* ruffling of untroubled waters, in the years of an already turbulent decade, was noted by both Church and secular authorities, again with opposite assessments of the editor's good judgment. Some declared *The Advocate* had valiantly trodden a path along which all worthy representatives of the Catholic press should follow; others thundered that the newspaper had recklessly disrupted the otherwise well-ordered household of the local Church. Costigan's editorship tellingly illustrates the tensions and dilemmas inherent in the liberal project and this case study will inform the analysis of the project in the central chapters of this thesis.

Context: the Catholic press in Australia

The broad context of this thesis is the Catholic press, and the prime focus is on the principal Catholic weeklies in Australia.⁷ Some references to the Catholic press in the United States will also be made, to illustrate that the liberal project

⁶ Santamaria's political activities in the 1950s will be canvassed in later chapters.

⁷ In the 1950s and 1960s, the Catholic press in Australia, broadly speaking, comprised dozens of publications. An undated list of CPA member publications in the Brian Doyle archives lists 55 publications. Just a significant few, located in the capital cities, were self-described "newspapers", providing news and information principally for Catholics in the six Australian states in which they were based.

in the Catholic press was a global phenomenon, rather than an Australian eccentricity.

The Australian Catholic Church today is divided into five provinces – Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and Brisbane, with Tasmania being part of the Melbourne Province and the Northern Territory part of Adelaide. Numerous newspapers have served these territories since colonial days. Not a few appeared and faded within the space of a few years, but a handful of weeklies⁸ stands out for remaining in publication over many decades. The impetus for the founding in 1839 of Australia's first Catholic newspaper, the *Australasian Chronicle*, was the anti-Catholicism of the time, which Australia's first Catholic bishop, John Bede Polding, wished to counter. Other factors, and personalities, shaped the Catholic press in its subsequent history, and different newspapers naturally developed their own identity, but they all defined themselves within a common Catholic culture. At the *Australasian Chronicle*'s founding, the Catholic Church in Australia was represented by a single ecclesiastical territory, the "Vicariate Apostolic of New Holland and Van Diemen's Land", shortly to become, in 1842, the Diocese of Sydney. During the *Chronicle*'s nine years of publication, the new dioceses of Adelaide, Hobart, Perth and Melbourne were carved out of Sydney's territory. As the Catholic populations grew in these new territories, new Catholic publications sprung up and, by the end of the century, there was a diocesan weekly in each of the five extant archdioceses (Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne and Hobart) and in the Diocese of Perth. These were: the *Freeman's Journal* (which had replaced the *Chronicle*) and *The Catholic Press* (Sydney), *The Advocate* (Melbourne), *The Southern Cross* (Adelaide), *The Monitor* (Hobart) and *The Record* (Perth). Two new Catholic weeklies were born in the new century, *The Tribune* in Melbourne and *The Catholic Leader* in Brisbane. In 1942 the *Freeman's Journal* merged with *The Catholic Press* to become Sydney's *Catholic*

⁸ A number of the antecedents of the weeklies were published fortnightly or monthly.

Weekly. In 1921, Hobart's *Monitor* was replaced by *The Catholic Standard* (which became *The Standard* in 1937).

The circulations of these newspapers grew with the growth of the Catholic populations, reaching a circulation peak midway through the twentieth century. In the latter half of the 1950s, a decline in the rate of participation by Catholics at Sunday Mass began, although the total Catholic population continued to rise.⁹ By the end of the next decade, however, a steady decline in circulation of all the Catholic weeklies had begun to set in, as numbers attending Sunday Mass began to drop significantly, in the wake of significant disruptions in the Catholic Church (see *Figure 2, page 257*). The loss of readership foreshadowed the eventual closure of five of these Catholic newspapers. Today, only two survive, as weeklies, *The Catholic Weekly* (Sydney) and *The Catholic Leader* (Brisbane). In the 1960s, however, there were seven Catholic weeklies, with a readership around 140,000.¹⁰

Many of the early Catholic newspapers were strong advocates of Irish causes, reflecting the ancestry of their readers. They were also financially independent of the local diocese, even if they had the patronage of the local bishop. Gradually, however, through the early twentieth century, the main Catholic weeklies in each state came under the proprietorship of the local archbishop and, by the 1960s, all these newspapers were diocesan owned; that is, the proprietor was the bishop of the principal diocese in the state where the newspaper was published. While there were some independent "Catholic" newspapers, such as the Melbourne-based *News Weekly* and the *Catholic Worker*, these were of a more campaigning bent. There were no large circulation, independent Catholic newspapers, such as the London *Tablet* (founded 1840), America's *Commonweal* (founded 1924) or the French *La Croix* (founded 1880).

⁹ Catholic population growth in Australia showed its first decline in 100 years in the most recent (2016) census.

¹⁰ According to notes belonging to the Catholic Press Association president at the time, Brian Doyle.

The Melbourne Catholic press

There were a number of attempts to establish a Catholic paper in Melbourne before the *Advocate's* foundation, resulting in a series of short-lived publications. Two Irish Catholic politicians, Charles Duffy, a future premier of Victoria,¹¹ and Michael O'Grady, both members of the Victorian Legislative Assembly, were key to establishing the foundations of a permanent Catholic press in Melbourne. In 1862 they launched *The Victorian*. Lacking episcopal endorsement and suffering financial problems, it closed in 1864, leaving *The Freeman's Journal* alone at that time in the field of Australia's Catholic press. The *Advocate's* birth was prompted by the launching in Hobart in 1867 of *The Catholic Standard*,¹² witnessed by pioneering Melbourne Jesuit priest, Joseph Dalton¹³ ("The Advocate's Early History", 1931). Dalton called Duffy, O'Grady and a young printer, Samuel Winter, to a meeting in Dalton's presbytery in Richmond, where it was proposed to establish a paper in Melbourne, and *The Advocate* was conceived ("Death of Mr S. V. Winter", 1904). An editor was appointed, William Gunson, and the first edition of *The Advocate* appeared on February 1, 1868, a substantial newspaper of 16 pages, with 24-year-old Samuel Winter the publisher. The paper took a strongly Irish-advocacy role and the first editions featured significant sections from Duffy's parliamentary speeches. The journal promised to "neither foster bigotry nor countenance social division" ("Now ready, The Advocate, a weekly Catholic journal", 1868). Samuel Winter put *The Advocate* on a solid footing, a publishing competence which prefigured his subsequent career: a few years after he launched *The Advocate*, he transferred ownership of the paper to his brother Joseph, moving on to eventually become the general manager of the Herald and Weekly Times newspaper company and the editor-in-chief of its two publications. Samuel's brother Joseph stayed at the helm of *The Advocate* for 43

¹¹ June 19 1871 to June 10 1872.

¹² 1867 to 1872.

¹³ Dalton established The Catholic parish of Richmond in Melbourne and built the church which still dominates the landscape, St Ignatius. He also founded Riverview College in Sydney.

years, until his death in 1915. Four years later, after half a century of lay ownership, the Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix,¹⁴ purchased the paper. According to historian Patrick Morgan, “Mannix would have been pleased to have a Catholic paper ... guaranteed to follow his position,” (Morgan, 2012, p. 196).¹⁵ Mannix installed a priest as editor, William Collins, the first in a succession, until 1969, of priest editors.

Melbourne’s other newspaper, *The Tribune*, ran alongside *The Advocate* for 71 years and was also, initially, an independent newspaper. Mannix bought *The Tribune* in 1924, making it the second paper in his diocesan stable. One of Mannix’s biographers, James Griffin, said *The Tribune* criticised Mannix “only once – over his attitude to Irish republicanism in 1923” (Griffin, 1986), but it did not always follow the same line as *The Advocate*. *The Tribune* closed in 1971, “under financial pressure” (McAloon, 2009, p. 17).

Two other prominent independent newspapers were on sale in Melbourne church porches at various times prior to the end of the Vatican Council, the *Catholic Worker* and *News-Weekly*. The newspapers’ editorial points of view were at opposite ends of a political spectrum but they both began under the editorship of Santamaria. The first, a monthly, the *Catholic Worker*, was launched in 1936 as a journal of lay opinion. It grew rapidly – “almost overnight, into a national monthly of 50,000 copies” (Murtagh, 1959, p. 175). Although he had approved its publication, Mannix later banned the *Catholic Worker* from sale at St Patrick’s Cathedral, because of an editorial in an April 1955 issue asserting that Catholics were free in conscience to vote for Labor if they wanted to.¹⁶ The ban was applied by many other parishes in Melbourne and the circulation of the *Worker*

¹⁴ Archbishop of Melbourne from 1917 to 1963.

¹⁵ Cited in the PhD thesis of Stephanie James, “Deep Green Loathing”? Shifting Irish-Australian Loyalties in the Victorian and South Australian Irish-Catholic Press 1868-1923”, Dec 2013.

¹⁶ See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the politics of the Labor split, which was behind Mannix’s dispute with the *Catholic Worker*.

plummeted (Ormonde, 1972, p. 87).¹⁷ The paper advocated workers' rights and took as its slogan "property for the people". The editorship of the *Catholic Worker* had been taken out of Santamaria's hands after twenty months and put in the hands of an editorial committee. In 1943, Santamaria founded a new, weekly publication, *Freedom*, which took up an anti-communist cause. *Freedom* changed its name to *News-Weekly* in 1946 and is still in publication. While it presented itself as independent of Church authority, *News-Weekly* was nevertheless heavily promoted by many bishops and priests through the 1950s and 1960s, while, in the same period, the *Catholic Worker* moved to a position of antipathy to Santamaria's viewpoints and those of his Catholic Social Studies Movement (B. Duncan, 2001, pp. 41, 104). In some sort of negative balancing of viewpoints, *News-Weekly* itself was banned for sale in churches in 1963, this time by Mannix's successor, Archbishop Justin Simonds.

The sectarianism that characterised colonial times and the first half of the twentieth century began to fade after the Second World War (Kelly, 2000, p. 393) and, by the 1960s, Catholics had taken their places in board rooms and on government front benches where they were once under-represented. The leaders of different faiths whose relationships had formerly been characterised by varying degrees of antipathy were now meeting in friendly discussion groups. Catholic papers in the 1960s retained a distinctly Catholic flavour, and St Patrick's Day processions featured on the front page every March,¹⁸ but the editorial tone reflected a Church community that no longer had to defend its right to exist. Instead of surveying a hostile world from the confines of a bunker, the Church turned its gaze inwards and, as the new current of renewal took hold, began to ask questions about itself. The time was ripe for the liberal project.

¹⁷ The ban was from sale at St Patrick's Cathedral, but other parishes followed suit. This saw the beginning of the paper's decline. Its circulation "plunged from 35,000 to 15,000" ("An activist for the faithful", 2005, p. 31). The *Catholic Worker* closed in 1976, due to "rising costs" ("Catholic Worker closes", 1976).

¹⁸ March 17 was, and still is, St Patrick's Day.

Thesis questions and chapter framework

Framing the analysis throughout this thesis are three principal questions:

1. Did the liberal project succeed or fail?
2. What were the causes of this success or failure?
3. What were the consequences of the success or failure?

To begin to address these questions, the thesis must first establish that such a “liberal project” was indeed evident in the Catholic press in the 1960s. This evidence will be provided through the case study and by comparing and contrasting the editorial practices of other Catholic newspapers in Australia and overseas, as well as comparing and contrasting the views of Catholic editors, Catholic bishops and other relevant authorities.

Chapters

As noted above, the role of the Catholic press has had little, if any, systematic definition in Australia or America and such literature which attempts to suggest such definition is scant. A summary of this literature will be presented in **Chapter 2**, together with a listing of the key sources for the liberal project. The chapter will also make a brief survey of secular press theory. **Chapter 3** will review the political and ecclesiastical events of the 1950s which fashioned the context for the *Advocate*’s operation before Costigan took on the editorship. It will also detail significant events during Costigan’s priestly training which informed his subsequent editorial direction at *The Advocate*. **In Chapters 4 to 7** the trajectory of the liberal project itself will be described, chiefly through certain crises, conflicts and debates at the Melbourne *Advocate* during Costigan’s seven-and-a-half-year editorship, during which he developed an independent editorial stance. **Chapter 8** will provide a summary of the principles and argument which underlay the liberal project at *The Advocate* and in the wider Catholic press, and will trace its origins and development. **Chapter 9** will describe how the project fared and will analyse the inherent tensions which made the project’s success

problematic. The thesis concludes, in **Chapter 10**, with a short discussion of the consequences of the project's poor faring.

Thesis research method and sources

This research project sits in the field of journalism studies and is essentially an empirical-historical study, based on qualitative, historical data from the sources described below. Both the movement in the Catholic press described here as the liberal project and Costigan's editorship at *The Advocate* have not been previously the subject of detailed study. For that reason, this research project was not designed to verify any existing theory about the Catholic press but rather to investigate whether such a theory might be constructed. This research, therefore, represents an exploration, in which much of the relevant, and somewhat rare, theoretical literature on the role of the Catholic press has been identified through the data collected from primary sources. The thesis also draws on the more well-established secular press theory, in order to make some comparisons and contrasts between the Catholic press and its secular counterpart.

The qualitative data collected in this research have come from three principal sources:

1. Interviews with participants in the events that are the subject of this study;
2. Contemporary newspapers;
3. Archives of contemporary documents.

The key interview source has been Michael Costigan. Other former Catholic editors interviewed were Elizabeth Rennick (*The Advocate*),¹⁹ Bob Wilkinson (*The Southern Cross*),²⁰ Patrick Cunningham (*The Record*),²¹ Kevin Hilferty (*The*

¹⁹ 1974 to 1982.

²⁰ 1960 to 1974.

²¹ 1971 to 1995.

Catholic Weekly)²² and Terry Southerwood (*The Standard*).²³ Other witnesses to the period interviewed were Margaret Press (Josephite sister, historian and author), Dr John Molony (historian and author),²⁴ Barry Hickey (former Archbishop of Perth),²⁵ and Michael Parer and Val Noone (former priests, authors and contemporaries of Costigan). The interviews have been semi-structured, employing both a basic set of identical questions, for consistency, and an open-ended discussion to elicit unanticipated material.

The thesis has drawn extensively from the archives of *The Advocate* and other Catholic and secular newspapers. More than 1,000 pages of *The Advocate* alone were reviewed.

A number of personal archives have been useful, in particular the papers of Michael Costigan and the archives of *Catholic Leader* editor Brian Doyle. The Doyle archives are variously located in the Fryer Library, University of Queensland, and in the possession of Doyle's daughter, Catherine (Cassie) Doyle. The Archdiocese of Hobart Archives, the personal papers of William Duncan²⁶ and the personal papers of James Vincent O'Loughlin²⁷ were also useful in researching the history of Australia's Catholic newspapers.

Apart from these primary sources, the author has relied on an extended set of texts which are listed in the bibliography and, in particular, on certain key references which are discussed in the literature review in the next chapter.

Documentary material has been collected through on-location searches in the following libraries and archives:

²² 1964 to 1973.

²³ Southerwood was variously assistant editor, acting editor and editor between 1963 and 1971.

²⁴ Emeritus Professor of History, Australian National University. Former priest and contemporary of Michael Costigan.

²⁵ 1991 to 2012.

²⁶ Editor of the *Australasian Chronicle*, 1839 to 1843. Archives in the State Library of NSW.

²⁷ Editor of *The Southern Cross*, 1889 to 1896. Archives in the National Library, Canberra.

- State Library Victoria (Melbourne)
- Dalton McCaughey Library (Parkville, Victoria)
- Mannix Library (East Melbourne)
- Victoria University Library Special collections & archives (Footscray Park)
- Monash University Library (Caulfield)
- National Library of Australia (Canberra)
- State Library New South Wales (Sydney)
- Veech Library (Catholic Institute of Sydney, Strathfield)
- Sydney Archdiocesan Archives (Sydney)
- Archdiocese of Hobart Archives and Heritage Collection (North Hobart)
- Libraries of Tasmania (Hobart)
- State Library of Western Australia (Perth)
- Archdiocese of Adelaide Archives (Adelaide)
- Brian Doyle Collection, Fryer Library, University of Queensland (St Lucia)
- Brian Doyle papers in the possession of Ms Catherine Doyle
- Personal papers of Michael Costigan
- Melbourne Archdiocesan Historical Commission

The process of assessing the value of the sources in this thesis has been made through extended cross-checking between sources and by referral to the interview sources. Incorporation of the material in the thesis has been on the basis of relevance to the principal thesis questions.

Project origin

This project developed out of the author's experiences as the editor of a Catholic diocesan monthly magazine in the 1990s²⁸ and as the president for a short time of the Australasian Catholic Press Association. While these experiences were positive and benign in terms of any serious conflicts with Church authorities over editorial policy, the author developed an interest in the history of the Australian

²⁸ *SA catholic*, Archdiocese of Adelaide, 1991 to 1995.

Catholic press. This project's focus was identified with the helpful advice of Catholic historian Ed Campion,²⁹ who wisely recommended focusing on just one Catholic editor and just one newspaper, rather than attempting the encyclopaedic task of documenting the complete history of Australia's Catholic weeklies. Why not, he suggested, look at Costigan's *Advocate*?

Conclusion

The liberal project was not a mere spontaneous outburst, nor a kicking over the traces of a few maverick authors. This thesis will show that it was a considered movement that sprang from at least two sources. First came a line of thinking in the Catholic Church that the liberal editors themselves traced back to the late 1930s, which emphasised, among other things, the exercise of religious duty through lay action and a frank engagement with the contemporary world. The more proximate and powerful stimulus to the liberal editors was the Second Vatican Council. The Council's call for *aggiornamento* (updating) propelled a movement among Church leaders and lay Catholics towards more openness to the world and more initiative among lay people in the exercise of independent Christian action in society. Underlying these movements within the Church, and perhaps reinforcing the impetus for updating, there was, in the 1960s a world-wide movement for change, manifest in political and social ferment and in popular culture. All these currents gave ready impetus and inspiration to Catholic editors in Australia who wished to pursue the liberal project.

²⁹ Emeritus Professor of History, Catholic Institute of Sydney.

Chapter 2: Literary sources

Introduction

Newspapers have long been primary sources for historians, and, among them, the pages of the Catholic press have provided a rich font of information. Some writers when citing the Catholic press have also commented on the character and policies of individual Catholic newspapers. For instance, Adelaide scholar Stephanie James's study of Irish-Australians, "Deep Green Loathing'? Shifting Irish-Australian Loyalties in the Victorian and South Australian Irish-Catholic Press 1868-1923", sourced significant material from *The Advocate* and *The Southern Cross* and, in passing, made several observations about those newspapers' editorial policies. James also remarked on the lack of "any focussed history of the religious press in Australia" and on the "sparse historical documentation of *The Advocate* and the *Southern Cross*" (James, 2014, p. 9). This assessment is echoed by other authorities. For instance, Queensland media academic John Harrison³⁰ advised the author that there was "almost nothing published in the scholarly literature about the religious press in Australia".

In regard to any detailed discussion of the role of the Catholic press itself, literary sources are even more rare. At no time in the history of the Catholic press in Australia might Catholic editors have pointed to commonly accepted texts which defined their own role or the function of their newspaper. Certainly, Catholic editors would proclaim a policy for their newspaper from time to time, but such charters generally promoted the immediate purposes of the proprietors, rather than any wider vision. Nevertheless, beginning in the late 1930s, broad principles which might inform a liberal project in the Catholic press began to be sketched by Catholic thinkers, and these were later taken up by certain Catholic editors

³⁰ Course Coordinator in the University of Queensland's School of Communication, and founding editor of the Uniting Church publication *Journey*.

who proposed their own definitions of a Catholic newspaper, albeit in isolated and often ignored documents.

This chapter will review the principal literary sources on which this thesis relies, in particular those texts that the advocates of the liberal project have cited in making their case. The chapter will also briefly canvass the key tenets of the Western liberal theory of the press. A further detailed analysis of key texts will be made through the body of the thesis.

Catholic press history and theory

While there is very little in the way of histories of Catholic newspapers in Australia, some rare instances are, nevertheless, worth noting, in particular the MA thesis of Margaret Payten, “William Augustine Duncan 1811–1885: a biography of a colonial reformer”. This work provides a detailed account of the history of Australia’s first Catholic newspaper, the *Australasian Chronicle*, and of its editor William Duncan. Another useful insight into the character and editorial policies of Duncan is contained in J. M. O’Brien’s 1972 essay in the *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, “W. A. Duncan, the Irish Question and the NSW Elections of 1843, where the author discusses the “inherent difficulties of reconciling political liberalism with Catholic political interests (O’Brien, 1972, p. 57).” In the same issue of this journal, Gregory Haines’s essay, “The *Freemans Journal*, 1857–1860: criticism within the Catholic Church”, is a helpful introduction to the early history of the *Chronicle*’s successor, the *Freemans Journal* (Haines, 1972). A short history of another early Catholic newspaper in Brisbane, *The Age*, forerunner of the *Catholic Leader*, is presented in Rosa MacGinley’s essay in the *Proceedings of Brisbane Catholic Historical Society*, “The Age 1892: An early Brisbane Catholic newspaper”. In this short work, MacGinley provides a brief summary of the different varieties of Catholic newspapers. Stephanie James’s 2015 chapter, “‘From Beyond the Sea’: The Irish Catholic press in the Southern Hemisphere”, in *Ireland in the World*, contains an informative

commentary on how diocesan bishops in Australia gradually took over the proprietorship of the pre-existing independent Catholic newspapers (James, 2015, pp. 92-93). Apart from these sources, much of the historical information in this thesis has been gleaned from either the pages of Catholic newspapers themselves or from books and articles not principally focused on Catholic press history.

Prompting the development of the arguments of the liberal editors was the growing feeling in some quarters that there was a problem with Catholic newspapers. The problem was expressed variously: Should the Catholic press be allowed to air the Church's dirty linen? Why is the Catholic press not doing more to evangelise? Should not Catholic editors have more freedom to act as professional journalists? Why aren't the bishops exercising more supervision over their diocesan newspapers? Should there be any censoring of the letters pages of Catholic newspapers ... should there be a letters page? These questions suggested different and conflicting answers but they pointed to a larger, underlying question: what was the purpose and function of the Catholic press? This was a question no one asked when the Catholic paper rocked no boats, but controversy flared if a Catholic editor, in the readers' or proprietors' eyes, appeared to be experimenting recklessly. The wry definition of news as that which "somebody somewhere wants to suppress"³¹ has a particular relevance in the Catholic press, since stakeholders were very quick to respond to content which was not to their liking. There were many reasons for their objections: some readers simply rejected new ideas and did not want to see their newspaper reporting them; some Church leaders did not want the faith of Catholics "disturbed" by dissent and took steps to have those views censored; and there were those who saw their diocesan newspaper as a vehicle for promoting particular religious or even political viewpoints and who objected strongly when other viewpoints were canvassed. If he wished to resist these pressures,³² which were frequently applied

³¹ Attributed to English press baron Lord Northcliffe (1865-1922).

³² Catholic editors in Australia were all male, until Elizabeth Rennick was appointed editor of *The Advocate* in 1974.

by powerful people in the Church, the Catholic editor was on his own, especially when the case for a more open press had not been well made out, let alone endorsed by any Church authority. It began to be argued, therefore, that the role of the Catholic press needed to be authoritatively defined, to make it clear to proprietors, editors and readers what they were to expect from their Catholic paper. Surely the recriminations and conflict between editors, Church hierarchy and readers would be prevented, and the jobs of Catholic editors would be more secure, if such definition was made.

Maritain: Catholic Action and the action of Catholics

An insightful analysis of the “problem” of the Catholic press was detailed at a surprisingly early stage by the Catholic French philosopher and author Jacques Maritain. His key insight into the Catholic press was in an appendix to his *True Humanism* (Maritain, 1938), entitled “The Planes of Action”, a document that appears to have been generally neglected.³³ Maritain defined three different “planes” of Christian action in the world, which led him to make a distinction between “Catholic Action” – activity which implicated the Church – and “the action of Catholics” – activity which did not. This distinction, much debated by Catholics in the 1950s, was blurred by Santamaria in his political campaigning (B. Duncan, 2005), leading to significant division and confusion in the Catholic Church in Australia. Maritain used these distinctions to define several distinct types of Catholic publication, which, he optimistically declared, would solve any confusion about the identity of a Catholic newspaper. Maritain’s definitions will be considered in more detail in Chapter 8.

Pius XII: public opinion

Maritain’s “Planes of Action” is one of three texts quoted frequently by proponents of the liberal project. The second was a speech given in 1950 by Pope Pius XII to a group of Catholic journalists who were in Rome for an international

³³ A later commentator refers to the “undusted book ... lying around for a quarter of a century” (Deedy, 1963, p. 101).

congress (Pius XII, 1950). Fundamental to the role of the Catholic press, the Pope said, was its enabling of the expression of “public opinion”. This was an essential characteristic of the life of the Church and its expression was to be encouraged. While the Pope did not intend that the cultivation of public opinion be a license to stir up conflict or to promote ill-considered ideas, his principle nevertheless anticipated a prominent emphasis by the Second Vatican Council on the critical role of the voice of the laity in the development of Church doctrine. Murtagh later said it was a “truly remarkable” comment (“The Apostolate of Public Opinion”, 1955). The Pope had spoken with “inspired emphasis”, said the Secretary General of the International Union of the Catholic Press (UCIP),³⁴ Emile Gabel (“The Catholic press must form public opinion”, 1961b).

Rahner: “Free Speech in the Church”

A third key source for the liberal argument was Karl Rahner,³⁵ a Jesuit priest and Catholic theologian, whose influence on the Second Vatican Council was preeminent (Marmion, 2017). In his 1959 essay, “Free Speech in the Church” (in which Pius XII’s observations about public opinion feature prominently), Rahner acknowledged that “at first sight it might seem that such a thing as public opinion would be utterly impossible in the Catholic Church”. Nevertheless, within the field of ideas not already settled by Church’s dogma, there was a need for public opinion to be developed, “by way of books, newspapers and public speeches”. The validity of public opinion within the Church, beyond the teaching and directives of the hierarchy, implied an essential right of lay people to free speech.

Catholic editors and other commentators

A number of people attempted to elaborate the argument for a liberal Catholic press throughout the 1960s. In 1963, Maritain, Pius XII and Rahner were cited approvingly in one of the rare, considered essays on the Catholic press, “The

³⁴ “Union Catholique Internationale de la Presse”.

³⁵ 1904-1984.

Catholic Press: the why and the wherefore”, a chapter in *The Religious Press in America*” (1963). The author was an American Catholic newspaper editor, John Deedy.³⁶ Deedy acknowledged that editorial freedom in the Catholic press was a “knotty problem” (Deedy, 1963, p. 95), arising because of the lack of definition of the role of the Catholic press. A set of “ground rules” was needed, he said, and suggested that Maritain’s proposals held the key to such clear definition. Maritain had identified a central problem for the Catholic press, namely, the concern about whether what was written in a Catholic paper necessarily had to “engage” the official Church. In Deedy’s view, the clear separation in people’s minds of the Catholic press from the “official” viewpoint would be best achieved by making the Catholic press a completely lay enterprise (Deedy, 1963, p. 102).

The issue of whether a diocesan-owned Catholic paper should or should not represent official Church teaching was ongoing and unresolved through the 1960s. While it was not disputed that at least some official Church teaching should appear within the pages of the Catholic newspaper, most Catholic editors, according to one Catholic writer, Daniel Callahan, did not consider themselves “simply mouthpieces for the local Ordinary”.³⁷ The associate editor of the independent American Catholic paper *Commonweal* declared that “The main thing which would handicap the press is the extent to which it sees itself as ‘official’” (“The ‘official’ Catholic press”, 1963).³⁸

Another Jesuit priest and theologian who contributed to the drafting of the documents of the Vatican Council was John Courtney Murray.³⁹ At the end of the

³⁶ In 1964 Deedy was editor of the diocesan newspaper *The Pittsburgh Catholic*. In 1967 he became the managing editor, until 1978, of the independent *Commonweal*, now the oldest independent lay Catholic journal of opinion in the United States.

³⁷ The “Ordinary” is the bishop in charge of a diocese.

³⁸ This is from an undated clipping from *The Advocate* in the Costigan papers, published during the Vatican Council.

³⁹ Murray had significant input into the Council’s 1965 Declaration on Religious Liberty, *Dignitatis Humanae* (“The Fight for Religious Freedom: John Courtney Murray’s role in ‘Dignitatis Humanae’”, 2015).

Council's second session, in an address to representatives of UCIP,⁴⁰ Murray drew the analogy between the function of the free press in civil society and the function of the Catholic press to make an argument for the free "dissemination of public information within the Church". Just as public information was a social necessity in secular society, so too was it in the Church, where the Church's "societal character" created a corresponding right to information for all its people, he said (Courtney Murray, 1964).⁴¹ Courtney Murray's views were frequently quoted by advocates of the liberal project.

Through the 1960s, UCIP was the most vocal Catholic organisation supporting a liberal project for the Catholic press. Its annual meeting in New York in 1965 proposed a somewhat tame resolution urging Catholic editors, "each with his own sphere of competence and responsibility", to provide what channels they could for Catholics "to express themselves freely on the issues confronting the Church and the world". However, one delegate⁴² put the issue more bluntly:

The newspaper's duty under God is to be true to the reader. Truthful reporting means honest reporting. Such reporting absolutely excludes all slanting, all propagandizing,⁴³ covering up, whitewashing or watering down of the truth, whether for well-meant purposes of edification, or whatever. ("Freedom of expression is essential", 1965)

Despite the lack of clear definition of the Catholic press and the multiplicity of editorial approaches found in different Catholic papers,⁴⁴ the idea that the Catholic press in general had a vital purpose for the Church as a whole, beyond the operation of individual publications, began to emerge in the professional gatherings of Catholic editors throughout the 1960s. The US Catholic Press

⁴⁰ UCIP members were attending an international conference in Rome; Courtney Murray's address was December 12, 1963.

⁴¹ This quotation is taken from a later published version of Courtney Murray's address.

⁴² "Veteran columnist" Joseph Breig, of the *Catholic Universe Bulletin*, Cleveland.

⁴³ The original "American" spelling is preserved here and in all citations.

⁴⁴ Deedy cites a number of these different approaches (Deedy, 1963, p. 106).

Association proposed a discussion paper for its 1966 annual convention, “The Purposes and Policies of the Catholic Press Association”, in which its author, John Reedy,⁴⁵ articulated this global purpose:

Today we must begin to think of the Catholic press as one institution, distinct from pulpit, classroom, confraternity program ... There are a number of services provided by the Catholic press which are not (and probably cannot be) offered by any other agency or institution of the Church ... The Catholic press is the loyal, devoted but unofficial voice of the living Church ... (that) contains a value and service to Church and nation which are more important than the welfare of the individual publications. (Reedy, 1966, p. 7)

The campaign by Catholic editors for more freedom of expression in their newspapers had received a significant boost from the highest of sources a few years earlier. Two months before his death in 1963 John XXIII published *Pacem in Terris*, an encyclical that one commentator called “the Catholic Church’s most extensive statement ever on human rights” (“Looking at *Pacem in Terris* 50 years later”, 2013). Echoing the 1948 “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”, the Pope listed the “inalienable rights” that all human beings possessed, including the right to “freedom of speech and publication” (John XXIII, 1963). The Pope’s encyclical was quoted by a succession of Catholic editors and commentators who made the case for freedom of expression (to varying extents) in the Catholic press. Among these were: Gabel, consulting editor of *The Texas Catholic* James Tucek,⁴⁶ editor

⁴⁵ Reedy, a priest of the Congregation of Holy Cross, was a publisher of the Ave Maria Press, a publishing house based at the University of Notre Dame, and editor of *Ave Maria*. In 1966 he received the Catholic Press Association award for outstanding contributions to Catholic journalism and was the chairman of the Association’s Basic Service Committee.

⁴⁶ “Freedom ... in communicating and expressing opinions ... was described by Pope John without any indication that the general principle is invalid within the Church” (Tucek, 1964, p. 4).

of *Civiltà Cattolica* (Rome) Roberto Tucci,⁴⁷ editor of the *National Catholic Reporter* (USA), Robert Hoyt,⁴⁸ editor of *The Advocate* Michael Costigan,⁴⁹ and bishop member of the Vatican II press council James Malone.⁵⁰

Hierarchy endorse a non-official Catholic press

The view that the Catholic press might *not* represent the official voice of the Church was not exclusive to Catholic journalists but was echoed by even some among the Church hierarchy. The progressive Archbishop of Atlanta, Georgia, Paul Hallinan⁵¹ said:

The popular Catholic mind must grow beyond yesterday's tendency to regard everything found in Catholic journals as *the Catholic position*. They are free to present *any* Catholic position touching humanity and the social order. (Hallinan, 1964)

An Australian archbishop, and another Vatican Council enthusiast, Guilford Young of Hobart,⁵² spoke in a similar vein to Hallinan's when interviewed by his local Catholic paper, *The Standard*. Young had just returned from the United States, where he had met with members of the US Catholic Press Association and

⁴⁷ "No one has any right to pick and choose in an arbitrary way from the available information, and then give out only what suits his personal ends or what fits his purpose, while suppressing the rest" ("Catholic press has key role", 1965).

⁴⁸ "A newspaperman ... knows his freedom exists for the sake of serving readers and not for the sake of promoting his own views of the situation in City Hall" ("Catholic press has key role", 1965).

⁴⁹ The function of the Catholic press was "objective reporting, without comment" and "to furnish information. Meditation on John XXIII's statement would solve unfortunate misunderstandings about the function of a Catholic journalist ("Function of the press", 1966).

⁵⁰ If the function of the newspaper did not go beyond carrying official teaching, "it would be possible to confuse a newspaper with a catechism ... Because it is indeed a newspaper, it must also inform" ("Catholic press and the hierarchy", 1967).

⁵¹ Hallinan was a supporter of black civil rights in America in the 1960s, an opponent of the Vietnam War and a prominent advocate of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council.

⁵² Sir Guilford Young (1916–1988) was made a bishop in 1948 at the age of 31 making him the then youngest Catholic bishop in the world.

acknowledged there was uncertainty about where the line – “if any” – should be drawn in reporting news in the Catholic press:

But there was a growing opinion that everything should be published, even if it was going to make a few faces red – including those of bishops ...

The fact that most Catholic newspapers were owned by the bishops did not cause the problems many thought it would when more probing reporting and more incisive comment made their way into Catholic journalism.

The bishops were among the first to encourage the kind of journalism that broke up the image of the diocesan newspaper as the “Catholic *Pravda*”. (“Catholic press to meet next week”, 1966)

The Catholic press associations

Not a few Catholic editors – and bishops – would have been surprised to hear this rosy view from the Church hierarchy about their Catholic press, but Young’s open approach was one with which many Australian Catholic editors would have been in sympathy. Like-minded editors who wished to discuss these new ideas had an opportunity to do so in Australia in the Catholic Press Association of Australia and New Zealand (CPA), which met for the first time in Sydney in 1955. The members of the Association, representing the chief Catholic weeklies and other smaller Catholic publications, gathered annually for a convention at which, alongside more commercial matters, a discussion about the role of the Catholic press and the role of Catholic editors was pursued. A series of documents which came out of their deliberations during the 1960s contain many of the key principles and arguments for the liberal project which this thesis analyses. At the first meeting of the association, *Advocate* associate editor Murtagh underlined the role the Catholic press had in forming public opinion, citing Pius XII, and declared that this went beyond the role of a house organ. He also identified the critical question concerning the Catholic press’s identity: “How can we make

clear to readers ... what is official, what is semi-official and what is not official in our publication? ... the most difficult problem of policy for a diocesan-owned weekly" ("The Apostolate of Public Opinion", 1955). The question troubled many of his fellow editors and, at a meeting of the Catholic Press Association in 1964, the executive drafted⁵³ a significant, ten page document, "The Catholic Press in Australia: Views of the Catholic Press Association". The document was written "in view of the promulgation of the Decree", namely, the Vatican Council's *On the Media of Social Communications Inter Mirifica* (1963). In fact, *Inter Mirifica* had been a disappointment for those looking for any endorsement of the liberal project. Deedy later dismissed it with the comment: "It is difficult to conceive a document so weak as the Council's communications decree inspiring profound deliberations or leading to any strong code of freedom" ("USA: A Crumbling Catholic Press", 1969). The decree did hold out some hope, however, with its instruction that a "pontifical commission" be set up to implement (in reality, to develop) its broad principles. The document the commission would produce, *Communio et Progressio: On the Means of Social Communication*, was a long time coming. It was published in 1971 and did, indeed contain stronger support for the liberal project, with an emphasis on promoting open dialogue within the Church, but, for some CPA members, it will be seen that this endorsement arrived too late.

Nevertheless, the CPA's 1964 "Views" proposed a "new spirit of openness of discussion and frankness" in the Catholic press, quoting Pius XII and John XXII. The Catholic Church was a society that would be strengthened by a more open exchange of views, the document said. "A Catholic press that read only like an official gazette would not be presenting information of the Church as a society" (Catholic Press Association, 1964). While the document was submitted to the Australian Catholic bishops in 1964, it "more or less sank without a trace",

⁵³ Costigan records the members who contributed to the document as: "Brian Doyle, Bob Wilkinson [*The Southern Cross*, Adelaide], Fr Rod Donnelly [*Standard*, Hobart], Kevin Hilferty [*Catholic Weekly*, Sydney] and myself" (Costigan, 2017b).

Costigan said later (Costigan, 2013). It appeared in a new form, however, in 1966 as a “Manifesto” of the Catholic Press Association, the same year John Reedy presented his position paper to the American Catholic Press Association. The “Manifesto” was published as a discussion paper in the Australian Catholic press for “Catholic Press Month”.⁵⁴ There was little response to either the “Manifesto” or to Reedy’s paper (Gadoua & Murphy, 1994). The apparent lack of response did not deter Australia’s Catholic editors from pressing their case. In 1967 the *Catholic Leader* editor, Brian Doyle, as president of the Catholic Press Association, published a heartfelt plea for more openness, entitled “Reporting ‘imperfections’ in the Catholic press”. This document and the response to it will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

By the mid 1970s, some were announcing the death of the liberal project: “Religious, political and economic forces that had contributed to liberalization of the Catholic newspaper press in the early 1960s had reversed by the end of the decade” (Real, 1975). There was a “told-you-so” from the independent Catholic press. The project was never going to work, said one writer in the *National Catholic Reporter*: “Quite frankly, I don’t think [Catholic diocesan publications] can ever be real newspapers. Diocesan weeklies will always be house organs – as long as the bishops are the publishers and the diocesan, clerically dominated bureaucracy holds sway over them” (“Can your local diocesan newspaper be a real paper?”, 1992).

And neither should the independent Catholic newspapers call themselves “Catholic”, might have been the rejoinder of the Church hierarchy. Four years after the founding of the *National Catholic Reporter*, the bishop of Kansas City, Charles Helmsing, condemned the paper in an official Church document where he asked the editors “in all honesty to drop the term ‘Catholic’ from their

⁵⁴ The “Manifesto” appeared in the newspapers of two of the principle drafters of the document, the *Catholic Leader* editor, Brian Doyle, (“Manifesto of Australia’s Catholic Press Association”, 1966) and the *Advocate* editor, Michael Costigan (“Manifesto of the Australian Catholic Press”, 1966).

masthead". The bishop alleged that the paper had made itself "a platform for the airing of heretical views on the church" (Kansas City Diocese, 1968).

In the mid-1960s, the battle for freedom of expression in the Catholic press was on.

General press theory

Some comparisons are made in this thesis between the model of the Catholic press that the liberal editors espoused and the model of secular newspapers. The literature in relation to the Western liberal theory of the press is extensive and well-recognised. Nevertheless a short survey of the foundational principles and literature is appropriate here.

By the time the *Australasian Chronicle*, Australia's first Catholic newspaper, was launched, freedom of the press was a well-established principle in liberal democracies. Those democracies had enshrined the idea that there should be an independent media which provided uncensored information, for at least the vital purpose of enabling citizens to make informed choices in their civic life (Schultz, 1998, pp. 2-4). The media were seen to exercise a "fourth estate" role, acting as a watchdog on other powerful organisations. Media truly independent of these other organisations, in which editors' decisions about what was published were made purely in the interests of their audience, were considered vital to a healthy democracy. Such principles underlay what was once described as the "libertarian" theory of the press.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Cf. Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm (1963). The authors distinguish four models: the Authoritarian press, usually privately owned but controlled by the state, and which arose with the invention of the printing press, when the state stepped in to license and censor the press; the Soviet model, which derives from it, where the state controls and also owns the media; the Libertarian press, independent of the State and the primary model of the Western press; and the Social Responsibility model, which modifies the libertarian model, putting responsible service of the community as a priority, above the freedom of the publisher. Commentators such as Noam Chomsky suggest that the Libertarian model masks another form of social control by the Western establishment which is no less

Notwithstanding its revered place in Western democracies, the establishment of press freedom has never been permanently guaranteed, nor has its freedom ever been absolute. The battle for freedom was fought in skirmishes over centuries. An authoritarian model of the press might be considered to have emerged in the fifteenth century, in England, when the revolution in publishing, galvanised by the Gutenberg press, was shackled with a series of licensing laws that severely restricted the freedom of publishers. John Milton (1608-1674) attacked the system in the seventeenth century and sowed the seeds for the liberal tradition of press freedom which followed (Ward, 1995, p. 4). The 1662 Licensing Act in particular prompted Milton to write his *Areopagitica*, “for the Liberty of Unlicenc’d Printing” which, in 1644, argued for the removal of the government licensing of publishers, on the grounds that human beings, with their God-given reason, were perfectly capable of discerning the truth for themselves. No one could be relied upon to determine for others what was true or false, useful or dangerous. This argument was theological: the censor of a good book “kills reason itself, kills the Image of God” (Milton, 1644). While the *Areopagitica* set a marker for a long liberal tradition, it failed to persuade the English parliament to repeal the licensing laws. It was the lobbying of another liberal thinker, John Locke (1632 to 1704), that finally led to the lapse of the Licensing Act in 1695. Locke’s writings on liberty and the social contract fed directly into the foundations of the American Constitution (Doernberg, 1985, p. 57) and the enshrining of the freedom of the press in the Bill of Rights. Nevertheless, his argument for the lifting of press censorship was a pragmatic one: the laws didn’t achieve the purpose for which they were intended, he argued, and entrenched an unjust monopoly for the Stationer’s Company which issued the press licenses. Developing liberal political theory post the American Constitution, John Stuart Mill (1806 to 1873) brought a new perspective on an old argument and said press freedom was necessary on utilitarian grounds. Truth was unlikely to prevail if there were laws restricting the

repressive than the Soviet model. (Cf. the classic work Chomsky co-authored with Edward Herman, *Manufacturing Consent* (Herman & Chomsky, 1988).)

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freedom to publish, and “truth, and derivatively the marketplace of ideas, are collective values to society as a whole” (Kelley & Donway, 1990, p. 83).

While their insistence on it was vigorous, the proponents of press freedom did not always feel able to ascribe it universally. Milton thought that allowing Catholics to freely publish their views was a step too far (Milton, 1644); and Locke, with strong religious convictions himself, said the spreading of atheistic views should not be tolerated (Locke, 1689). Utilitarians, too, might easily find situations where free speech should **not** be protected, for the supposed good of society (O'Neill, 1990, p. 158). Even if a free press was “a distinctive organising principle of the modern European and North American worlds” (Keane, 1991, p. 6), in practice an absolute right to free speech was rarely argued, and the interpretation of such a right in given historical circumstances was vexed. Even in the United States, where the right to freedom of the press is enshrined in the constitution, “two centuries of constitutional adjudication have clouded an Amendment whose wording appeared to be shinningly clear” (Keane, 1991, p. 128).

In fact, and notwithstanding the philosophical principles with which they were bolstered, the various historical formulations of press freedom were principally driven by the political circumstances of their time (Ward, 1995, pp. 9-10). In a similar way, the circumstances in the Catholic Church of the 1960s drove some Catholic editors to call for a greater distance between themselves and their proprietors. Freedom of the press is an uneven patchwork, even in the Western press. It is the heritage of a series of beachheads established at critical moments in history and defended on the basis of different and sometimes inconsistent intellectual viewpoints (Keane, 1991, p. 48). Journalism academic Michael Schudson has suggested, in a 2005 essay, “The Virtues of an Unlovable Press”, that journalists, when they are doing their job to the highest standards of their profession, were always going to be “unlovable”. Those features of journalism which made people feel uncomfortable and even scandalised were the very things that “may make the most vital of contributions to democracy, he argued

(Schudson, 2005, p. 23). Catholic editors were going to be “unlovable”, too, when – acting according to Courtney Murray’s principle that public information was just as much a social necessity in the Church as in secular society – they presented facts that might be uncomfortable for their Catholic readers.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding the venerable procession of philosophers championing the cause of freedom of the press, the ability of editors to present uncensored facts to their readers has always been fraught within Western democracies, and numerous examples of journalists confronting newspaper managers over editorial freedom might be cited.⁵⁶ The ability of Catholic editors to present uncensored facts to readers has been even more curtailed. Just how far those editors could go in claiming – as some of them did – that their editorial independence should echo that exercised by their secular counterparts was revealed in the way their liberal project unfolded through the 1960s. Their campaign presented many challenges, conflicts and dilemmas, and these were brought into sharp relief at the Melbourne *Advocate* in the editorial decisions – and their repercussions – of Michael Costigan. Those decisions were driven, as every other editor’s, by the political circumstances of his time and, for Costigan, by the culture of the

⁵⁶ For instance, in 1975 in Australia, journalists at *The Australian* newspaper went on strike against perceived editorial interference in the paper’s election coverage. Their statement in *The Sydney Morning Herald* said they were “not protesting at their proprietor [Rupert Murdoch]’s right to express his views in editorials but at a ‘very deliberate and blatant bias in the presentation of news’” (Cryle, 2008, pp. 138-139). In 1988, a well-founded rumour circulated among staff at the Melbourne *Age* newspaper of a takeover bid by British newspaper baron Robert Maxwell (Simons, 2012), which came on the heels of Rupert Murdoch’s successful takeover of the Herald and Weekly Times the year before. The then Federal Treasurer Paul Keating, who had approved the Murdoch takeover of the Herald and Weekly Times, prevented the Maxwell takeover (Tiffen, 2014, p. 175). In response, the staff of *The Age* endorsed a “Fairfax Papers’ Charter of Editorial Independence”, which affirmed that “the editors alone shall determine the daily editorial content of the newspapers”. An updated version of the charter was published in a response by *The Age* staff to a 2006 government discussion paper on the regulation of ownership of Australia’s media, “Submission on Media Reform Options” (Birnbauer, 2006).

Catholic Church community in Melbourne. That culture was itself conditioned by events that took place in the years preceding the commencement of Costigan's editorship at *The Advocate* and by the personalities involved. The 1950s were a critical part of the formation of the *Advocate's* future associate editor. The key events and personalities of that decade will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Editor in waiting

Introduction

Michael Costigan was the associate editor of the Melbourne *Advocate* through the greater part of the 1960s, and his editorship of the newspaper is the central case study of this thesis. Costigan was born in Melbourne in 1931 and brought up in Preston in a devout Catholic family, one of eight children. Educated in Catholic schools, he was Dux in his final year at the Jesuit-run St Patrick's College, East Melbourne. In 1949, the year after his matriculation, he entered Corpus Christi College, Werribee, Melbourne's training institution for its diocesan priests.⁵⁷ Seminary training was divided then, as in many places still today, into two stages – three years of philosophy and four years of theology. Towards the end of Costigan's philosophy training, he was selected to go to Rome to undertake theology studies and complete a degree in canon and civil law, since Church authorities believed the Melbourne Archdiocese at the time was short of canon lawyers. Costigan later said he would have “loved to have done” a church history or scripture degree (Costigan, 2015c), but in late 1952 he happily left for Rome to begin his studies at one of the Roman seminaries, Propaganda Fide College, with no expectation of returning to an appointment at *The Advocate*. Costigan was in Rome completing his priestly studies for most of the 1950s. This was a turbulent time for the Church in Australia, and Costigan was kept well in touch with events and with the particular political crisis which not only had a significant impact on the Catholic Church in his home state of Victoria but shaped the Catholic culture which would be the context for his editorship in the following decade. The Cold War hovered over much of the political discourse of the 1950s, and the communist threat preoccupied both Church and state leaders,

⁵⁷ Priests who worked under the jurisdiction of the bishop of a diocese were “diocesan”; religious orders who were not immediately subject to the jurisdiction of a local bishop, such as the Jesuits, generally had their own seminaries where these “religious” priests were trained.

even if they sometimes exaggerated that threat for their own political ends. The fear was nevertheless not unreasonable. The conflict between the post-war superpowers the USSR and the USA had escalated in the years following the Second World War, threatening the peace and stability of nations.⁵⁸ A nuclear arms race was on and, at the beginning of the decade, tensions between the Soviet bloc nations and Western powers aligned with the USA had escalated into a proxy war in Korea.⁵⁹ The spectre of the communist threat intensified in 1956 when the Soviets invaded Hungary. Robert Menzies, Australia's Prime Minister during this decade,⁶⁰ reinstituted universal national service, and Australia, as an ally of the United States, sent troops to fight in Korea.

The stage was also being set for another war and for a renewed fear in Australia of communist expansion. In 1954, the defeat of French forces in Vietnam by the communist-supported Viet Minh nationalists brought to an end a long period of colonial rule in that country. A second Indochina War,⁶¹ the Vietnam War, loomed as the 1950s drew to a close. Australia's and the Catholic Church's support of the war would present one of the most difficult moments for Costigan as editor of *The Advocate* in the middle of the following decade.

This chapter will summarise the key events and personalities in Australia in these critical years which particularly shaped Melbourne Church culture. It will also describe the immediate influences in Rome on Costigan himself – the significant people he encountered and the new ideas to which he was exposed.

⁵⁸ The start of the Cold War is often dated to a speech of American President Harry Truman on March 12, 1947, which promised American support for nations threatened by Soviet communism.

⁵⁹ 1950 to 1953.

⁶⁰ Menzies was Prime Minister for two periods in Australia: 1939 to 1941, and 1949 to 1966.

⁶¹ Some considered the Vietnam War merely the continuation of the same war (Karnow, 1991, p.215).

The communist threat

Many years after Costigan's days at *The Advocate* were over, in a paper delivered to the Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand (of which he was a founding father), Costigan suggested there may have been a hidden purpose in Mannix's sending him to Rome to become a priest-canon lawyer:

Another factor might have been the need, recognised by Mannix and Carboni,⁶² allies in supporting B. A. Santamaria's anti-communist Movement, for sound canonical advice in defending that activity against its critics. (Costigan, 2016, p. 17)

"Santamaria's anti-communist Movement" had in fact opened up a battleground in the 1950s, with later repercussions for Costigan's editorship. Those events arose from a longer history of conflicting ideologies, both in the Church and in the wider society. Before following Costigan to Rome that history and those events will be reviewed.

As the 1950s opened, the Catholic community in Melbourne was generally a place of security and certitude. Mannix was the head of the Melbourne Church, the only archbishop that many Melbourne Catholics, including Costigan, had known. Mannix had been in charge of the Archdiocese since 1917 but was now ageing. He would turn 90 in 1954. Catholics belonged to a somewhat monolithic institution which they would see reflected in the pages of their Catholic newspaper, of which they had a choice of two in Melbourne, *The Advocate* and *The Tribune*. Many Catholics would respond to the urging of their priest to take a paper home after Sunday Mass each week, to ensure there was "a Catholic paper in every Catholic family". These newspapers had a significant market since, generally throughout Australia and certainly in Melbourne, Catholic churches hosted large congregations; the majority of those calling themselves Catholics in those days

⁶² Archbishop Romolo Carboni was the Apostolic Delegate to Australia, 1953 to 1959.

were “practising”. While it was a Church already relatively “triumphant”,⁶³ there were rumblings outside the walls. The main threat to the Church’s security through the 1950s, underscored with regular stark reminders from the pulpit and in the Catholic press, was communism: an organisation hostile to religion and responsible for the persecution and killing of Catholics in many parts of the world. Still alive in the memory of many *Advocate* readers was the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), in which the right-wing General Francisco Franco had fought to overthrow a left-leaning and communist-backed government. “Atrocities committed against members of religious orders” had intensified Catholic feeling against communism (Costar, 2013, p. 9). In 1937, in response to, among other things, the Spanish Civil War, Pope Pius XI published an encyclical against communism, *Divini Redemptoris*. In 1949 the Holy Office issued an excommunication on anyone who joined communist parties, although it specified that such people had to “profess materialistic Communist doctrine” (Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, 1949). Communism and Catholicity were incompatible; communism was an evil that had to be confronted and eradicated wherever it was found.

In 1937, the Australian Catholic bishops established the Australian National Secretariat for Catholic Action (ANSCA),⁶⁴ which was another event that “signalled a new emphasis [in the Catholic Church] on anti-communist agitation and organisation” (Macintyre, 1998, p. 304). ANSCA was given the responsibility of setting up specialised movements to further “Catholic Action” (Jory, 1967, p. 93), and among its objectives was “encouraging greater participation by Catholic

⁶³ Catholic doctrine defined three stages for its members – the “Church Militant” comprised the Catholics in the business of fighting evil in the world; the “Church Penitent” represented its deceased members in Purgatory and the “Church Triumphant” was meant to be reserved for the saints in heaven.

⁶⁴ The announcement of ANSCA’s formation by Archbishop Simonds was reported in *The Advocate*, January 20 1938. Simonds (at that time Archbishop of Hobart) was the secretary of an episcopal committee formed to oversee the operations of ANSCA, the Episcopal Committee of Catholic Action. Archbishop Mannix was the committee’s chairman.

workers in their unions” (Strangio, 2012, p. 228). Santamaria was nominated as assistant director of the organisation, under its director, Frank Maher, who was the president of the Campion Society, an organisation of mostly young Catholic university students who had lobbied for the formation of ANSCA (Jory, 1986, p. 89). A brief sketch of the origins of Catholic Action is necessary before discussing the dramatic events that unfolded in the mid-1950s, which would significantly disturb the Catholic community’s former equanimity and unity.

The idea of Catholic Action was developed through a long line of Catholic social teaching which found its starting point in the idea that the Church had the right and responsibility to bring Christian influence on society. This teaching is contained in a series of papal encyclical letters, beginning with Leo XIII’s 1891 *Rerum Novarum*⁶⁵ – *On Capital and Labour*, which addressed the rights of workers. The encyclical defined the balance which should be found between the needs of labour and capital and the role of the state in ensuring fair wages and the protection of the poor (Australian Catholic Social Justice Council). It came at a time of social unrest in Europe in consequence, to a large extent, of the industrial revolution. The unrest had prompted a series of revolutions among which the socialist doctrines of Karl Marx were prominent. The encyclical was written in response to these circumstances and included a rejection of socialism (Leo XIII, 1891 Nos. 4, 5, 14, 15, 17).

It lies in the power of a ruler to benefit every class in the State, and amongst the rest to promote to the utmost the interests of the poor; and this in virtue of his office, and without being open to suspicion of undue interference – since it is the province of the commonwealth to serve the common good. And the more that is done for the benefit of the working classes by the general laws of the country, the less need will there be to seek for special means to relieve them. (Leo XIII, 1891 No. 32)

⁶⁵ The Latin title comes from the opening words: “... the spirit of **revolutionary change**, which has long been disturbing the nations of the world ...”

In 1931, on the fortieth anniversary of Leo's encyclical, Pius XI wrote another major social encyclical which reinforced the views of Leo and took them further. *Quadragesimo Anno*⁶⁶ – *On Reconstruction of the Social Order* was published as the worldwide Great Depression was taking hold, putting millions of people out of work and sending families into poverty. Pius again argued for Leo's middle road between socialism, which denied the right to private property, and the unchecked free market which oppressed the poor. It again argued for a just wage for the worker.⁶⁷ Such teaching as this, which came from the Catholic Church's highest authority, gave legitimacy to the involvement of Catholics in social action. A religion based on love of neighbour could legitimately expect its members to help create a society which enhanced the common good and the wellbeing of individuals in it.

Pius XI also gave the Church a classical definition of Catholic Action – although it would be repudiated by later generations of Catholics – namely, “the participation and the collaboration of the laity with the Apostolic Hierarchy” (Pius XI, 1931 No. 5).⁶⁸ In practice, the term “Catholic Action” was adopted by a wide variety of organisations in the Church to describe their activities, including those whose action was particularly evangelical – such as the Holy Name Society and the Legion of Mary.⁶⁹ It was also embraced by movements which sought to bring about social change more directly. In Melbourne in the 1930s and 1940s, young Catholics were inspired by the teaching of the social encyclicals, and among them was that group of Catholic Melbourne University students who, in 1931, established the Campion Society. Some of the Campions were also inspired by another social action movement that had been started by a Belgian priest

⁶⁶ “In the fortieth year.”

⁶⁷ *Quadragesimo Anno*, especially Nos. 71 and 72.

⁶⁸ Such a definition held less currency in the post-Vatican Council Church where an alternative concept of the “lay apostolate” has taken the place of “Catholic action”, namely, a more autonomous exercise of action in the world by the laity.

⁶⁹ The Holy Name Society was a men's organisation centred around weekly Mass attendance and had a large social element; the Legion of Mary, for men or women, demanded much more pastoral zeal in terms of weekly meetings and active proselytisation through the systematic visiting of homes.

(later cardinal) Joseph Cardijn (Jory, 1986, p. 6). The Young Christian Worker (YCW) or “Jocist” movement encouraged young Catholics to take action for social change in their workplaces and, encouraged by the Campions, would become established throughout Australia from the beginning of the 1940s, with the endorsement, at the start, of Mannix.

Among the group of Campions was the young Bartholomew Augustine (“Bob”) Santamaria who, in 1936, launched the *Catholic Worker* newspaper as its inaugural editor. The paper’s editorial viewpoint in the first editions was both anti-communist and anti-capitalist, but the focus on capitalism was “short-lived” when, in the third issue, prompted especially by events in Spain, the polemic against communism was intensified (Strangio & Costar, 2005, p. 203). This also marked the beginning of a widening chasm between the views of Santamaria and those who would follow instead the Cardijn model of Catholic Action. The Campions’ Central Committee thereafter replaced Santamaria as sole editor with an editorial board, from which Santamaria resigned shortly afterwards (Jory, 1967, p. 78). In 1943 he founded his newspaper *Freedom*, which became *News-Weekly* in 1946. The *Catholic Worker* itself would run for forty years in Melbourne and, by the 1950s, had become a staunch critic of Santamaria’s political activities.

The Movement and the Labor split

For Australia’s “principal Catholic anti-communist”, Santamaria (Macintyre, 1998, p. 303), communism constituted an imminent threat to both the Church and to Australia’s security, and this was reflected in the frequently alarmist articles in *News-Weekly*⁷⁰ and, with more significant consequences, in his activities in the

⁷⁰ See, for example Bruce Duncan’s comment: “With characteristic hyperbole, *News-Weekly* feared that 1952 ‘might well be one of the last years in the history of the Australian nation as we know it’ (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 185).”

Australian labour movement.⁷¹ During the years of the Second World War, not only Santamaria but also the Australian Labor Party was troubled by the increasing influence of the Communist Party of Australia in the union movement (Strangio, 2012, p. 246). In 1942 Santamaria successfully persuaded Mannix to provide funding for an organisation to fight communism within the unions (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 58). The outcome was the establishment of a network of secret cells in Catholic parishes – initially in Melbourne – and “in a number of trade unions and factories”. The Melbourne organisation shortly made contacts with anti-communists in Sydney as a “loose national alliance” (Ormonde, 1972, p. 3). In 1945, the Catholic bishops gave their approval to Santamaria’s organisation, which was named the Catholic Social Studies Movement though generally referred to as “The Movement”. This was an ambiguous decision, since the bishops at once gave the Church’s blessing to Santamaria’s political activities while also declaring that The Movement was not to be defined as official Catholic Action. There was one dissenter from this distinction, Mannix, who “clearly had no problem in recognising the Movement as official Catholic Action” (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 85). Duncan says this ambiguity meant the “project was fatally flawed from the start and was to precipitate the split in the 1950s within the Church and the ALP” (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 82). The Movement’s campaign against communism was aided by an opportunistic association with another newly-formed organisation within the union movement, the Industrial Groups. By 1946, the NSW ALP, followed by the Victorian branch, had established these groups (the “Groupers”) to win back the unions to party control (Strangio, 2012, p. 259). By 1953, the informal alliance between The Movement and the Industrial Groups had gone a long way towards breaking the communist influence in the unions (Strangio & Costar, 2005, p. 210). It had, however, been an uneasy partnership, and the juxtaposition of politics with a religious crusade, not to mention the

⁷¹ “That Santamaria sought to proselytize amongst the Catholic/labour community reflected the Australian social structure of the time, in which there existed a strong link amongst a unionised, Catholic, Irish working class and the ALP – strengthened as it had been by the conscription controversies of 1916-17” (Strangio & Costar, 2005, p. 210).

ambiguity of Santamaria's motivations, had attracted criticism from both political and church leaders. In 1953, Archbishop Simonds publicly expressed concern about the Church being involved in politics (*see page 57*). The bishops were now collectively discussing how to separate Santamaria's political activities from ANSCA, the official movement for Catholic Action (B. Duncan, 2001 Ch. 14) – with the exception of the Victorian bishops who stood solidly with Santamaria. But events over the following months would also reveal a deeply divided Labor Party in Australia. According to political historian Paul Strangio, “the major battle line within the ALP in the early 1950s was between anti-communist Catholic militants and their non-Grouper opponents” but there were also tensions between the Victorian Labor Party and the Federal Parliamentary Labor party (Strangio, 2012, p. 284). In October 1954, the federal Labor leader, H.V. (“Bert”) Evatt, exposed those he called “disloyal” Labor Party members in Victoria who were Santamaria supporters. Evatt blamed Labor's defeat in the 1954 federal election on “a small minority of members, located particularly in the State of Victoria” and named *News-Weekly* as fomenting a conspiracy against him. His message was that “Santamaria's organisations were trying to take over the Victorian Labor Party” (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 225). This was a signal, for a public airing of the grievances of those opposed to the anti-communist organisations within the Labor Movement, while those targeted by Evatt responded angrily. The reputation of Catholic Action was never more sullied.⁷² The airing of grievances was no safety valve, however; the conflict escalated and the rift between opposing camps widened.

What happened next was a debilitating split within the Labor Party, the causes and consequences of which have been extensively documented by historians – such as Robert Murray, in *The Split* (1970); Gerard Henderson in *Mr Santamaria and the Bishops* (1982); Bruce Duncan, in *Crusade or Conspiracy* (2001); Brian Costar, Peter Love and Paul Strangio in *The Great Labor Schism* (2005); and Paul

⁷² Letter writers in the newspapers identified Catholic Action as being behind the divisions in the Labor Party (Strangio, 2012, p. 323).

Strangio in *Neither Power Nor Glory* (2012). The events might be summarily described as follows: The Labor Federal Executive named the Victorian Labor Central Executive as the locus of the conflict, in a bid to contain the damage to the Party, and ordered an inquiry into the Victorian branch (Strangio, 2012, p. 325). The inquiry determined that a new Victorian Central Executive should be elected at a special meeting in February 1955. The conference was boycotted by a mostly Catholic, pro-Grouper bloc of the old Executive. A new Central Committee was nevertheless elected and, for a short time, “the Victorian ALP had mutated into a twin-headed monster. It was a question of which would lop off the other (Strangio, 2012, p. 332).” The conflict was a prelude to a permanent division in the Labor Party and the defeat of the Labor Government in Victoria. The membership of the Victorian Labor Party was reduced by two thirds by the breakaway group (Strangio, 2012, p. 354). Pro-Grouper Federal MPs were expelled from the Labor Party and formed their own party, initially called the Anti-Communist Labor Party, which became, in 1957, the Democratic Labor Party (DLP). A further casualty of the split were the Industrial Groups, which were disbanded (Strangio, 2012, p. 333).

In the Catholic Church, there were two apparently opposite responses to the Labor split and to the part that Santamaria’s Movement had played in it – although the bishops “tried to preserve the appearance of unity in the crisis” (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 256). In April 1955, the bishops issued a joint pastoral letter on “The Menace of Communism” which lamented the setback to the anti-communist movements but “failed to address the deeper issues in the dispute and made no mention of the movement, the burning issue of the moment” (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 257). In Melbourne, before the May 25 election to elect a new government in the wake of the defeat of the Victorian Labor Government, Mannix made a public statement which contrasted the anti-communist activists with Evatt, “who hastens to defend communists at home and abroad”. His public statement “left Catholics under no illusion as to which side it was their spiritual

duty to support – a point hammered home from numerous pulpits” (Strangio, 2012, p. 341).

The Victorian bishops gathered in support around Santamaria, but other bishops, particularly Cardinal Gilroy in Sydney, became increasingly worried about the way in which Santamaria continued to implicate the Church in politics. The full extent of Santamaria’s intentions were not known at the time, but later evidence suggests his program represented a real, if unrealistic, attempt to assert a controlling influence by his Movement over the Australian Labor Party (Strangio & Costar, 2005, p. 211). In 1956, Santamaria set up a new independent lay organisation, the Catholic Social Movement (CSM), “a continuation of the Movement under a different name” (Henderson, 2015, p. 221). Later in the year, at Gilroy’s invitation, the bishops gathered twice to prepare a submission for the Pope (Pius XII) seeking a ruling on the status of the Movement. In November, a delegation of bishops, including Gilroy but no Victorian bishops, travelled to Rome to present the petition. The Vatican responded – twice, after Gilroy sought clarification – essentially decreeing that the Movement had to be reconstructed as “a Catholic lay association” but its leaders were not to be involved “in political parties and unions” (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 338). In December 1957, in the light of the Vatican response, Santamaria’s CSM “dissolved itself” and established the National Civic Council (NCC), “a strictly civic body which did not need the permission of bishops to operate in a diocese” (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 347). It had been a defeat for Santamaria, but not one that Mannix acknowledged. Neither were Catholics brought in on the discussion.

These crucial events – the split in the bishops’ ranks, the petitions to Rome, the two Vatican rulings against the Movement, the Movement’s dissolution, and the formation of the NCC – were barely reported, if at all, in *The Advocate* and *Tribune*. Not to fully disclose them and discuss their implications was a serious failure of the magazine’s duty to its readers. (Morgan, 2018, p. 198)

The Advocate: a partisan voice

At the end of the 1950s the dust was settling over the Labor split and the Movement dispute, but the anti-communist culture in the Melbourne Church had, if anything, hardened. The hierarchy stood firmly behind Santamaria's NCC, and the DLP was the party of choice. *The Advocate* reflected this stance and was unlikely to question it, especially given what had happened to the *Catholic Worker* when it dared to suggest Catholics were free to vote for the Labor Party. Costigan would have been clear about the paper's editorial line, too, as he later recounted: "Under [*Advocate* associate editor] Father Murtagh, in the 1950s, the paper had maintained what I would regard as a coolly reasoned policy of support for the N.C.C. – D.L.P line" (Costigan, 1969). The *Advocate's* support for the DLP was nevertheless not seamless, and Duncan pointed out that in a July 1958 editorial the newspaper "unexpectedly ... modified its partisan stand and editorialised from Gilroy's statement and the 1955 Joint Pastoral that Catholics were free to vote even for the ALP" (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 351). The editorial denied the contention in a Melbourne *Sun* article of July 9 by "an apologist of the Labor majority party led by Dr Evatt" that Catholics were "bound to oppose the ALP and support the DLP ... No member of the Hierarchy – even those who have shown more sympathy towards it – has suggested that Catholics have a duty to support it or are acting wrongly in not doing so. It is not under any kind of clerical direction" ("Is the D.L.P. a 'Church Party'?", 1958).

Notwithstanding this less partisan advice on how to vote, an editorial supporting the DLP viewpoint could be expected before most elections – as there had been before the Victorian election in May that year, just a month prior to the publishing of the more moderate editorial above.⁷³ As has been noted, the 1957 intervention by Rome repudiating the Movement's alignment of the Church in party politics was disregarded by the Melbourne archdiocese, and *The Advocate* sailed on with its DLP line (Ormonde, 1972, p. 110). A new Vatican statement on

⁷³ Cf. also *Advocate* November 16 1961, p. 10; November 23 1961, p.10.

communism was issued in 1959 saying that “Catholics could not vote for parties or candidates who, even if not themselves holding principles opposed to the faith, still united with communists or favoured them in practice” (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 360). This was interpreted in Melbourne as supporting Mannix’s position, with an *Advocate* editorial on April 30 claiming: “The old simple formula, that a Catholic is free to vote for any party except the Communists Party, is out of date.” The *Advocate*’s partisan politics reflected a culture that many considered endemic in the Catholic press in Australia. One commentator, Fr Gregory Meere, penned a damning picture of Catholic press censorship and bias in a 1958 article in the Melbourne publication *Twentieth Century*:

A great part of the Australian diocesan press is now committed politically, but is divided in its politics. One section pleads its cause openly. The other is less honest in its advocacy. Both abuse their position as a diocesan press, which is sold at Church doors and advertised from Catholic pulpits.

A recent and momentous instance of the press falling down on its job was its failure to inform the laity of what was going on in the Labour [sic] split. When the secular press aroused the spleen of almost the whole community against Catholics, a muted Catholic press left them defenceless and in the dark. It refused to discuss the situation with even a modicum of frankness. Catholics had to rely on an unsympathetic secular press for information about themselves, and many were not in a position to check its accuracy or distortion. The integrity of the Catholic press has not been restored. (Meere, 1958a, p. 127)

Costigan would try to counter the partisan politics reflected in *The Advocate* in the course of his editorship. The newspaper, nevertheless, would at times vacillate in its point of view. However, in the 1950s, thoughts about editing a newspaper were far from Costigan’s mind, as he pursued his priestly studies in Rome at Propaganda College.

Costigan's Roman education

Propaganda Fide was a prestigious Roman seminary which trained future priests from “mission countries”⁷⁴ and among whose graduates were many prominent Australian priests and bishops. Costigan’s initial theology studies were at the 325-year-old Pontifical Urban University. He would complete his law degree later at another Roman university, the Pontifical Lateran University, where, in 1961 he successfully defended his doctorate, receiving full marks, 90/90 (Costigan, 2013). His degree, “Juris Utriusque Doctor” (JUD), a canon and civil law doctorate, was the first to be awarded to an Australian (Costigan, 2016, p. 19).

In Rome, Costigan worked throughout the 1950s towards completing his theology studies and his law degree. In 1955 he was ordained a priest, marking the completion of the theology studies. During these years, he was not completely insulated from the turbulence at home and “followed with interest some of the happenings in the Church and the wider community in Australia” (Costigan, 2015a, p. 160). Various visitors and correspondence, too, gave him further insights about these events. In particular, among the visitors, was Coadjutor Archbishop of Melbourne⁷⁵ Justin Simonds and *Advocate* columnist Denys Jackson and, among the correspondents, Santamaria. Rome also exposed Costigan to many of the new ideas circulating at the Catholic Church’s centre in the years just prior to the Vatican Council and gave him the opportunity to establish personal contacts with key Catholic thinkers of the day. Most significant among these personalities was his teacher on social economics and social justice and the Professor of Social Economy

⁷⁴ “Australia’s and New Zealand’s status at the time as ‘missionary countries’ put them under the authority of the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide (‘The Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith’). This meant that Propaganda’s Urban University was the main destination for diocesan priests sent by their bishops to Rome from our countries for post-ordination courses” (Costigan, 2016, p. 9).

⁷⁵ A coadjutor archbishop was an assistant archbishop appointed to an archdiocese with the right to succeed the incumbent archbishop when that archbishop resigned or died.

at the Lateran University, Pietro Pavan, “one of the two best teachers I ever had” (Costigan, 2015c).⁷⁶

These contacts and ideas didn’t prompt Costigan to any radical fervour at the time, but nevertheless sowed the seeds that would flower into his later, more liberal thinking. During his Roman years, Costigan says his political and ecclesiastical views, could not be differentiated from those of any other member of the Melbourne clergy:

In those years, my sympathies were with the view espoused by Archbishop Mannix, Bishop Fox,⁷⁷ Archbishop Carboni and many of the Australian clergy and laity, especially in Victoria: I believed that the Santamaria-N.C.C-D.L.P. line was the right one. (Costigan, 1969)

Costigan’s lecturer, Pavan, had for most of his academic life been an active promoter of the Catholic Church’s social teaching and of social action. He was a disciple of Jacques Maritain and became an adviser to Archbishop Angelo Roncalli when the latter was the Patriarch of Venice and, later, when he was Pope John XXIII. Pavan made a major contribution to Catholic Church teaching in assisting Pope John to write his encyclicals, *Mater et Magistra* (1961),⁷⁸ and the landmark *Pacem in Terris* (1963). The latter was substantially composed by Pavan “and a small team of Roman theologians” (Murphy, 1966). Pavan’s contribution to the Church would be recognised in the final years of his life when Pope John-Paul II made him a priest-cardinal, a very rare instance in modern times where a pope dispenses with the normal prerequisite that a cardinal must be first ordained a bishop. (Jacques Maritain, a layman, was also offered a cardinal’s hat, by Pope Paul VI, but Maritain refused the honour.)

In 1959, Costigan was consulting Pavan about his thesis topic. In the light of the events in Australia since the Labor split, Costigan had suggested that Santamaria’s anti-communist Movement would make a good topic and Pavan

⁷⁶ Pavan was later Rector Magnificus of the university.

⁷⁷ Auxiliary Bishop to Mannix from 1957.

⁷⁸ Which urged the reconstruction of the social order and “the worldwide sharing of knowledge, capital and labour” based on the inherent dignity of every human being.

had initially agreed (Costigan, 2013). Costigan already knew about the supposedly secret delegation of Australian bishops which had travelled to Rome in November 1956 to seek a resolution to the Movement dispute. The main polarity in the argument was between the Sydney bishops, who were against the Movement as configured by Santamaria and who argued that “the best way to fight communism was to remain in the ALP” (Duncan, 2001, p.263), and, on the other side, the Victorian bishops who supported The Movement as it was. The delegation nevertheless represented only the Sydney side (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 312). A priest friend in Rome told Costigan the intention of the Sydney bishops was to “put the skids under the Movement” (Costigan, 2013). There was a long deliberation by a commission of cardinals to respond to the Australian bishops’ petition. The first step in the process was the preparation of a briefing document that detailed the cases for each of the opposing camps. What Costigan did not realise in 1959 was that his thesis supervisor, Pavan, had prepared the Sydney bishops’ case (B. Duncan, 2005, p. 222). Pavan’s brief criticised the Movement for its attempt to involve the Church in party politics and concluded that the Movement was “indeed set up as quasi-Catholic Action with a ‘mandate’ from the bishops and acted under their authority and control” (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 333).

Costigan, in happy ignorance of Pavan’s already intimate involvement in the subject, decided to consult Santamaria about his thesis topic. He especially felt able to consult Santamaria, in the light of a courtesy call he had made on the Movement leader in a visit home during his 1957 summer vacation. The visit had been recommended by the Movement chaplain, Fr Eric D’Arcy⁷⁹ and occurred

⁷⁹ D’Arcy was known as a brilliant student at Corpus Christi and became the head of the Philosophy Department at Melbourne University. “Santamaria, ever with his eye out for talent, probably went to Mannix and said, look, we’re very impressed with this young priest, Eric Darcy. We’d like him to be chaplain to the Movement, and of course Mannix concurred, as he did with most of the things Santamaria put to him. And so D’Arcy became captive of the Santamaria faction.” (Costigan, 2015c) D’Arcy was made the Bishop of Sale in 1981 and the Archbishop of Hobart in 1988.

shortly after Rome had confirmed its rejection of the Movement's activities.⁸⁰ In a private letter a few weeks earlier, Santamaria had told Mannix that "as far as the lay apostolate is concerned, the ground has been taken completely from under my feet" (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 339). When Costigan asked him at their meeting about the Movement, Santamaria said, "That's all past now. I'm no longer in favour."⁸¹ He nevertheless received Costigan "with typical cordiality" – and proceeded to recruit him as one of his sources of information in Rome: "He also said to me that if there's anything I'm aware of in Rome that could be of interest to him he would be most grateful if I'd let him know and pass documents on to him" (Costigan, 2013).

In May 1959 Costigan wrote to Santamaria:

Although I promised when I saw you twenty months ago to keep an eye out over there for anything that could be of help to you, now that I am writing it is to ask rather than to give ...

Last year I wrote a dissertation under Monsignor Pavan's direction, entitled "The Relations between the Hierarchy and the Laity in the Indirect Apostolate in the light of the teachings of Pope Pius XII" and intended to develop this theme further ... What he would like from me is a factual, objective account of the "Movement" (I use the popular name) from its beginnings, with special attention to the "contrast" (differences, divisions) that have arisen, even among Catholics themselves, in recent times. ... To my objection, that seven years away from home had left me rather out of touch with a lot that had happened in that time, he replied that this could be more of an advantage than otherwise in the interests of a dispassionate

⁸⁰ This was in the second, clarifying response from Rome on July 25 1957 confirming that "the Movement itself was to 'avoid all direct or indirect action on unions or political parties'" (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 338).

⁸¹ The comments were apparently disingenuous, in the light of Santamaria's continuing political activities.

treatment of the matter, as long as I could obtain accurate information.

I would be most grateful if you could let me know what you think of this, Mr. Santamaria; also if you could give me some ideas as to sources for a thesis like this. (Costigan, 1959a)

While Rome had decreed in 1957 that the Church should not interfere in politics, Santamaria continued to do precisely that through the organisations he set up to replace the Movement, the CSM and the NCC. Throughout 1958 and 1959, Mannix and Santamaria behaved as if Rome had actually endorsed the Movement's activities. Out of frustration with Melbourne's apparent disregard for the Roman decision and concerned about the ongoing disunity in the Church, Sydney's Cardinal Gilroy appealed again to a senior Vatican official and one of Gilroy's former teachers at Propaganda Fide, Cardinal Pietro Agagianian, to arbitrate on the matter. Agagianian, a consummate diplomat, visited the Sydney and Melbourne bishops in August 1959 and poured oil on the troubled waters. He also apparently took action. Following his return to Rome, Santamaria's supporter, the Apostolic Delegate Carboni, found himself the next month appointed as Apostolic Nuncio to Peru.⁸² This was a clear sidelining of the Archbishop.

In June, before Agagianian's visit, Santamaria replied to Costigan's letter, firstly apologising for the delay due to his being "away from the office for some time" and "In addition, I thought that I would seek the opportunity of discussing your suggestion with the Archbishop who was and is a main participant in the controversy concerning the 'Movement'". Santamaria gave a general endorsement of Costigan's thesis topic, then rehearsed the argument he had been running in defence of the Movement's political action:

⁸² Another friend of Agagianian and a strong critic of Santamaria, the Archbishop of Adelaide, Matthew Beovich, had forewarning of this move: Cardinal Agagianian "did, however, hint to Beovich that 'some good solution to our problem is in the offing'. Beovich later interpreted this as a reference to the appointment of a new apostolic delegate, a senior and experienced Vatican diplomat" (Laffin, 2009, p. 18).

While it is very interesting to establish and to constantly restate general principles so that political action will not be misguided or involve the Hierarchy more than it should be, etc., the thousand concrete situations into which one runs in the course of political activity makes the application of principle less easy than the pure theorist appreciates. (Santamaria, 1959a)

He went on to say that Mannix said he would be happy to give Costigan “his authority for the use of all correspondence, etc., over his own name”, but said that a balanced picture of the Movement controversy could not be made without the documents “from the side of those who opposed the Movement.” Costigan would have to get these from “His Eminence Cardinal Gilroy, his Auxiliary Bishop Carroll and the Coadjutor Archbishop of Brisbane Archbishop O’Donnell”.⁸³ Santamaria also noted that the official documents from Rome to the Australian bishops had been marked confidential and were not for public release. “I do not know how you can establish whether the Holy See⁸⁴ – whose action was an integral part of the whole problem – would open its archives,” Santamaria said (Santamaria, 1959a).

While Santamaria’s real intent cannot be judged from this letter, it did appear he was putting up obstacles to Costigan’s pursuing a study of the Movement controversy: “Finally, there is the physical problem of how to get all of the material to you, if all of the other documents are cleared. There are literally dozens of files involved ... I do not know how to handle this. Perhaps you have some suggestions.” If Costigan decided not to go ahead with the project, Santamaria offered to “work out one or two alternative suggestions for you which will be easier to follow up”. Costigan did have second thoughts, and they were prompted by Pavan’s change of mind in regard to the Movement topic. Pavan had promised to see whether it was possible to get sources on the topic but came

⁸³ These were the three bishops in the 1957 delegation to Rome.

⁸⁴ The Vatican.

back to Costigan and said it would be better to just write on the teachings of Pius XII on Catholic Action.

He shook his head and he said, look, I don't think it would be politic or wise for you to proceed with the thesis that directly looks into the Australian situation ... instead of writing about the Australian situation, you can look at some of the principles involved in this kind of action that was and is taken in Australia, and he quoted some other countries where things were happening. He said go through all the documents of Pius XII, all of his addresses – there were 18, 19 volumes of them – and do a thesis on Pius XII's teaching on – he used the phrase – on the Christian animation of the temporal order ... So, that's what I did. (Costigan, 2013)

Costigan later saw a guiding hand in this advice which went beyond the need to determine a satisfactory thesis topic: "In retrospect, with knowledge now of Pavan's central role in resolving the Australian conflict in Gilroy's and Carroll's favour, I wonder if he was protecting me from possible adverse repercussions after returning to Mannix's service in Melbourne" (Costigan, 2015a, p. 162). Costigan informed Santamaria of his change of mind in a letter in July:

Mgr. Pavan, perhaps on second thoughts, was somewhat less enthusiastic about the idea for the thesis than he had been some months previously, when he himself proposed it. He seems to feel that the time may not be ripe for such a work, since the events concerned are so recent, and that I might be better advised to choose a less controversial topic. (Costigan, 1959b)

Santamaria replied with a caveat that "another dissertation strictly on the Papal doctrine governing the action of laymen in the temporal order might be repeating ground which has already been covered more or less adequately since Maritain wrote 'Man and the State'."⁸⁵ Santamaria suggested to Costigan that he

⁸⁵ A 1951 work by Maritain.

might think about writing something about “the rights of subordinate bodies within mass democratic political parties” and sent him an article published by the Melbourne pro-Movement magazine *Social Survey* called “The idea of a Church party” (Santamaria, 1959a). In a final letter to Santamaria in this series, Costigan told him that it was too late to change his topic at this stage and wished Santamaria “every blessing ... on yourself, your family and work” (Costigan, 1959c).

The Parish Priest of West Melbourne

Another person intimately involved in the Movement dispute was the Coadjutor Archbishop of Melbourne, Justin Simonds, who became a significant influence on Costigan in his Roman years and in the years to come. Simonds was a bishop who stood outside the episcopal coterie in Victoria, being “absolutely opposed to the activities and policies of Mr Santamaria” (Costigan, 1969), and Costigan considered him a friend (Costigan, 2011). He was also atypical in the Australian hierarchy of the 1950s, the first Australian-born Catholic archbishop and a rare scholar in that company. He had completed a PhD in the Catholic University of Louvain in 1930 and had been a lecturer in Sydney’s two seminaries, eventually becoming rector at St Columba’s College, Springwood, where students for the priesthood completed their philosophy studies. In 1937 he was made Archbishop of Hobart and, in 1942, without Mannix being consulted, he was appointed the Coadjutor Archbishop of Melbourne, with the right to succeed Mannix.⁸⁶ Mannix made Simonds parish priest of West Melbourne and there he remained until Mannix’s death in 1963, for 21 years virtually sidelined from any sort of formal leadership in the Melbourne Church. “I am just a glorified parish priest – nobody tells me anything’, he used to say,” Costigan told Simonds’s successor,

⁸⁶ The appointment was made by the Apostolic Delegate, Enrico Panico, who was hostile to Mannix (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 34). According to historian Race Mathews, “Panico’s brief from Rome was to secure a more rapid transition from an Irish to an Australian-born hierarchy, and in the process curb Mannix’s influence and perceived intransigence” (Mathews, 2014, p. 88).

Archbishop James Knox (Costigan, 1969).

Simonds was an early advocate of Catholic Action. In Europe he had been exposed to the work of Cardijn⁸⁷ and the Jocist movements (Vodola, 2014, p. 8) and became the founding episcopal chairman of the YCW when it was established in Australia in 1943. Simonds was also the secretary of the committee set up in 1937 to establish the first formal Catholic Action groups in Australia, the Episcopal Committee on Catholic Action. Simonds was generally publicly loyal to Mannix, although he did not hide his views in private (Costigan, 1969).

Church canon law requires the bishops in charge of dioceses to call on the Pope periodically to report on the state of their Church, in what is called an “ad limina” visit.⁸⁸ In 1960, Mannix was too old to make this journey, and Simonds went on his behalf. At the archbishop’s request Costigan, now fluent in Italian, acted as Simonds’s interpreter and secretary. On June 10, Simonds went for his formal interview with Pope John. Waiting with him outside the Pope’s door was Costigan, for whom Simonds had also arranged a papal audience.

While we waited Simonds started to sound off about the state of the church thanks to the Santamaria controversy and he was warning me to be careful when I came back to Melbourne, not to get involved in what he saw as playing politics, and he spoke very strongly about his disapproval of Santamaria and his methods. (Costigan, 2013)

Costigan’s inherited sympathy for the Santamaria line was being challenged. “It was Archbishop Simonds himself who first shook my faith in this position,” he later told Knox (Costigan, 1969). Others, too, questioned the diocesan orthodoxy,

⁸⁷ Cardijn studied at Louvain University in 1906/1907.

⁸⁸ “Ad limina apostolorum”, to the threshold (of the tombs) of the apostles. Normally, the visit is expected every five years.

including Costigan's twin brother, Frank:⁸⁹ "In his letters he would tell me about some of the conflicts. And they weren't letters that were favourable to the Movement and to Bob [Santamaria]" (Costigan, 2015c). Simonds for the most part had kept his head down during the controversies over the Movement and the Labor split. He had spoken publicly on the conflicts on only a couple of occasions, but those occasions were significant. At a clergy lunch in December 1953, to celebrate the enthronement as Archbishop of Canberra-Goulburn of a fellow bishop-scholar Eris O'Brien,⁹⁰ Simonds issued a pointed warning about the interference of the Church in politics. Simonds's statement was not reported in *The Advocate* but *The Catholic Weekly* recorded his words:

The special importance of the Archdiocese which Dr. O'Brien is called upon to rule is that it embraces the political and legislative capital of Australia ...

The occupant of the See needs to possess special qualifications as a guide on moral and social problems to give a sound lead to those who mould our social life ...

As ecclesiastical leader of this See ... he is equipped to play a very useful role in the development of our national policies, but, as I know him well, I am sure that he will set his face sternly against any attempt to involve the Church in underground political intrigue.

Anything of that nature is completely foreign to his character, and he is too well versed in history to imagine that the Church's divine apostolate gains any permanent fruit when any of her misguided children seek to capture political power in her name. ("Non-Political Role of Federal Archbishop", 1954)

⁸⁹ Frank, a lawyer, became active in the Labor party in Victoria and would achieve prominence as the chair of the Australian government's 1980 "Costigan Commission" into organised crime.

⁹⁰ O'Brien lectured part time in Australian history at the University of Sydney, 1947-48 and was the author of a number of historical and other works, including *The Foundation of Australia (1786-1800)* (London, 1937). (Johnston, 2000)

Without doubt, one of the “misguided children” Simonds had in mind was Santamaria who, in 1953, was “at the peak of his influence” (Henderson, 2015, p. 201). In January that year, Santamaria had presented a paper at a Movement summer school, “Religious Apostolate and Civic Action” (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 188). The ideas in the paper were recycled in a number of forums in the subsequent months and years and proposed a form of Catholic Action Santamaria called the “way of permeation” (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 189). Santamaria appeared to suggest precisely what Simonds warned against, namely, “to capture political power” in the Church’s name. Among the people to whom Santamaria promoted his paper was the Cardinal Archbishop of Bombay, Valerian Gracias, who was a visitor to Australia during April that year. The next year, Gracias asked Santamaria for permission to publish the paper in the Bombay Catholic weekly *The Examiner*, which Santamaria granted.⁹¹ Excerpts from the paper were not published until June 1955 (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 177) but they aroused alarm. When Brian Doyle alerted Pavan to their publication, Pavan was reported to have said, “the essential propositions of these articles were completely in conflict with the social teaching” of the Church (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 274). Doyle also told Simonds about the *Examiner* articles and offered the Archbishop copies. Simonds was immediately alert and wrote back to Doyle in October 1955:

Concerning the other matter which you discussed in your letter, I must say it was somewhat surprising to me. I have not seen the “Bombay Examiner”, in which the articles you mentioned were published. But I should be very grateful if you could procure for my own use a copy of the issues concerned as I should like very much to study them. The whole matter is very important, and I should be thankful for an opportunity of keeping au fait with what Mr B.A.S. is thinking. I see very little of him. (Simonds, 1955)

Doyle sent the articles and Simonds replied:

⁹¹ The request was made in September 1954 (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 265). Cardinal Gracias was a former co-editor of *The Examiner*.

Thank you very much for your letter of the 27th Oct, enclosing copies of the articles in the *Bombay Examiner*. I read them with interest ...

They express the mind of the author which has often been hinted at here, but never fully stated as far as I know. He has a good deal of support for his general thesis over here, but I don't think it has much general support outside of Melbourne. It is not likely, I think, to reach beyond the theoretical level. (Simonds, 1955)

The *Examiner* articles later “seriously embarrassed” Santamaria when they came to light in Australia (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 265).

Doyle was to become a strong critic of Santamaria, as were two other Catholic press colleagues, Costigan himself and *Southern Cross* editor Bob Wilkinson. Simonds, also a critic, provoked strong media attention at a 1961 meeting of the CPA where he publicly distanced himself from Santamaria and revealed the secret agreement by Australia's Catholic bishops. He told the members that in January 1958 the bishops had unanimously pledged to the Pope “that the Church will never be allied to, or associated with, any political party” as the mission of the Church is “gravely compromised” when it is “made to appear as a party hack of any political body”. This was an agreement that had been broken by Simonds's fellow archbishop in Melbourne, Mannix.

Simonds kept his counsel in his West Melbourne presbytery but, after the Catholic bishops had written to the Pope in January 1958 disassociating the Church from politics, and when Mannix was clearly taking no notice, Simonds could contain himself no longer. Mannix had made another public attack on the Labor Party during the November 1958 federal election campaign (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 355). In a TV Christmas message at the end of that year, Simonds declared:

I am very happy to have the opportunity of sending this message of Christmas goodwill to the people of the community. I do so with

particular pleasure since a great number of people have expressed to me their distress that last month, during the election campaign, the Church became involved in a bitter political controversy, which is always a very regrettable circumstance. I am happy to say that I was completely unconnected with it altogether. Whenever the Church's ministry and spiritual mission becomes befogged with political issues the cause of religion always suffers. (Ormonde, 1972, p. 111)

The Archbishop's message was not reported in *The Advocate*. While a few people had got wind of an intervention by the Vatican in the Australian dispute, the official documents were not made available to clergy or laity in Sydney or Melbourne (Ormonde, 1972, p. 110). Catholics and the population in general were left in ignorance of what Rome had decreed and, in Melbourne, it was business as usual. But another opportunity to put the facts on the record presented itself to Simonds in May 1961 at the annual conference of the CPA in Melbourne. In opening the conference, Simonds revealed to the gathered Catholic editors information about the Australian bishops' response to the Rome rulings that had not been reported in the Catholic press, certainly not in Melbourne. He called on the editors to print the facts about the Movement dispute and gave a strong signal of the direction in which he might take the Melbourne Church when his turn came. This time *The Advocate* reported the Archbishop's words:

I wish to make a few remarks of importance to you men who exert such an important influence on the Catholic mind. We are all very painfully aware of the sad discord which has recently afflicted the unity and solidarity of the Catholic body in Australia. It arose from the intrusions into our historic unity of a discordant element that had its roots in party politics. Catholics are bitterly divided over these issues ... that are political rather than doctrinal ...

I know by my own personal experience, many weak Catholics are openly hostile to the Church and have abandoned the practice of

their Faith because they have imagined that the Church is involved in the wrangling of party political bodies ...

I take this opportunity in speaking to the officials of the Catholic press in Australia of telling you that at our general meeting in January 1958 the Bishops of Australia, gravely worried by the dissensions within the Catholic body, gave a unanimous pledge to the Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, that we would strive by every means in our power 'to bring about an effective and cordial unity of purpose among us for the common welfare of the Church in Australia'. We gave the Holy Father our united assurance that the Church would never be allied to, or associated with, any political party, nor would any approval or assistance be given to bodies that operate in the political field ...

We look to you as officers of the Catholic press to help us to carry out this pledge to the Holy Father. You must be scrupulously careful, in your editorial comments on current affairs and in your presentation of the news of the day, never to align the Church with any purely political party or movement. The Catholic Church, which is the Body of Christ, stands far above the sordid strife of party political jobbery, and its God-given task of saving souls is gravely compromised when the Church is made to appear as a party hack of any political body or movement. ("Press asked to work for unity in Church", 1961)

Mannix and Fox were surely not pleased with this strong rejection of the Melbourne political line. Two pages further on in the same edition of the paper appeared the report of an address given by Fox to the Tramways Employees, five days after Simonds's address. Fox's theme was the threat of communism:

"Communism must be defeated in the Trade Unions if Australia is not going to be betrayed, because it is in the unions that the power lies," said His Lordship, Bishop Fox, last Sunday.

He said that warnings of the danger of communism to Australia and to religion should not be necessary. "Yet there are Australians, and among them Catholics, who would say that the danger is very slight," said His Lordship. "Do not be mistaken, the danger is very great." ("Communist danger lies in the trade unions", 1961)

In a highlighted panel in the centre of the Fox report was a "Statement by Archbishop Mannix":

A statement made at the recent national Convention of the Catholic Press Association by His Grace Archbishop Simonds has come to my notice.

I know that every bishop in Australia would endorse my complete support of the appeal, made at the convention by His Grace, 'for unity and solidarity of the Catholic body in Australia'. In fact, I believe that the Bishops would regard such an appeal as timely and long overdue.

While Archbishop Simonds has not proposed any specific method of bringing about unity, I am confident that I would likewise have the support of all the Bishops in suggesting that the most desirable way of attempting to bring about this unity would be to re-endorse the views about communism which they expressed unanimously in their Pastoral addressed to the Catholics of Australia in 1955.

("Statement by Archbishop Mannix", 1961)

The two archbishops were clearly at odds. A minefield had been laid for the new *Advocate* editor.

Conclusion

Even before he took up his editorship at *The Advocate*, Costigan was not a typical representative of the camp in which many of his brother priests in the Archdiocese of Melbourne stood. He did not, nevertheless, arrive at the

newspaper with any notions of overturning its accepted orthodoxy, and, in any case, he had a lot to learn about how the newspaper was run and what was the role of an editor. There was a period of apprenticeship to be completed before he could find his own voice. Those apprenticeship years would take place at an exciting, even revolutionary, time for the Catholic Church, and Costigan would be caught up in its turbulence as he endeavoured to marry long-held positions – about the Church as well as his ministry as a priest – with the challenging and reforming ideas coming out of the Second Vatican Council. Those apprenticeship years, in which Costigan begins to negotiate the power dynamics in the Melbourne Church that will determine the success of his liberal project at *The Advocate*, are the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Apprentice years (*Mannix*, 1961-1963)

Introduction

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” Charles Dickens’s opening to *A Tale of Two Cities*, might well be applied to the sixties. It was a decade which saw heightened tension in the Cold War,⁹² the escalation of the Vietnam War, the assassination of an American president and, by the end of the decade, a brief threat of revolution on the streets of Paris, when discontented students rioted and ten million workers went on strike. Yet the decade is most remembered for being the period of the birth of new freedoms, of the overturning of social values which many felt had kept society in a straightjacket. Even though the May 1968 disturbances in Paris did not significantly change the course of French politics, they were described by one commentator as the moment when

the established hierarchy and formality that permeated relationships between teachers and students, parents and children, bosses and workers, and ultimately even politicians and citizens, had been upended. (“May 1968: A Month of Revolution Pushed France Into the Modern World”, 2018)

Humankind’s view of itself was also dramatically inverted towards the end of the decade, when an American astronaut brought back a photo of the Earth rising above the surface of the Moon.⁹³ Six months later the first human beings walked on its surface. The race between the nuclear superpowers to put the first man on the Moon – albeit, according to one American astronaut, no more than “a battle in the Cold War”⁹⁴ – produced a triumphant ending to the decade.

The 1960s would also be an eventful period for *The Advocate*. At the beginning of the decade, Daniel Mannix, the archbishop who had governed the Catholic

⁹² The Cuban missile crisis in October 1962 being one of the most dangerous incidents.

⁹³ Apollo 8 astronaut William Anders, Christmas Eve, 2018.

⁹⁴ Apollo 8 astronaut Frank Borman (Borman, 2009).

Church in Melbourne for 43 years, was reaching the end of his reign. While he continued to make public appearances up to his ninety-ninth year, an inner circle of senior Church officials would maintain the anti-communist and DLP line. Prominent among them was Arthur Fox, Mannix's former Vicar General and, from 1956, his assistant bishop. The chorus of episcopal support of the DLP line in *The Advocate* came also from beyond the Melbourne Archdiocese, which was the first among four Catholic dioceses in Victoria. The bishops of the other Victorian regions – James O'Collins, Bishop of Ballarat (1941-1971), Bernard Stewart, Bishop of Sandhurst (Bendigo, 1947-1979), and Patrick Lyons, Bishop of Sale (1957-1967) – were all supporters of the DLP and their views were also regularly headlined. The priests, too, in those times generally supported the party line.

Not long after the decade began, a new “associate editor”, Michael Costigan, was appointed to the newspaper. The tumultuous events of the Labor split and the public divisions in the Church no longer caught the headlines: Santamaria was no longer centre stage in the public political debates. But it would be wrong to imagine that the alignments of those years no longer signified in Church politics or culture. Santamaria continued as a cultural warrior for his brand of orthodoxy within the Church community in Melbourne, and *The Advocate* remained a journal which predominantly reflected his political viewpoint. However, events on the horizon were about to take the Catholic Church in a new direction that would see its certainties and identity more changed – and, ultimately, more significantly diminished – than they had been even by the controversies of the fifties. The increasing anxiety of Australians over the Vietnam War and the sending of Australian troops to fight there would occupy many columns in *The Advocate*, and the controversy over conscription would eventually see the new editor breaking with the paper's traditional standpoint. But of even greater significance for the Catholic Church was the Second Vatican Council. The deliberations and proposed reforms of the Council Fathers thrilled some, angered others and troubled many, as long-held certainties were shaken. The Council

provoked a seismic shift in the Catholic Church's foundations, and a half century after the event its aftershocks are still being felt. Both the Council and the Vietnam War provided new arenas for Santamaria to prosecute his conservative agenda. They also provided the *Advocate's* new editor opportunities to pursue a new direction, independent of the Santamaria crusade.

This chapter will introduce key personnel at *The Advocate* and canvass some of the power dynamics that were significant for Costigan's editorship. The chapter will summarise the significance of the Vietnam War and the Second Vatican Council for *The Advocate* and for Costigan's policy decisions.

Taking up office

In 1961 Costigan was ready to return home from his studies in Rome. He had been away from Melbourne for nine years and much had happened during his absence. But he had been kept well informed of events and looked forward to a ministry in Melbourne, which he assumed would be in parish life. Having completed an extra six-month course and successfully defended his doctoral thesis in early 1961, Costigan returned to Australia via the United States. He spent some weeks in the summer of that year working in parishes in New York City (The Bronx) and Rochester, New York State. He returned to Australia in September 1961 and undertook two very short-term appointments, firstly in the Kyneton parish and then a three-week appointment in the parish of East Brunswick. Considering his knowledge of Italian, Costigan anticipated a permanent appointment in a parish with a large Italian population (Costigan, 2013). However, in November, he received a letter appointing him "to the staff of the Advocate Press" (Mannix, 1961). It was the sort of peremptory letter not uncommon with clergy appointments in those times, as one American bishop acknowledged in a 1964 article in *The Catholic Journalist*:

... There are many ways, direct or devious, by which priests find entrance into Catholic journalism. Perhaps the most common is the

express order of the Bishop: “Reverend and dear Father: I hereby appoint you editor of the *Catholic Bugle*. You will take up residence with the Little Sisters of the Poor. Please do a good job and do not make too great a fool of yourself.” (Dwyer, 1964, p. 8)

While Costigan said the job was “unexpected” and that Simonds had actually opposed the appointment on the grounds that such a job was not good for a young priest who had been away from the diocese for such a long time (Costigan, 2015c), Costigan conceded that some articles he had written in Rome had possibly “signalled that I had a pen” (Costigan, 2011). The English *Catholic Worker*, at the behest of a classmate at Propaganda College, Adrian Hastings,⁹⁵ had published some articles by Costigan on the Movement, and he had also written articles for *The Advocate*. Mannix was unlikely to take advice from Simonds in regard to Costigan’s appointment and was said to have expressed the view that, with the Vatican Council soon to begin, *The Advocate* would benefit from having someone there with recent Roman experience (Costigan, 2016). When the *Advocate* management was looking to fill the place left by the former editor, Max Grabau, Costigan’s name was surely in contention.

Costigan was the de facto editor of *The Advocate*, but this was not his official title. His letter of appointment gave no indication of duties or title, but he was installed in succession to two previous “associate editors”, and Costigan was always careful to describe himself as such. Mannix, as the *Advocate*’s proprietor, had begun a system in the late 1930s of appointing a junior priest with the title of *Advocate* “assistant” or “associate editor”, appointing a senior, Irish priest in the role of managing editor. While, the associate editor attended to the day-to-day running of the newspaper, effectively making all the editorial decisions, the arrangement was a form of control, says Costigan. “It was a feeling that he [Mannix] could be assured that the paper was not going to go haywire, go overboard ... partly on theological matters but also on political-type matters” (Costigan, 2015c). Costigan’s superior, the managing editor throughout his

⁹⁵ Hastings would become a life-long contributor to the English journal *The Tablet*, as a theologian-historian.

editorship, was Fr Dennis Murphy, who had been in that position since 1948 (*Official Directory of the Catholic Church*, 1948). Murphy was a semi-invalid who also had a parish to run. He rarely appeared in the *Advocate* office and “never really acted as the editor” (Costigan, 2011). Murphy’s main input to the paper, according to Costigan, was to write the occasional book notice and to edit a page of Irish news. The relationship between Murphy and Costigan appears to have been benign. “The only time I annoyed Murphy was when I sent out a letter to all the priests,” Costigan said. On that occasion, Murphy had objected to Costigan writing the letter instead of the “real” editor of the paper (Costigan, 2011). The real conflict Michael was to have over his editorial policy came from higher up the chain of command.

Mannix had governed the Catholic Church in Melbourne for a few years short of half a century but by Costigan’s arrival was in semi-retirement. Costigan said that, with some exceptions, he had little to do with Mannix and felt he was given a free hand in the paper’s editorial policy in the early years. The only editorial instruction his staff ever received from Mannix, Costigan said, was, “Never use the word ‘farewell’ as a verb” (Costigan, 2013). More active in the administration of the diocese – and in setting the tone for its messages – was Bishop Fox, Mannix’s Auxiliary of nearly five years. Fox was an ardent supporter of Santamaria – one of his “minions”, according to *Southern Cross* editor Bob Wilkinson (Wilkinson, 2015). Santamaria’s style and argument were transparent in many of Fox’s sermons and addresses. Fox’s Communion breakfast address to Waterside Workers in March 1960, at which event Santamaria was also a speaker, is revealing:

We have with us today an inspired man in Mr. Santamaria. I would have liked to have seen him on the day of his Confirmation. When he received that Sacrament the Holy Ghost must have come down into his soul with all His graces and blessings. He is an extraordinary man ... I only wish his talk had been tape-recorded. It was certainly an inspired address and one that we should keep in our minds to help us to persevere in this fight against the greatest evil in the

world – communism. (“Bishop Fox Addresses the Waterside Workers”, 1960)

While Fox lacked the gravitas and erudition of Archbishop Simonds, he did not lack chutzpah and was always ready to go on the front foot in defending the Melbourne Catholic position against those he saw as its enemies or detractors. His attacks on communism and dire warnings about its danger most defined his persona. “It was communism or nothing with him,” Wilkinson said. “He was just boots and all (Wilkinson, 2015).” At the same Waterside Workers communion breakfast, Fox repeated Santamaria’s propaganda in denying that there were any secret organisations in the Catholic Church.

“Mr Whitlam [Deputy Leader of the Australian Labor Party] ... is reported also as saying that there were secret religious organizations, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, which did damage to both political parties. I have never heard of any secret religious organizations in the Catholic Church. I would like Mr Whitlam to name them. Where are they?” (“Bishop Fox Addresses the Waterside Workers”, 1960)

Fox not only stood firmly behind the DLP but, in 1960, said he was “certainly convinced that no Catholic can with a good conscience vote for the A.L.P. in the present circumstances” (“Bishop Fox Answers Dr. Rumble”, 1960). In Fox’s view, the Labor Party was a “popular front” for the communists (“A.L.P. Damaged by Association with Communism”, 1960). The relationship between Fox and Costigan was always civil, but the bishop would never be a great supporter of the new editor or of the direction in which Costigan would take the newspaper. Indeed Fox would eventually make his opposition to that direction public, causing humiliation to Costigan. When a new archbishop, James Knox, was appointed to Melbourne in Costigan’s final years at the paper, Fox would be removed to another diocese, but that was too late for Costigan.

Costigan found greater support in Melbourne's other Archbishop, Simonds, who was the Parish Priest of West Melbourne when Costigan commenced work at *The Advocate*. While Simonds's influence on diocesan policy while Mannix was alive was minor, he provided Costigan with encouragement in his editorial role. Simonds had invited Costigan to call on him for lunch when he wished, and Costigan said he had availed himself of that opportunity on occasion (Costigan, 2015c).

Within the newspaper office, too, Costigan would find strong support for his editorial directions. In particular, and even inspiring this direction, was the paper's news editor, Frank Murphy. Murphy, a man in his sixties at the time Costigan began at *The Advocate* (Costigan, 2015c), had a long history of active involvement in the Church and was an early member of the Campion Society, being invited to join in 1933 (Jory, 1986, p. 41). Murphy had earlier tried out a vocation to the priesthood with the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart but had been asked to leave when the seminary authorities took exception to an idle comment about a senior student. (According to Costigan, Murphy had described the other student, who had some position of authority, as "mediocrity enthroned" (Costigan, 2015c).) Murphy was involved in one of the Campions' first evangelical initiatives, the Melbourne Catholic Evidence Guild,⁹⁶ which would host speakers at Melbourne's Yarra Bank speakers corner, "competing with Communist, Evangelical and other pitches for the attention of the large crowds of curious or sceptical spectators". Murphy joined the Guild in 1934 and by 1936 would be the only Campion member left in it (Jory, 1986, p. 64). He nevertheless remained a regular speaker on the Yarra Bank, long after he was invited by [then associate editor] Murtagh to join the paper in 1937:

"For thirty years, Frank hardly missed a Sunday on the Yarra Bank as a Guild speaker. Fr. Murtagh tells how, in the early days, when the

⁹⁶ Founded in 1933 and modelled on the Sydney Catholic Evidence Guild, itself founded in 1925 (Jory, 1986, p. 16).

Advocate ... was certainly not paying him a very handsome wage, he used to walk to the Yarra Bank because he couldn't afford the tram-fare ... Frank kept the *Advocate* alive virtually single-handed while Fr. Murtagh was studying in Washington, later while, Father Grabau [whose editorship is discussed below] and Father Murphy were simultaneously absent for several months, and in the latter part of 1963 while I was at the Vatican Council and again during the past months, except for the time of his own illness. (Costigan, 1969)

Murphy was greatly devoted to Archbishop Mannix and published a biography of Mannix in 1948.⁹⁷ He was not so enamoured with Santamaria. "Although Mannix of course became a great backer of Santamaria, I heard [Frank] say a number of times that Santamaria had pulled the wool over Mannix's eyes" (Costigan, 2015c).

Costigan's long-term predecessor, for all of the 1940s and 1950s, was James Murtagh. Murtagh had resigned in 1959 due to a heart condition,⁹⁸ and a short-term replacement had been made at the end of that year in Fr Max Grabau, a former RAAF bomber pilot, ordained late to the priesthood. Grabau, however, had not been a success as editor. *The Advocate* was Grabau's first appointment after ordination and an unlikely one. He had a diploma of business administration but no evident journalism experience, although Church authorities may have seen his contributions to the arts pages as justifying the appointment (Costigan, 2013). Neither did Grabau appear to have the necessary disposition to deal with the stresses of a newspaper office, especially one where deep fault lines between the personnel in the Church's governing bodies were not far below the surface. Costigan said Grabau was under significant stress at *The Advocate* and may have had a "kind of nervous breakdown" after barely a year in the job (Costigan, 2011). Certainly he was subject to at least one heavy-handed

⁹⁷ *Daniel Mannix: Archbishop of Melbourne* (Advocate Press, Melbourne 1948); revised and updated as *Daniel Mannix: Archbishop of Melbourne 1917-1963* (Polding Press, Melbourne, 1973).

⁹⁸ Murtagh had had a number of heart attacks (Costigan, 2011) and resigned his position in September 1959 ("[Retirement of Fr Murtagh]", 1960).

rebuff from Fox, which he “took to heart” (Costigan, 1969). Fox had responded to an opinion Grabau expressed in an editorial about long-winded speeches by minor guests at Communion breakfasts. These were occasions for the expression of Catholic solidarity around a communal reception of Communion, followed by a shared breakfast (truly breaking the fast, given the requirement at the time for Catholics to abstain from food before receiving Communion); and they were a regular commitment in bishops’ diaries. However, said Grabau, organisers of such events needed to improve their time management, especially when a bishop had been invited to deliver an address. On this occasion, it was Archbishop Simonds who had had to cut his prepared address short because previous speakers had gone on for too long:

This is-only one of the numerous instances when this situation has occurred during the many years in which Communion breakfasts have been held. His Grace the Archbishop himself, notably at times when his people were expecting him to comment on some matter of topical public interest, has had to sit through an unconscionably long series of addresses until practically midday, so that at length he has been obliged to say that, because of the lateness of the hour, he can only be brief. (“Too Many Speeches”, 1960)

Bishop Fox expressed his contrary opinion at another Communion breakfast shortly afterwards, and his comments were carried on the front page of the following week’s edition. “Australians like making speeches. ... May the guest speaker continue to flourish,” Fox said. In his view, after reading the previous week’s editorial, the organisers of Communion breakfasts, were more likely to stop inviting the bishop than to cut down the speeches of other guests (“Australians Like Making Speeches”, 1960). Fox was certainly entitled to his view, and *The Advocate* was right to carry it. At the same time, this strong public statement was surely not only a rebuff to Grabau’s editorial but expressed a certain antipathy to Simonds’s viewpoint. There were tensions in the Church hierarchy. Grabau went on to a long and honoured ministry as a priest in

Melbourne parishes (Hart, 2006) but when Costigan began at *The Advocate*, he had been absent from the *Advocate* office for many months, his appointment as an assistant priest in the parish of Sunshine being announced in the paper a week before Costigan arrived (“Diocesan appointments”, 1961).

Within a week of his November 14 appointment letter, Costigan was in the editor’s chair in the *Advocate* office and had moved into the nearby Armadale parish, “the traditional home of the associate editor of *The Advocate*” and a position which included some light parish duties. Costigan hit the ground running and, although the Vicar General, Laurie Moran, suggested to him that a journalism course “mightn’t be a bad idea”, the new editor had had enough of study. He very quickly was “caught up in the flurry of the paper, getting it out every week and learning”, an education in which he had the support of a large *Advocate* staff and in particular his news editor, Murphy (Costigan, 2013).

After Costigan took up his chair, readers would have discerned no new line in the paper’s direction. Having landed in a job which he had not anticipated, Costigan had no particular editorial plan. Preserving the status quo seemed the logical way forward. Costigan said he was “very much an apprentice” who did not have any “anti-Santamaria views” (Costigan, 2013).

In my first year or two at *The Advocate*, I lacked the confidence to do much about this situation. In any case, I was not the titular editor, so my hands were tied. My own views on the local scene had not come into clear focus. I felt a little more detached from the squabbles of the 1950s than those who had actually been on the scene. But I did try to establish good relations with all sides and to appear to be neutral on contentious issues. (Costigan, 1969)

Vietnam

Driving much of the Church’s response to the “squabbles” of the 1950s was the fear and threat of communism, and the bogey of communism continued to

dominate the new controversies of the 1960s. This was nowhere more evident than in the Church's response to the conflict in Vietnam. Australians in general shared the anxiety of Catholics over communism and, in relation to Vietnam, had accepted the "domino" theory – "the naive belief that Communism would engulf the entire region if America lost in Vietnam" (Karnow, 1991, p. 56). In the early part of the decade, Vietnam was not prominent in the consciousness of most people but, when Prime Minister Menzies announced in November 1964 he was introducing conscription, Vietnam would increasingly become a country that Australians could not ignore. Australian Catholics were doubly motivated in their concern about Vietnam. Not only did they fear communism, they strongly identified with fellow Catholics in Vietnam, whose lives were in immediate peril from the conflict.

The simple analysis that the Vietnam War was a battle against communism belied a more complex reality. In the aftermath of the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954, Vietnam had been divided by a supposedly temporary border running half way across the country between north and south,⁹⁹ as mandated by the July 1954 Geneva Accords. That agreement marked the end of the First Indochina War, the end of colonial occupation and the division of the country between "two home-grown dictatorships" (Kiernan, 2017, p. 391). In the north, the communist Democratic Republic of Vietnam was led by its president Ho Chi Minh,¹⁰⁰ whose lifetime driving force was the unification and independence of Vietnam. In 1941, Ho had set up the Viet Minh, the League for the Independence of Vietnam, which had played a dominant role in the French defeat and which would play another significant role in the early stages of the new conflict. In the south, the Republic of Vietnam was led by Ngo Dinh Diem,¹⁰¹ also a Vietnamese nationalist but an anti-communist who, in 1954, had been appointed as the sixth prime minister of the short-lived State of Vietnam by the former and last

⁹⁹ A "military demarcation, not a political border between states" (Kiernan, 2017, p. 391).

¹⁰⁰ President from 1945, when the republic was declared, until his death in 1969.

¹⁰¹ President of the Republic of Vietnam from 1955 to 1963.

Emperor of Vietnam, Bao Dai. The Geneva Accords had proposed elections for July 1956, at which the people could decide which government would run a reunified country. The elections never happened. Neither America nor Diem's government wanted the very real possibility of Vietnam being united under the communists.¹⁰² Instead, Diem held a "heavily rigged" referendum in October 1955 (Kiernan, 2017, p. 405), in which he defeated Bao Dai and proclaimed the anti-communist Republic of Vietnam with himself as its first president. Washington now set about shoring up Diem's anti-communist government. The American presence in Vietnam expanded, in the form of, initially, "advisors" and then later as military aid to support Diem's resistance to those opposing his regime. Diem was an autocratic ruler who even his younger brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, said "could never get the support of the people" (Kiernan, 2017, p. 408). Diem maintained his control by suppressing not just his communist enemies but anti-communists groups who might otherwise have supported him (Kiernan, 2017, p. 405), creating a climate ripe for rebellion. Resistance to Diem's rule – and to the American occupation – was most intense in the form of an insurgency in the south by the Viet Minh. In 1956, after the failed elections, Viet Minh units in the south were awaiting instructions from Hanoi on the next course of action. Ho appeared reluctant to authorise armed resistance in the south, but the Viet Minh began to take up arms in any case, to defend themselves against a violent repression by Diem. Even though the Viet Minh had communist support, this was a civil war, rather than the first step in a supposedly communist expansion that would ultimately engulf neighbouring countries and eventually Australia.

Diem was a Catholic, his family having converted to Catholicism in the seventeenth century (Fall, 1984, p. 235). Catholics were a minority in Vietnam's largely Buddhist population, but a well-established minority which now had a

¹⁰² "That Southeast Asia must not be 'lost' formed part of the strategic thinking dominant in the United States at the time ... the confidential 1969 US Department of Defense historical compilation on the Vietnam War, known as the 'Pentagon Papers', asserted that the agreements specifying nationwide free elections in Vietnam in July 1956 had amounted to 'a major disaster for US interests'" (Kiernan, 2017, p. 399).

strong advocate in Diem. In the years following the country's formal division, nearly one million Vietnamese, mostly Catholics, fled from the north to the south (Karnow, 1991, p. 238).¹⁰³ Diem, their fellow religionist, gave these northern Catholics increased hope of finding a safe haven and gave Diem his "core constituency" in the south (Karnow, 1991, p. 294). In 1959, Diem "formally dedicated South Vietnam to the Virgin Mary" (Kiernan, 2017, p. 420), which probably did not help his cause in the long term.

In 1960, the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (or the National Liberation Front) was established by the communists, built on Viet Minh veterans and otherwise known as the Viet Cong. By this time, the Viet Cong was reported to be in control of many villages south of Saigon (Kiernan, 2017, pp. 413-414), and Ho Chi Minh had by now approved the use of armed force in the south, while building up his North Vietnam Army. The Second Indochina War, the Vietnam War – or the "American War", as it was known in Vietnam – was well under way, if not yet prominent in the consciousness of Australians. The first American deaths in the conflict had occurred in 1959, the prelude to more than fifty-seven thousand American personnel killed in Vietnam (Kiernan, 2017, p. 449) by the time the American War ended in 1973.¹⁰⁴ The number of these casualties would be overshadowed by civilian deaths on both sides, with estimations of a total of three million lives lost in thirty years of war up until the war's end (Kiernan, 2017, p. 451).

As Costigan began his appointment at *The Advocate* in December 1961, the American military commitment to Diem's government was escalating, albeit its air and land combat missions in the south at this juncture were covert.

¹⁰³ Images depicting Vietnamese Catholic refugees fleeing north Vietnam into the safety of the south were in the pages of *The Advocate* as early as 1960 ("[Vietnam refugee photo]", 1960).

¹⁰⁴ Long running peace talks from 1969 in Paris produced a peace agreement and "cease fire" in January 1973. The civil war nevertheless continued until the fall of Saigon in April 1975, followed by the reunification of the country as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in July 1976.

Nevertheless, “Americans were playing a direct role in what was still a South Vietnamese civil war” (Kiernan, 2017, p. 415). And *The Advocate* appeared to be cheering. A headline on a November 23 report of a Santamaria broadcast proclaimed: “Diem deserves support for South Vietnam” (1961). Support for the party line on Vietnam would continue as Costigan established himself at the newspaper. Catholic leaders in Melbourne rallied their people in prayer for the success of Diem’s government and, in April 1963, the Melbourne archdiocese would host a visit to Melbourne of Diem’s brother, Bishop Ngo Dinh Thuc, with great fanfare.¹⁰⁵ The impression of a glorious cause would soon be shattered, however. Diem’s favouritism of the Catholic minority had contributed to Buddhist protests that erupted in the middle of that year, with shocking pictures broadcast around the world of the self-immolations of Buddhist monks on the streets of Saigon. Diem’s mishandling of the Buddhist conflict prompted Washington to withdraw its support of the president and to give covert backing to a coup by South Vietnamese generals in November that led to his assassination (Kiernan, 2017, p. 422). Diem’s brother Nhu was killed alongside Diem and another brother, Can was arrested and later executed. Thuc was attending the Vatican Council in Rome and never returned to Vietnam (Kiernan, 2017, p. 422). As the complex reality of the Vietnam war and its real tragedy became more clearly defined – and as Costigan developed a more independent standpoint at *The Advocate* – the newspaper’s line on the conflict would change.

The Vatican Council

Costigan’s primary focus at the start, however, was on an event of much more moment for him. He had come back from Rome “full of Vatican II”, having been there when Pope John announced he was calling a Council (Costigan, 2011). Five weeks after he took up his duties, the Pope formally invited the bishops of the Catholic world to meet in Rome for what would be the first session of the Second

¹⁰⁵ Thuc had been made the bishop of Hue when a native Catholic hierarchy was established in Vietnam in November 1960.

Vatican Council.¹⁰⁶ In the formal document convoking the Council,¹⁰⁷ the Pope explained why he thought the Council timely. The world was under threat, he said, from new weapons that enabled self-destruction. So it was, too, because of the rise of a new materialistic order that excluded God. These very things, however, had made human beings more thoughtful, more desirous of peace and more alert to spiritual values, the Pope said, and he wanted the Church to become a partner with the world in contributing “more effectively to the solutions of the problems of the modern age”. The tone of the document was one of cooperation with the contemporary world, and also with people of other faiths. While he singled out atheism as a significant threat to the Catholic faith, his way of dealing with atheists themselves would be seen to have a flavour distinct from the Melbourne line.

The Council took place over four years, holding four sessions in 1962, 1963, 1964 and 1965. It would be a mistake to imagine that the timetable was laid out clearly in advance. Certainly, there had been two years of planning before the Council began with, largely, the Roman Curia¹⁰⁸ drafting the discussion documents. These “schemata” were the first drafts of the documents to be formally promulgated by the Pope when everyone had agreed on them. It was expected that the curial cardinals would form the “commissions” which would drive these documents forward. There was, in the end, substantial agreement on most of the sixteen documents finally issued – but not before the bishops of the world had wrenched control from the curial bishops. In the first session of the Council, the bishops nominated alternative representatives on the commissions, including more representation from the wider Church, and they also rejected the curial drafts. Some bishops assumed the business of the council would be concluded in a short

¹⁰⁶ The First Vatican Council was held between 1869 and 1870 but was interrupted with the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War and its deliberations were never completed.

¹⁰⁷ *Humanae Salutis*, December 25 1961.

¹⁰⁸ The group of administrative organisations in the Vatican supporting the governance of the Church – the Vatican’s “public service”.

space of time, but the process took a lot longer. For the bishops, the historic gathering¹⁰⁹ was also a journey whose path was by no means clearly delineated.

While only the bishops and some superiors of major religious orders could vote on the draft documents, special advisors, “periti” (experts), also attended the sessions, by invitation. One peritus, appointed by Pope John, theologian and Jesuit priest Hans Kung,¹¹⁰ was in no doubt about the Council’s significance:

When we look back on the achievements of this first period of Vatican II, we can only wonder in joy and amazement at what has already been done. We can affirm this much already, after the first session: the Second Vatican council has begun a new epoch, a new epoch in the history of the Catholic Church and of the whole of Christendom. (Kung, 1963, p. 420)

Not so exuberant was Bishop Fox in Melbourne. At a special Mass for the opening of the second session of the Council in September 1963, Fox told the congregation that, “The first session ended without ... a great deal being accomplished.” His main concern, communism, had not been addressed, but he “would not be surprised ... if the question of communism was discussed at the coming session” (“Eyes of the World Will Be Focused on Rome”, 1963). Fox was wrong about that¹¹¹ but his lukewarm attitude to the council was shared by many of his brother bishops in Australia. As Catholic historian Edmund Campion observed: “Their expectations were low ... 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” (Campion, 2012, p. 106). Nevertheless, Campion singled out one, surprising exception to this general rule:

¹⁰⁹ More Catholic bishops, from a wider diversity of nations, gathered in Rome than had ever before for the previous 20 ecumenical councils, convened over a period of 1900 years.

¹¹⁰ Kung later became very critical of the Church and, in 1979, was stripped of his right to teach Catholic theology after questioning papal infallibility.

¹¹¹ The Council documents are silent on the question of communism, a matter of subsequent controversy.

Not all of our bishops were completely unprepared ... 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 than 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.' ...

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. (Campion, 2012)

Mannix's response might be explained by his general antipathy towards Vatican authority in general and the Roman Curia in particular. Nevertheless his response puts him, at this point in history, in the camp of the Church reformers, since this first draft of *Lumen Gentium* was similarly rejected by the Council Fathers for its

over-juridical outlook and its sidelining of the lay people to a submissive position under the bishops (Gleeson, 2004, p. 2). Mannix's new editor, Costigan, had had a privileged view of the new thinking in the Church during his time in Rome and he was in no doubt that the Council was an historic moment. There was something of a crusade in his desire to bring the historic gathering of Catholic Church leaders to the attention of his readers.

I knew enough Church history and had enough of a sense of the Church to realise this was going to be a big event. When I came back to Melbourne what I discerned was a kind of apathy about it, and ignorance ... apathy among a lot of the clergy and some of the bishops. And people didn't know, and I kind of saw it as my mission to tell them about it. (Costigan, 2011)

Nevertheless, there was a problem for journalists in getting information about the Council's proceedings. The formal discussion sessions were closed to reporters. Instead, they were provided with press releases from an office set up at some distance away, staffed by people who were themselves excluded from the Council's sessions (Gribble, 2017, p. 31). Costigan, however, had some good Roman contacts and found ways around this obstacle (as did many other journalists). The clergy grapevine yielded much fruit. "My fellow chaplain at Boys Town¹¹² ... was also on some of the committees preparing for Vatican II ... We used to talk a lot about what was happening and he used to let me know stuff" (Costigan, 2011). There were also other insiders, in particular a priest writing under the pseudonym "Xavier Rynne",¹¹³ whose dispatches were seized on by

¹¹² During 1958 and 1960 Costigan had resided as chaplain at Rome's Boys Town (Citta dei Ragazzi), a home for homeless and orphaned boys just outside Rome, while he continued his studies. (Costigan, 2015b)

¹¹³ His identity was later revealed as a professor of moral theology at the Pontifical Lateran University, Redemptorist priest Francis X. Murphy. Murphy's reports were published in a series of "Letters" in *The New Yorker*, later turned into books which became key references for the Council, from a progressive point of view. ("Francis Murphy Dies at 87; Chronicled Vatican Debates", 2002; "Controversial, familiar voice has returned: writer 'Xavier Rynne' hasn't lost his style", 1993)

journalists around the world, including Costigan. Xavier Rynne was criticised for his black and white liberals-versus-conservative critiques, but he made good newspaper copy.

With these sources Costigan ensured that the forthcoming Council was kept before *Advocate* readers throughout his first full year as editor, in articles such as: “Ecumenical Council to Open on 11 October” (*Advocate*, 15/2/1962), “Preparations for Vatican Council” (14/4/1962), “Will Ecumenical Council be a ‘Great Awakening’?” (3/5/1962), “Final Preparation for Ecumenical Council” (5/7/1962), “Basic Programme for Ecumenical Council” (2/8/1962), “Cardinal Bea Warns Against Undue Optimism” (23/8/1962). Once the Council was in session, *The Advocate* covered its deliberations in detail and, in particular, in an entertaining weekly “Rome Newsletter” by Roman correspondent Desmond O’Grady.¹¹⁴ In 2010 Costigan remarked that some of Australia’s bishops considered that “any calls for change or reform were unnecessary – or, even worse, dangerous” (Costigan, 2010). He was to discover that publishing calls for change was also dangerous, when one of O’Grady’s newsletters carried a report about “a group of delegates” at the Council who were lobbying for a change in the Church’s policy of excluding women from the priesthood (“Cost of the Council could be astronomical”, 1962). The report was among a list of potential discussion topics for the bishops, presented somewhat whimsically, although also somewhat inaccurately. An article in the following week’s edition explained that the group actually comprised “Swiss suffragettes”, not official delegates and that it seemed “unlikely ... that consideration will be given to the admittance of women to the priesthood” (“Proposal from Swiss Suffragettes”, 1962). Despite this generally balanced and newsworthy report, a fierce reaction came from the Bishop of Sale, Patrick Lyons, who publicly criticised *The Advocate*, saying that the *Advocate*’s editor “should have known better” than to have allowed the airing of such impossibilities (Costigan, 2013).

¹¹⁴ Previously O’Grady had been literary editor of *The Bulletin*.

The Church policy of secrecy over what the Council fathers were discussing in their closed sessions became untenable following the first session, particularly in the light of the intense interest of people around the world in an event which, if nothing else, offered great pageantry and spectacle. Given that a significant part of their discussion was about more openness, the bishops saw that the world needed to know what was going on and, for the remaining Council sessions, the media were given access to all the formal debates.

Costigan's access to the Council was particularly enhanced for reporting the second session when he was given the opportunity to go to Rome himself as a Council correspondent for several Catholic newspapers. He was promoted in this role by the Archbishop of Hobart, Guilford Young, at a meeting of the CPA in Hobart in March 1963.¹¹⁵ Young came to all the sessions, Costigan said, and enthused about the Council.

He said to us at the meetings that whatever happens ... someone from the Catholic press should go to Rome to report the next session, the Second session. So four of the papers, *The Advocate*, *Tribune*, *The Southern Cross* and the *Hobart Standard* came to me and said you're the obvious one to go because you've got the Rome background and the language. (Costigan, 2011)

Costigan, after his return from covering the Council, said, "It was a totally transforming experience. I'd spent nine years in Rome doing ecclesiastical studies but ... I learnt a lot more theology in those three or four months than I had in nine years" (Costigan, 2011).

There was a significant hiatus in the Council's schedule when Pope John died in June that year, causing the Council to be automatically suspended. One of the first acts of the new Pope, Paul VI, however, was to announce that the Council would continue, and the second session opened on September 29. The day

¹¹⁵ March 26-28, 1963.

before, Costigan picked up his ticket for the opening ceremony from the Vatican media office. He was well ensconced in the city, having secured free accommodation with the Blessed Sacrament Fathers in return for acting as a chauffeur for some of the Council delegates who were staying in the same house (Costigan, 2010). Costigan's reporting of this session of the Council would establish the *Advocate's* reputation as one of the most authoritative sources for Australian Catholics on the events and output of the Council. While the Council produced only two documents in that session (one, on the liturgy, signalling historic changes to the worship practices of Catholics,¹¹⁶ and the other, on the media of social communications,¹¹⁷ bringing general disappointment) the debates of the Council Fathers indicated a profound change in thinking in the Catholic Church. Instead of describing itself in terms of hierarchy and authority, as in previous councils, the idea of "the people of God" and of lay leadership became the central motifs. A new attitude of listening to the world was in evidence, and this encouraged Catholic newspaper editors to talk about a new openness in the Catholic press. The Council document on communications, *Inter Mirifica*, had avoided any substantial definition of the role of the Catholic press but Catholic editors in the months ahead began to attempt their own definitions, and *The Advocate* would expound its own view of the role of a Catholic newspaper.

Conclusion

For the whole world, 1963 had been a tumultuous year. In November, South Vietnam's President Diem was assassinated¹¹⁸ and, more momentously, so was President John Kennedy.¹¹⁹ In the same month, between these two deaths, Mannix died,¹²⁰ marking the end of 46 years' leadership of the Archdiocese of Melbourne. For the Church of Melbourne, this last death was especially

¹¹⁶ *Sacrosanctum Consilium*, December 4 1963.

¹¹⁷ *Inter Mirifica*, December 4 1963.

¹¹⁸ November 1.

¹¹⁹ November 22.

¹²⁰ November 6.

significant, signalling a new era for the Archdiocese under a new Archbishop whose understanding of the Church's mission was vastly different to that of his predecessor. Simonds's enthronement promised, too, a more supportive future for the *Advocate's* editor.

The next chapter will describe key events and issues during what will turn out to be a short reign for the new Archbishop of Melbourne. It will show Costigan, during the final sessions of the Vatican Council, beginning to develop his own editorial style, as he sees the opportunity, under Simonds, for a more open and less politically partisan editorial policy. In particular, the chapter will discuss the impact of the Second Vatican Council on the Church and on the newspaper, and the changing attitudes towards Communism and the Vietnam War. These events were the catalyst for a unique phase in the liberal project for the Catholic press in Melbourne.

Chapter 5: Turning the ship around (Simonds, 1964-1965)

Introduction

The previous chapter described the early, “apprentice” years of Michael Costigan, following his appointment as associate editor at Melbourne’s main Catholic newspaper *The Advocate*. These were the final years in the reign of the ageing Archbishop Daniel Mannix. Costigan had not brought any reforming agenda to his role as the *Advocate*’s de facto editor. In his first years, the paper continued an editorial line that was generally supportive of the politics of Santamaria and his National Civic Council. It was business as usual and Costigan, moreover, did not feel confident about exercising too much independence, conscious that the veteran staff at *The Advocate* might well think of him as “this young upstart priest” (Costigan, 2015c). More significantly, Costigan had been preoccupied with a watershed event in the Catholic Church, the Second Vatican Council, which began in 1962. His reporting of the Council over the next few years would be acclaimed by later commentators for its significant contribution to informing and educating the Australian Church but, in the Council’s first session in 1962, Costigan had to deal with the problem of sourcing accurate, independent information about the deliberations of the “Council Fathers”, the Catholic bishops. Reports of the bishops’ initial, behind-closed-doors meetings were heavily censored by Vatican authorities, and Costigan had to rely heavily for information on the contacts he had made during his earlier studies in Rome. In 1963, the communication channels were freed up and Costigan went to Rome himself to report the Council’s second session first hand.

In 1964, the year in which this chapter begins, Costigan decided not to attend the Council’s third session. The chapter will show how the *Advocate* editor, growing more confident in his role, began to give the newspaper a more independent editorial direction and, in so doing, began to articulate, with Catholic press colleagues, a new definition of the role of a Catholic newspaper. A number of

Catholic thinkers, including the philosopher Jacques Maritain and his own Roman tutor, Pietro Pavan, had disposed him to the idea of running a Catholic publication along the lines of a true newspaper, rather than a house organ, with its pages reflecting a wide range of views, including those not officially sanctioned by Church authorities. Nevertheless, up until this point, the idea of a “liberal project” for the Catholic press had not been at the front of his mind. Now, the ferment of thinking provoked by Vatican II and the Council’s own *aggiornamento* galvanised Costigan into a direction that might bring more freedom of expression into the pages of *The Advocate*.

No small opportunity for taking *The Advocate* in this new direction was provided in late 1963 by the installation of Justin Simonds as Archbishop of Melbourne, following the death of Mannix. Costigan knew he had an ally in the new Archbishop in his project of “updating” *The Advocate*, and Simonds’s early moves against Santamaria had appeared to be a first move in freeing the newspaper from that particular external influence. Costigan would find another significant support base in his fellow Catholic editors in the Catholic Press Association. As secretary of that organisation, he was involved in the drafting of a CPA document in 1964 in response to the Vatican Council, which was a first attempt at an official level in Australia at a definition of the Catholic press, in terms which described a liberal project.

Apart from the Council, the Vietnam War began to focus the attention of Melbourne Catholics during these years. Both events would provide challenges for the editor to walk the narrow line of establishing the *Advocate*’s independence from outside control without at same time alienating his readers and superiors. From 1964, *The Advocate* began to reflect views which diverged noticeably from the Santamaria line. The positions *The Advocate* took were well supported by documents coming from two forward-thinking popes – John XXIII and Paul VI. However, the Melbourne Church’s new dawn would be clouded by Simonds’s declining health. The resulting power vacuum and resurgence of the

Santamaria followers would bring new pressures on the *Advocate* associate editor and jeopardise the liberal project.

A new archbishop and a new broom

Costigan had completed almost two years as *Advocate* associate editor when the long Mannix reign came to an end, heralding a new era for the Melbourne Church. By 1963 Mannix was virtually a recluse in his home at Raheen in Studley Park. His last public appearance was on St Patrick's Day the previous year. Mannix held on to his position of Archbishop, nevertheless, and, in the words of his biographer Max Vodola, "in his wily ways, retained total control of the archdiocese until his death" (Vodola, 1997, p. 41). In a review of James Griffin's biography of Mannix, Bruce Duncan asked: "Did Mannix cling to his position, even though in later years he was largely confined to his residence, simply to prevent Simonds closing down the Santamaria movement in Melbourne ("Griffin on Mannix", 2013)?" Whatever the answer, it was clear in 1963 that there was going to be a new Archbishop before very long, and everyone knew who it would be – the parish priest of Melbourne East, Justin Simonds.

Mannix fell seriously ill on November 5, 1963, and Simonds, in Rome at the second session of the Council, received an "urgent summons" to return home. He was on a plane early the next morning just before a second cable arrived to say Mannix had died (Laffin, 2014, p. 437). The old archbishop was one year short of 100. Simonds arrived home in time to preach the funeral panegyric (Vodola, 1997, p. 86).¹²¹ The new Archbishop had made it clear he would take the Melbourne Archdiocese in a direction other than that of his illustrious predecessor and he began the process of putting the Mannix-Santamaria years behind him at Mannix's funeral, downplaying the former archbishop's contribution to Australian political life and instead praising his piety:

¹²¹ November 10, 1963.

It is, however, one of the ironies of human life that, when the spotlight of political prominence is unduly played upon ecclesiastical leaders, their truly greatest work is often overshadowed in the minds of men. Archbishop Mannix's incursions into the affairs of State were not his greatest contribution to Australian public life. He was primarily a man of God ... and vastly enriched the Australian Church. ("Archbishop Simonds's Panegyric", 1963)

Simonds's comments were not disingenuous, since there was an aspect of the former archbishop's life that was deeply spiritual, ascetic and humble (Franklin, Nolan, & Gilchrist, 2014, p. 62). Nevertheless, in playing down Mannix's political role, Simonds was defining a priority for his own leadership, one more proper, in his view, for Church leaders, namely, that of caring for the spiritual welfare of the people. However, while Mannix was gone, his protégé, Santamaria – even more implicated in "incursions into the affairs of State" – was still active as a spokesperson for the Catholic Church, featuring on the weekly Catholic television programme, "Sunday Magazine" on HSV 7. In his spring cleaning of the archdiocese, Simonds had Santamaria in his sights. The Archbishop had already made moves to sideline Santamaria, replacing him, in the late 1950s, as the drafter of the Catholic bishops' annual social justice statements (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 382). Now, in his first week in office, he took a more dramatic step. Two days after Mannix's funeral, he removed Santamaria from "Sunday Magazine". Santamaria's sacking was a powerful statement, and a controversial one. Costigan said that even Simonds was "staggered at the reaction".

When I had a private interview with him a couple of months later, he was still visibly shaken when recalling it. He had been kept for so long out of the centre of things in the diocese ("I am just a glorified parish priest – nobody tells me anything", he used to say) that he was unable to guess at the real strength and passion of the Santamaria following. (Costigan, 1969)

On November 21, Simonds explained his actions in an address to the members of a Catholic luncheon club. Referring to his “twenty-one years on the sidelines”, he said he had spent much time contemplating the problems he would have to deal with when he took up the “burden” of being Archbishop. The reason for removing Santamaria was that the statutory time then allotted to churches on television and radio¹²² was “for the exposition of Catholic spirituality and doctrine”, he said.

When I was asked to take on the burden there was an election coming on and I did not want the session to be used for a political purpose ... And so I asked Mr Santamaria to step down and allow the session to be used for its true, its juridical purpose. Mr Santamaria gave me not the slightest murmur or criticism ...

But some of Mr Santamaria’s friends were not very pleased. I received a lot of letters. I have not answered them and I do not intend to answer them ...

There was no one in this city more pleased than I was to read today that Mr Santamaria now has his own television session ... I sent him my blessing. (“Did not want session used for politics”, 1963)

Within days of his sacking from “Sunday magazine”, Santamaria had been offered a segment on another TV station, GTV 9, which eventually became his long-running “Point of View”. As far as neutralising Santamaria’s voice in Melbourne, Simonds’s action had less effect than the Archbishop might have hoped.

Simonds’s eschewing of Church involvement in politics was not, it should be said, a retreat into piousness or a denial that Catholics had a significant role to play in the world. In a 1937 pastoral letter, written when he was Archbishop of Hobart, he had reminded his people that they had a role to play in social action, which was “to bring the principles of Christ to bear upon every phase of our personal and social life”. (Simonds, “Our Incorporation in the Priesthood of Jesus Christ”,

¹²² A requirement which lapsed in the 1980s.

cited in Vodola, 1997, p. 36.) His idea that the people shared in “the priesthood of Christ” would be a prominent theme in the documents of the Vatican Council to come and, in that regard, Simonds was ahead of the game.

Alongside the very public removal of Santamaria from “Sunday Magazine”, Simonds began to restrict the influence of the small group of clerics who had surrounded Mannix and who administered the archdiocese on Mannix’s behalf. According to Vodola, one of the Archbishop’s first policy decisions was seen in “the disbanding of this form of bureaucratic monopoly” (Vodola, 1997, p. 42). The attitudes and the culture of the Mannix years were, however, deeply ingrained, and turning the ship around was not as simple a task as changing job titles. Santamaria’s Movement was alive and well in the form of the National Civic Council, and the DLP still held out hope of being a political force, since its policy of “punishing” the Labor Party by directing its second preferences to the Liberal Party continued, for the time being, to be effective (Lyons, 2008, p. 430).

Costigan returns from the Council with new ideas

While Simonds was setting his new course for the Melbourne Church, Costigan was in Rome observing the last days of the second session of the Council. His distance from the events which so preoccupied the Melbourne Church allowed him a more expansive view of the Church, and exposed him to new ideas about the Catholic press, which were reinforced on a significant trip home through the United States. Throughout this Council session, Costigan had been sending reports back to *The Advocate*, and “Father Costigan’s Council diary” had been appearing regularly in the newspaper. An entry in Costigan’s personal diary records his attendance on December 1, just before the second session ended,¹²³ at a “Symposium of International Catholic Press Union, where John Courtney Murray was a guest speaker” (Costigan, 2010). At the UCIP meeting, Courtney Murray spoke of the role of the Catholic press as analogous to the role of the

¹²³ The second session concluded on December 4, 1963.

secular press, itself a “vehicle, as it were, of a dialogue between the people and the government”. (Courtney Murray’s understanding of the role of the Catholic press is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.) Also in Costigan’s diary for the same day was this note: “Went to Domus Mariae to hear De Lubac on Teilhard de Chardin” (Costigan, 2010). Henri De Lubac was a peritus at the Council and credited with making a significant contribution to two key Council documents, *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) and *Gaudium et Spes* (Constitution on the Church in the Modern World). Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was a palaeontologist and a philosopher. Both were Jesuit priests whose written works were at various times banned by Church authorities for not conforming to orthodox teaching. In their later years both were looked on more favourably: de Lubac was made a cardinal and Teilhard’s works were cited by Pope Francis in his 2015 encyclical on the environment, *Laudato si’*. Costigan was aligning himself with this progressive thinking, and he later reflected that awareness of these new ideas had begun even earlier, during his seminary studies:

Although my theology studies in Rome in the 1950s ... had been at the feet of generally conservative or so-called ultramontane¹²⁴ lecturers, I was not immune from the influence of some of those they attacked. These were in the most cases French, German, Swiss and Belgian theologians, but they also included such non-Europeans as the American Jesuit John Courtney Murray, a particular *bête-noir* of the author of one of my Lateran University textbooks, the formidable Cardinal Ottaviani.¹²⁵ (“Vatican II – How the Council has dominated my life”, 2012)

¹²⁴ “Beyond the mountains”: an epithet long used in the Church to describe a conservative viewpoint among those who looked back across the Alps from Europe to Roman Church authorities for validation of their views.

¹²⁵ Ottaviani was Pro-Prefect of the Vatican’s Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith and a prominent conservative at the Vatican Council. He opposed John XXIII’s moves towards dialogue with communists and resisted changes to the traditional Mass.

Before he returned to Melbourne, some of the journalists Costigan had befriended in Rome invited him to visit their publications. Simonds approved a return trip home via the United States (Costigan, 2015c) and, on December 10, Costigan left Rome for New York, where he first visited the office of *America*, a Jesuit-run weekly magazine which had Courtney Murray as one of its contributors. *America* was an independent Catholic publication, not subject to any official diocesan control. Its contemporary website says that it “aggressively promoted racial and social justice from the 1930s through the 1960s” (“About America Media”, 2018). Costigan’s host at *America* was the magazine’s then associate editor, the Jesuit Don Campion. Whether the two associate editors shared similar views about the role of a Catholic editor, Costigan cannot recall. Nevertheless the two men in time would appear to develop a similar editorial strategy in the running of their newspapers, a strategy which walked a narrow and fragile line between appeasing, on the one hand, that section of their paper’s readership which looked for change and, on the other, that section which resisted it. Campion’s editorial diplomacy would be seen in 1968 when he became *America*’s editor in chief and took on a new theology and religion editor, another Jesuit, John Haughey.¹²⁶ Haughey arrived at *America* at the moment when Pope Paul VI released his controversial encyclical on contraception, *Humane Vitae*.¹²⁷ Haughey’s later reflections on this event well illustrate the dilemma faced, even by an independent, progressive Catholic journal, when it came to publishing controversial material. The Pope’s release of *Humane Vitae* was a watershed moment for Catholics. The document’s ban on artificial contraception produced a level of dissent among both Catholic lay people and priests that was unprecedented at the time. How the matter should be reported also presented a serious dilemma for Catholic editors. The independent London Catholic Weekly *The Tablet* criticised the encyclical in an editorial by its newly-arrived editor, Tom Burns, who said: “We must honestly confess that neither joy nor hope can we derive from the Encyclical.” The *Tablet*’s response to the

¹²⁶ *America* editor 1968 to 1974.

¹²⁷ July 26 1968.

encyclical produced “an alarming fall in the *Tablet*’s circulation among its more conservative readers” (“Tom Burns – Obituary”, 1995). *America*’s response might have echoed the *Tablet*’s if it was not for Campion’s curbing the passion of his junior editor. Haughey said he had “represented the restive crowd that wanted Vatican II to be implemented through the magazine much faster than the older heads around the editorial table thought was prudent” (“Our Back Pages: Reminiscences of America’ s editors and staff”, 2009). Campion had asked Haughey to write an editorial on the papal encyclical but, when Campion saw the draft, he wanted it toned down. Haughey explained why:

The gist of my text was that the encyclical was a real mistake and was going to challenge the church in drastic ways. Don did not accept a word of what I wrote; he felt the need to be more even-handed toward Paul VI and much more gentle. In hindsight, I think he was more aware of the *America* readership than I took into account. (“Our Back Pages: Reminiscences of America's editors and staff”, 2009).

In 1963, *Humane Vitae* was some years away, but when the moment came, Costigan’s editorial response would be closer to *America*’s cautious approach than to the *Tablet*’s outrage. Nevertheless, the cautious response that sought a middle way between too much challenge for readers and too much safety was a narrow path for a Catholic editor and ran the risk of neither pleasing the progressives nor the conservatives. In a long letter to Archbishop Knox written in 1969, in which Costigan surveyed his time as *Advocate* associate editor, he made the rueful reflection: “I have the distinction of having been attacked in the pages of both the *Catholic Worker* and *News-Weekly*!” The *Catholic Worker* had attacked *The Advocate* for its allegedly being controlled by Santamaria’s National Civic Council (NCC) supporters; *News-Weekly* was the organ of the NCC. Costigan’s plaintive cry recalls John Courtney Murray’s warning to Catholic press personnel in his 1963 address to UCIP in Rome:

It seems to me that the Catholic press lives and works upon, as it were, a border line, the border line between the Church and the world. The Catholic press occupies an exposed place and therefore a perilous place. If you stand on the border line between the Church and the world you must expect to be shot at from both sides.

(Courtney Murray, 1964)

While in New York, Costigan was invited to visit the Diocese of Kansas City whose Catholic newspaper, the *Catholic Reporter*, was edited by a lay journalist, Robert Hoyt, said to be among a new “cadre of young, professional Catholic journalists [which had] emerged to test the limits of traditional Catholic journalism” (Burns, 2007, p. 109). Costigan met Hoyt and his bishop, Charles Helmsing. At the time, Hoyt had plans to convert his newspaper into the *National Catholic Reporter* and, with Helmsing’s approval, the national newspaper was launched in 1964. The journal continues today as “the only significant alternative Catholic voice” in the United States”, according to its own description (“Mission and Values”, 2018). Costigan later expressed pleasure in being “there at the gestation” of this progressive newspaper. He also described Helmsing as “one of the more progressive American bishops at Vatican II” (Costigan, 2015c) – but this was before Helmsing condemned the NCR for its “heretical views”.¹²⁸ Costigan’s association with these progressive editors likely had an influence on the direction of his own editorship of *The Advocate*. At the least, it indicated in which direction his inclinations lay.

Costigan was back in Melbourne for the new year of 1964, with a new archbishop and the first two Council documents, hot off the press, to occupy his attention. *Inter Mirifica*, on communications, would provide intense study for the Catholic Press Association but would ultimately cause few ripples; *Sacrosanctum Consilium*, on the liturgy, would make considerably more waves, presaging substantial changes to the traditional Catholic Mass. There were two more

¹²⁸ Costigan’s view of this condemnation was that Helmsing had “been leant on by some of his conservative mates ... and his own career might be in jeopardy” (Costigan, 2017a).

sessions of the Council, in 1964 and 1965. Costigan did not return for either, although Simonds asked him before the third session whether he wanted to go back to Rome to cover it. Costigan said he would not return to Rome, since “heading off for three or four months was putting a bit of a strain on Frank Murphy, the news editor”. Besides, Costigan had established good contacts overseas and had become well informed about the Council’s procedures and personalities. With this familiarity, and with fluency in Italian and the ability to read French, he was in a good position to report what was going on, with the help of four publications in particular which he said had “the best coverage” of the Council: *L’Avvenire d’Italia* (a progressive, Catholic-inspired daily, based in Bologna), *Le Monde* (independent French daily, based in Paris), *The Tablet* and the *National Catholic Reporter*. Informing *Advocate* readers of what was happening in Rome at the Council and what it all meant would focus Costigan’s attention for the next several years. “I used to burn the midnight oil every week. We published for those last two sessions a four-page insert in *The Advocate* where I would do a synopsis, day by day, of the council and put in little news items of what was happening” (Costigan, 2011). Historian Ed Campion said, “No Catholic weekly in the English-speaking world covered the council better than *The Advocate*”, (Costigan, 2011) and even Fox was full of praise for the *Advocate* associate editor when the bishop addressed members of the Catholic Press Association gathered for their annual meeting in 1964: “I consider that during the second session of the Council the Press, both secular and religious, but particularly the latter, did a mighty job ... Might I congratulate Fr Costigan, your secretary, on his work of reporting the second session of the Council” (“Bishop Fox Praises Press Coverage”, 1964). Costigan’s focus on the Council did not end after it closed in December 1965 and its impact in his life remained all-consuming. “In the few years immediately after the council I was fully occupied writing, editing, speaking, conducting courses and organising inter-church seminars in Melbourne about the council. In that period the council had in a way taken over my life” (“Vatican II – How the Council has dominated my life”, 2012).

Is a diocesan newspaper ‘official’?

There was a wide diversity in readers’ expectations about what should be reported in their Catholic newspaper, and a crucial question was whether a diocesan paper represented the official voice of the Catholic Church. To what degree did a Catholic editor have independence from presenting that official view? Simonds’s sacking of Santamaria prompted a reaction in the secular press that provided an opportunity for *The Advocate* to make a policy statement about its editorial independence. While Costigan was in Rome, the paper’s direction was in the hands of Frank Murphy, an experienced editor who was of a similar mind to Costigan in regard to editorial independence, and quite likely helped to develop Costigan’s thinking. On the editorial page of November 28, 1963 (the week President John F Kennedy was assassinated) was a commentary on the reaction of some Sydney papers to Simonds’s sacking of Santamaria. The *Daily Mirror* had claimed that Simonds’s action had come with the approval and, indeed, instruction of the Vatican. The *Mirror*, quoting a United Press International correspondent in Rome, said that “Vatican sources ‘condoned and even highly applauded’ the political assassination of Mr BA Santamaria.” While *The Advocate* said the *Mirror*’s source was not properly verified, there may well have been truth in the *Mirror*’s assertions that certain people in Rome were looking on with pleasure at Simonds’s action. Certainly, there were highly influential people in the Vatican, such as Pavan, who would have done so. Bruce Duncan suggested that, in moving swiftly to curb the Santamaria influence, Simonds was indeed “acting on instructions from Agagianian” (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 382), the cardinal who had banished the pro-Santamaria Apostolic Nuncio to Peru. Simonds, nevertheless, in his address to the Catholic luncheon club, said the *Mirror* had reached “a pretty low level” in having “the audacity to say that the Holy See had ordered me to do what I had done”.

Perhaps of more immediate concern to the *Advocate*’s editorial writer, however, was the claim in the *Mirror* article that “the two official newspapers of the

Melbourne Archdiocese, *The Advocate* and *The Tribune*, have been declared out of bounds for [Santamaria's] propaganda". The leader writer said the *Mirror's* assertion was "the first *The Advocate* heard of it", and went on to make a significant statement of editorial policy:

Such papers as *The Advocate* are not official. The only official part of them is that announcing official engagements of statements issued for publication by the Archbishop or his Vicar-general, or similar releases by the authorities of other Victorian dioceses.

News items, which include those on international affairs coming from the NCWC¹²⁹ and United Press International (used also by the daily press), are obviously not official and the various expressions of opinion by writers of news, film, theatre, radio and TV, music and sporting reviews, or the information contained in them, and in *Cooking Notes*, can in no way be attributed to the ecclesiastical authorities.

The editor is, of course, responsible for seeing that such news and views do not conflict with Catholic faith or morals and that, on the positive side, they help to promote standards and convey information in accordance with Catholic principles. Hence such papers sometimes disagree in their points of view, but their individual opinions are not officially those of the Church. ("The Press and Archbishop Simonds", 1963)

The question of whether a Catholic newspaper should be understood to represent views and opinions sanctioned by the hierarchy is key to a discussion of the liberal project, and the question is fraught. It was relevant to Catholic editors in

¹²⁹ The National Catholic Welfare Council Press Department, founded by the US bishops in 1920, became the National Catholic News Service (NC News) in 1967 and the Catholic News Service (CNS) in 1986, which continues today as, "an editorially independent and financially self-sustaining division of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops". (American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives, 2018). Australian Catholic newspapers relied heavily on this news agency.

Australia and also in America. In a 1958 article discussing the Catholic press in the United States, Australian priest Gregory Meere said readers in that country were not clear about the “official” status of their Catholic newspapers and that Catholic editors had muddied the waters.

As far back as 1866 the Bishops had declined responsibility for anything except what was labelled an official notice, and had warned readers against concluding that the rest had the Bishop’s sanction and approval. However this does not mean that readers of the Catholic Press are clear on the point. Moreover, there is much more than the use of the word “official” invoked. For example, it is typical Catholic Press sales talk to say: “We undertake to give you the Catholic viewpoint on all important events of the day.” This implies that there is a definitive Catholic judgement to be delivered on these events. (Meere, 1958b, p. 23)

Meere suggested that, while an understanding of Maritain’s distinctions between the “spiritual” and “temporal” planes of Christian activity might help people to distinguish between that content in the Catholic press which commits the Church and that which does not, this did not appear to have been helpful to Catholic editors, at least in America. Meere said that the problem remained

of how the Catholic Press can treat temporal questions without confusing Catholics on what is Catholic teaching and what is a Catholic opinion. Various writers have proposed solutions, notably Maritain in his *True Humanism*. But a regional meeting of the [US] CPA last year [1957] showed that no agreement had been reached on the matter. Some said there is no place in Catholic Press editorials for a specific stand on temporal issues, since there is too much of the “official” about the press. Others denied this. They said a whole group of attitudes should be represented and this in a clearly designated section of the paper where people will expect such treatment of temporal questions. (Meere, 1958b, pp. 24-25)

This same fraught debate over whether the Catholic paper might be understood to carry views which are not sanctioned by the hierarchy had been underway in the United States for some years. One Catholic journalist in California who did appear to be clear about where the direction of his newspaper lay was the editor of the *San Francisco Monitor*, John O'Connor. O'Connor, one of the few lay people in charge of a Catholic paper in America in those years, described the dawn of the 1960s as beginning a "new age" for the Catholic press, and he set about defining that new age in his newspaper. Catholic historian Jeffrey Burns, in an article in the *US Catholic Historian*, summed up O'Connor's version of the liberal project and described O'Connor's personal rise – and fall, since his crusade was to have an unhappy ending. O'Connor's editorials proclaimed there was "room for a difference of opinion within the Church" and described the need for "creative dialogue and open discussion", which he said it was the Catholic press's role to facilitate. Burns sums up the new age in terms which might well define the liberal project:

Catholic newspapers were encouraged to move away from being "house organs" or from simply being the mouthpiece of the local bishop. The Catholic press was to be professional, technically competent, and driven by the same standards as the secular press. In the language of the era, the Church and its press had to emerge from the "ghetto" and engage the world openly and honestly.
(Burns, 2007, p. 109)

O'Connor's liberal project, however, was to fail. According to Burns, O'Connor was highly critical of certain Church authorities and, even when there were loud complaints about his editorials, he did not moderate his "forthright" style. After two years in the editor's chair, a new bishop demoted him to associate editor and put a priest editor above him whose job was "to rein in O'Connor". O'Connor remained at the paper until 1965 when he took up a post as the first editor of a new Catholic paper in the Diocese of Wilmington, Delaware, the *Delmarva*

Dialog. O'Connor's last column in the *San Francisco Monitor* in May 1965 again spelled out his enthusiasm for a new style of Catholic paper:

Of particular sharpness right now, with the Council in mid-stream so to speak, is the openness of the Church, the honesty of reporting, the freedom of dissent, the encouragement of ecumenical dialog and dialog within the Catholic group, and the whole question of criticism, reform, and renewal. ... By its very nature good reporting runs the risk of being labeled "controversial" simply because it discloses news that some people, usually authorities, would prefer remained undisclosed ... In my opinion, it is only a matter of time when the reporting press runs the house organ press out of business. I have every confidence that a new age of the Catholic press can be welcomed. (As cited in Burns, 2007, p. 119)

Before two years were up and despite high hopes from everyone at the *Delmarva Dialog*, including the diocesan bishop, O'Connor was accused of provoking disunity in the local Church and in short time he was forced to resign. O'Connor had been active in the US Catholic Press Association, becoming its vice-president in 1967, but in the following years he moved to the secular press and television. His work there, nevertheless, would be "distinguished in both fields" (Burns, 2007, p. 126).

The same discussion which the O'Connor case provoked was taking place among Catholic editors in Australia in the mid-1960s. In 1964, the Australian CPA had produced their discussion paper, "The Catholic Press in Australia: Views of the Catholic Press Association", in response to the Vatican decree of the previous year on the media, *Inter Mirifica*. Costigan said the principal people behind the eleven-page document were Brisbane *Catholic Leader* editor Brian Doyle, Adelaide *Southern Cross* editor Bob Wilkinson and himself. It was "our manifesto to the bishops, quoting this decree [and] its reference to a right to information". Nevertheless, he said, the document's call for more openness and frankness in

discussion in the Catholic press represented “somewhat utopian views on the present state and future prospects of the Catholic press in Australia”. It may have been utopian, but it reflected the similar concerns of Catholic editors in the United States and was a well-intentioned response to the spirit of the Vatican Council’s calls for a more open Church. Policies of silence on “matters less than perfect”, adopted out of a fear of provoking controversy would be “fatal to the effectiveness of the Catholic press,” the statement said. Furthermore, such policies amounted to a denial of the legitimate right of people to information:

A greater scandal than an occasional controversial item would be a Catholic Press that was habitually less frank, informative and searching than the reputable secular press. It must be said that today even Catholics often seem to depend more on the secular press than on the Catholic press for news of controversial matters in the Church.

Any policy of automatic exclusion of opinions contrary to the policies or opinions of churchmen or publishers would seem to be too strict ... Mature and orderly thought among Catholics produces a lawful diversity, from which charity need not be absent. This diversity ought to be reflected by the Catholic press. A Catholic press that read only like an official gazette would not be presenting information of the Church as a society. (Catholic Press Association, 1964)

The editors’ concern, too, was for a Catholic press which also had a message for the wider society. At the present time, the document said, the Catholic press “has little influence on Australian life outside a small minority of Catholics”. The Catholic press needed to grow in order to “bring about and maintain a bridge sought by the Council between the Church and the world”. Holding it back was “a lack of understanding within the Church of the press medium and a lack of resources to initiate development”.

The hand of Doyle can clearly be seen in the CPA document: the ideas it contained would appear again in a Catholic press “manifesto”, which the CPA published in 1966 (*discussed in the next chapter*). Doyle’s thinking about the role of the Catholic press was strongly influenced by the discussion around “Catholic Action” and by the writings of Maritain. Doyle, moreover, had sat at the feet of Pavan at an international conference in Manila in December 1955 – the first Asian meeting of the Lay Apostolate – where Catholic Action was the principal topic and Pavan was a keynote speaker. At the time, Doyle was associate editor of *The Catholic Weekly* and, according to Duncan, was sent to Manila by the Archbishop of Sydney, Thomas Norman Gilroy “to contest Santamaria’s interpretation of Catholic political action” (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 274). Santamaria had been expected to attend the conference but ultimately did not, “on the grounds of ill health”. Pavan’s paper was entitled “The Lay Apostolate in the Modern World” and Doyle told his wife Philomena in a personal letter that the paper “knocks the last nail into the Santamaria coffin” (Doyle, 1955b). Following Maritain, Pavan described two distinct “fields” in which lay Catholics might bring their Christian principles to bear. The first was the only field properly called “Catholic Action” and which was, essentially, action within officially approved Catholic organisations that had “the mandate of the hierarchy”. Catholics taking action in such organisations were operating in an “ecclesial” field. (One example of such an organisation was Cardijn’s Young Christian Worker movement.) Catholics might also apply their Christian principles in the “temporal” field, a domain for which the Catholic hierarchy had no responsibility.

The laity must ... undertake such action [in the “temporal” field] on their own initiative and their own responsibility, whether they are acting individually ... or whether they are acting as members of associations for temporal action inspired by Christian principles. The Ecclesiastical Hierarchies are not responsible, for instance, for the economic action of Catholics in co-operatives, even if the co-operative movement is of Christian inspiration, and the same may

be said of the action in the trade unions, in politics or, in general, of any other action of a scientific, technical, economic or professional character. (Pavan, 1955, p. 118)

It is very likely Pavan had the Australian political situation and the recent Labor split in mind when he proclaimed these principles. Doyle was in close contact with Pavan at the conference. He told his wife he had procured an advanced copy of Pavan's address and that he had been "putting in some excellent anti-Santa propaganda" (Doyle, 1955b). He spoke to Pavan after the presentation and reported in a further letter to his wife:

I put the Melbourne position to him clearly. He said it was quite untenable. I reminded him of the contents of the Bombay articles.¹³⁰ He said outright that the ideas in those articles were wrong. He is definitely the man on whom the Holy See leans for advice and guidance on all these matters. (Doyle, 1955a)

While Pavan did not discuss the role of the Catholic press in his Manila paper, he was describing an apostolate which Doyle evidently thought applied to the Catholic press. The role of the Catholic press had been styled by Costigan's predecessor, Murtagh, in the paper he delivered to the CPA's first meeting in 1955, as "the apostolate of public opinion", and Doyle would have been familiar with this reference. Murtagh saw the Catholic press intimately connected with the lay apostolate and outside the domain of officialdom:

It is clear that ... the role of the Catholic Press is something vastly greater than a "house organ" for the household of the Faith. It is first and foremost ... an extension and continuation of Catholic Education ... it serves the needs of the Lay Apostolate and the information and formation of Catholic Public Opinion. ("The Apostolate of Public Opinion", 1955)

¹³⁰ Extracts from Santamaria's "Religious Apostolate and Civic Action", published in the *Bombay Examiner* (see page 58 ff).

Bringing the influence of Christian principles to the wider world was something Catholic newspapers were well placed to do. But the credibility of those newspapers depended on readers believing they presented a true and uncensored record of the life of the Catholic community. This was the view expounded in the CPA document: the “scandal” of publishing an occasional controversial item was a better option than the Church presenting a sanitised picture of itself that papered over differences and hid dirty laundry. The readers of the Catholic press for the most part were living in the “temporal” realm. They were exposed to the clash of different points of view and could legitimately hold different opinions about the right way of bringing Christian principles to bear in the world. The Catholic press was precisely the place where this debate might take place, and it should be allowed to do so without interference from the hierarchy. This was how the drafters of the document saw it.

Perhaps Doyle, as a layman, was in a better position to argue this case than a priest-editor, who had another role as a pastoral leader and representative of the bishop. People might justifiably expect controversy from a newspaperman; they expected a priest to be an agent of harmony and reconciliation and to convey at least the impression of solidarity with his episcopal superiors. Costigan was a co-author of the CPA document and endorsed its point of view. Nevertheless, the dual expectations on him from his role as both newspaper editor and priest would produce significant conflict for him in the years ahead.

At the highest level of the Church hierarchy, there was apparent endorsement of the CPA’s understanding of the role of the Catholic press in terms of presenting the full reality of the Church. An appendix in its “Views” document quoted various “papal utterances” as sources of the principles it outlined, among them a 1964 address of Paul VI to a group of pilgrims about Catholic newspapers, which was reported in *The Advocate*:

We admit that a paper, even if it qualifies itself as Catholic, is a profane thing. It is, in fact, the reflection of the non-sacred character of life as it is lived ...

A paper is a mirror, and it must be an ample and faithful mirror. It obeys a fundamental requirement of its own, that of informing and reporting the news, that of serving a truth which we might describe as photographic, the truth of events, of facts, of daily happenings, the objective truth of the world which surrounds us and moves around us.” (“Why a Catholic Paper is a Necessity”, 1964)

This was a view of the Catholic press more in line with the liberal project than an utterance of Bishop Fox that same year. At the 1964 CPA meeting in which Fox praised Costigan for his Vatican Council reporting, the bishop also said: “The main functions of the Catholic Press are to spread Christ’s teaching and to defend his Church.” Fox’s elaboration of these functions suggests a more restrictive role for a Catholic newspaper:

As members of the Catholic Press Association, you have an apostolate to propagate Catholic doctrinal and moral teaching and also to set right false notions about the Church itself and false ideas about faith and morality. Also you must help to correct false public opinion on matters of vital importance both to the Church and to the Nation. (“Bishop Fox Praises Press Coverage”, 1964)

Fox’s emphasis on evangelisation and defending the Catholic faith was not an uncommon view – nor an unexpected one – among the hierarchy, both in Australia and around the world. Ten years earlier the Auxiliary Bishop of Philadelphia, Joseph McShea, told a group of American Catholic editors in Philadelphia¹³¹ that the role of the Catholic press was in a direct line with “the divinely-inspired writings of Saint Paul and the other Apostles and Evangelists”.

¹³¹ Meeting of the Eastern Region of the Catholic Press Association of the United States, Philadelphia, November 4 1955.

He offered the gathered editors three models of “the apostolate of the written word”, each from the late Middle Ages: “Catholic newspapers and magazines are today the continuation, with the changes required by contemporary life, of the handbills of Saint Francis de Sales and the apologetic works of a Peter Canisius and Robert Bellarmine” (McShea, 1955, p. 67). Francis de Sales (1567-1622), a bishop, was proclaimed patron saint of writers and journalists by Pius XI in 1923; Peter Canisius (1521-1597) and Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) were both Jesuits, the latter a cardinal. All were prominent in defending the Church during the Counter-Reformation period. The sole focus of McShea’s address was the Church’s teaching authority, its *magisterium*, responsibility for which lay exclusively, he said, in the hands of the hierarchy. The essential value of the Catholic press was not in its “extensive news coverage”. It came “from its sacred task of disseminating, explaining and defending the teachings of Christ’s Church”. In fact, anything a Catholic newspaper did would be “completely fruitless” were it to ignore “its higher destiny as an agency of the teaching authority of the Church”. McShea cited as his authoritative source the 1954 address¹³² given by Pius XII to cardinals and bishops attending the canonisation of Pope Pius X in Rome. Its topic, appropriately, was the teaching authority of popes and bishops. McShea ignored the more relevant address of Pius XII to Catholic journalists in 1950, where the Pope spoke of the Catholic press’s critical role of encouraging the expression of “public opinion”.¹³³ Secular newspapers were the “organs of public opinion”, McShea said. The Catholic press had to live by “quite a different set of standards”, because its “prime function [was] to reflect not opinion, either public or private, but the unerring doctrine of Mother Church” (McShea, 1955, p. 69). McShea no doubt believed his definition of the Catholic press as agent of the magisterium to be comprehensive, and perhaps his words to the Catholic newspaper editors simply expressed exasperation, as his

¹³² May 31 1954.

¹³³ “Discorso di Sua Santità Pio XII ai Giornalisti Cattolici Convenuti a Roma per Il Loro Quarto Congresso Internazionale”, February 2 1950. This address will be discussed in Chapter 8.

conclusion suggests: “I have seen here and there through the years examples of attempts at a Readers’ Forum which degenerated into inept explanation and even overt attack on the accepted teachings of the Church” (McShea, 1955, p. 69).

McShea’s definition of a Catholic newspaper nevertheless suggested one-way communication. His final piece of advice to the editors was that, while “genuinely Catholic” newspapers might have a readers’ forum, this should only be under “the greatest vigilance”. In one respect, this is a moderate viewpoint compared with that of Fox, who, as will be seen later, was against the idea of a letters page entirely.

The contrast between McShea’s idea of the role of the Catholic press and that outlined in the CPA document could hardly have been more stark. Admittedly, McShea’s definition is extreme, almost a caricature, but its general direction was nevertheless representative of the general approach of the Church hierarchy to the Catholic press and highlighted the problem at the heart of the liberal project: Catholic editors and their proprietors were standing in two different playing fields when they made their pronouncements about the Catholic press.

In February 1965, Doyle was still waiting to hear from the bishops about the CPA statement of the year before. In a February letter to the about-to-be Archbishop of Brisbane, Patrick O’Donnell, he lobbied the bishop for a response:

The purpose of the letter¹³⁴ is to promote the “Aggiornamento” in the Catholic Press of Australia that was indicated by the Council and other recent developments.

The leaders of the Association are anxious that the Bishops might discuss the letter at their next conference and in particular that they might formally vote upon the matters listed on pages 6-7.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Sic. Doyle is here referring to the CPA statement.

¹³⁵ The matters listed were mostly suggestions about improving communication processes between the bishops and the Catholic press.

No answer came. "I had no recollection or record of a response from the hierarchy," Costigan said (Costigan, 2011).

'One eyed church diet'

The big policy questions for the Catholic press would continue to be debated over the coming years. In the meantime, Costigan was faced with the task of presenting an editorial line at *The Advocate* which was both consistent and independent of outside interference. When Costigan arrived at *The Advocate*, it was the custom for Denys Jackson to write the main *Advocate* editorial. (Jackson also wrote for *The Tribune* and *News-Weekly* and was a presenter of the "Catholic Hour" on Melbourne radio station 3AW.¹³⁶) Costigan said the practice continued for a while, with "some consultation with [news editor] Mr Frank Murphy and myself" (Costigan, 1969). Costigan had no doubt that, even though Jackson "did not always admire" Santamaria's methods, he agreed with Santamaria's policies (Costigan, 1969). Moreover, Costigan believed Jackson was directly instructed by Santamaria.

I have heard [Jackson] come into the office on a Monday morning and declare with the disarming frankness which is one of his endearing characteristics that "he was tired of writing *Advocate* editorials for Bob Santamaria". It seems that the N.C.C. headquarters of the News-Weekly office were ports-of-call on the way to *The Advocate*, while he was gathering ideas for his editorials. (Costigan, 1969)

For a while, it seemed there was an inconsistent editorial line coming from *The Advocate*, as Costigan introduced new ideas and Jackson continued his Santamaria–NCC line. The apparently see-sawing policies were noticed by the

¹³⁶ Jackson was a co-founder of the Champion Society and had been editor of *The Tribune* in the 1930s. A fellow early Champion member, the Mannix biographer and 1960s Labor Party activist, Niall Brennan, says Jackson was more influential in forming the intellectual climate of the Melbourne Church in the post-war period than Santamaria. (Brennan, p.18)

wider press. A front-page story in *The Australian* in September 1964, which cited “a leading layman” as its source, acknowledged that *The Advocate* and *The Tribune* had moved away from the Santamaria line under Simonds but said those newspapers had reverted to type in recent times. Under the heading “Catholic Press changes course”, the article said that:

In a sudden reversal of form, both Melbourne Catholic papers have published long reports of the State convention of the National Civic Council, the organisation associated with Mr B. A. Santamaria.

The Advocate, the official organ of the diocese featured the address [of Santamaria] prominently on page 7.

Since the death of Archbishop Mannix in November, both papers had greatly reduced the space and prominence given to the affairs and views of the NCC.

This was believed to reflect the views of the new Archbishop, Dr Justin Simonds, who, unlike Dr Mannix, is an opponent of the influence of Mr Santamaria in Church life.

It was pointed out last night that the sudden switch back to prominence of NCC views in the two papers had come while Dr Simonds was out of Australia ...

A leading layman said last night that the two diocesan papers were largely staffed by supporters of the NCC who had strongly resented the change of policy ordered by Dr Simonds. (“Catholic Press changes course”, 1964)

It could hardly be said that *The Advocate* was staffed by “supporters of the NCC” – Costigan and Murphy could not be so typed – but it was the case that Denys Jackson wrote most of the editorials. It is likely that the *Australian*’s antenna had registered the recent promotion of some NCC views in the *Advocate* editorial columns – Costigan conceded that he and Murphy “might have shaken our heads about the line he [Jackson] was taking on some foreign affairs issue” (Costigan,

2015c). Nevertheless, the *Advocate* editorial of the next week, a Murphy-Costigan collaboration, declared the *Australian* article a “fantasy” that had caused “hilarity” in the *Advocate* office. The paper had reported Santamaria’s comments at the NCC conference “because it was a good answer to some of the allegations made against Catholic education”. Moreover, the paper published its views independent of diocesan control:

Archbishop Simonds neither ordered nor gave any instruction or direction whatever to *The Advocate* on this or any other policy on or since his accession to the See of Melbourne. The editorial staff of *The Advocate* exercised its own judgment on what should or should not be published. (“The Australian’ Fantasy”, 1964)

Further fuel for the *Australian*’s line was nevertheless provided by the *Catholic Worker* – whose writers may well have been the source of the *Australian* story – in a long article in its October issue. Santamaria’s Movement crusade against communism, which had “compromised the Church”, was now continuing through the NCC, the article said. While the NCC was meant to be independent of the hierarchy, Santamaria’s “influence in Catholic institutions persists”, in particular through the Catholic press:

The Catholic mass media in Victoria have long been controlled by Movement men and fellow-travellers, whose constant propaganda has won a passive acceptance among many of the Catholic flock. They have long been fed a one-eyed political diet in the diocesan press ...

The new Archbishop, Dr, Simonds, is averse to incursions into the political arena, and the NCC does not enjoy his patronage. But the NCC is now well entrenched in many Catholic hearts. (“NCC in the Victorian Church”, 1964)

The Australian of October 5, in an article entitled “A one-eyed Church diet”, was happy to pick up on these comments, highlighting the *Catholic Worker*’s claim

that the Labor Party Federal Opposition Leader, Arthur Calwell, was “the man who has suffered the severest vilification through this segment of the Press” (“A ‘One-Eyed’ Church Diet”, 1964). Calwell, a Catholic, had been a good friend of Mannix before the Labor split, but Mannix had turned against him and *The Advocate* had followed suit, at least in terms of a continuing series of critical articles about Calwell’s policies. Costigan, however, was not constrained by the paper’s previous political framework and had no reason to give Calwell bad press. The *Catholic Worker* writer perhaps had “a bee in his bonnet”, an October 8 editorial suggests. Certainly, it said, the *Worker*’s claim that *The Advocate* had downplayed Calwell’s award of a papal knighthood earlier in the year was not sustainable.

The Advocate published the announcement of the honour as a double-column “box”, seven inches deep, on the front page, under the heading in bold type, “Hon. Arthur A. Calwell Knighted by Pope Paul” ... On another page, in a six-inch double-column “box” it described the Order of St Gregory, which Mr Calwell received. What better prominence could the *Catholic Worker* expect!

We haven’t the space, and it is not necessary, to follow item by item the strange allegations which *The Australian* deems worthy of national advertisement and which the *Catholic Worker* contributor, apparently agitated by the bee we have referred to, continues to make. (“Attack on the Catholic Press”, 1964)

Moreover, none of the *Advocate* staff were “movement men or fellow travellers”. “Their only editorial concern is to publish what they consider to be news interesting to Catholics, and, incidentally, to readers in general, and to comment upon matters of particular interest” (“Attack on the Catholic Press”, 1964). Fifty years later, Costigan stuck by the “bee in his bonnet” theory. The writer of the *Catholic Worker* article, and probably the *Australian*’s source was “someone who was very strongly anti-NCC, and could see the hand of Santamaria everywhere”.

There was an assumption by those critical of the Santamaria line in Melbourne that *The Advocate* would continue to promote the NCC point of view and that anyone appointed associate editor would be of the same mind, Costigan said (Costigan, 2015c).

Despite the October editorial being “a good summary of our philosophy” (Costigan, 2015c), it was going to be some time before Costigan would dispel the perception among many that *The Advocate* was not an organ of the NCC. A couple of weeks after the second *Australian* article, an article in *Nation* magazine, headed “Movement at the Station”, conceded that, under Costigan, *The Advocate* had “become cautiously more liberal in recent years”. However, it went on, “any regular reader of the Catholic Press in Melbourne would be hard-pressed to find an issue on which these two papers [*The Advocate* and *The Tribune*] are opposed to the NCC” (“Movement at the Station”, 1964).

By 1965, Costigan was becoming more certain that the *Advocate*’s purpose was neither to merely carry the “official” views of the Church nor to be an instrument of any particular external lobby group, in particular, to be a mouthpiece of Santamaria. He had come to the view that Santamaria “saw *The Advocate* as an instrument to propagate his views and to keep his followers informed in the kind of way, in his opinion, they should be informed” (Costigan, 2015c). In this regard, Santamaria’s influence was not external, since within the *Advocate* office Santamaria had an agent well placed to push his line – Denys Jackson. However, progressively, Costigan assumed a more prominent editorial-writing role.

I gradually began to take over some of the leader-writing myself, but generally confined myself to religious or ecclesiastical themes, especially during and after the Council ... In the meanwhile, my opinions on political affairs were evolving, largely under the influence of the Council's documents, notably on the Church in the Modern World ...

I had taken to using a firmer rein on Mr Jackson when he was writing on these matters. I often used the red pencil on his editorials and sometimes inserted sections of my own, drawing attention to what the council had to say on peace and war, and to Pope Paul's peace initiatives – which were not very well received by the Catholic right wing in Australia. I also saw to it that reports of dissent among American Catholics found their way into the paper. (Costigan, 1969)

Costigan recalls he gradually tried to wean control of editorials away from Jackson, “so that I would keep him off his hobby horses” (Costigan, 2011). Jackson would continue to write the bulk of the main editorials, with Costigan contributing “never more than 20 or 30 per cent, perhaps”. However, Costigan said Jackson was well aware that he was “not at one” with Frank Murphy and himself and that Jackson “needed to go a bit more carefully” (Costigan, 2015c). The Santamaria influence was diminished, but the limits of Costigan's ability to run a more independent editorial line would be tested in other ways.

Vietnam: The Advocate questions conscription

One of the significant tests of Costigan's editorial independence was the Vietnam War. Until the middle of the decade, Vietnam had not been front-of-mind for Australians. It was not a significant issue in the November 1963 federal election, which had been won convincingly by the Menzies Government (Strangio, 2002, p. 144). Opinion polls in these years showed the majority of the population supported the Government's alignment with the United States in its prosecution of the war (Edwards, 1997, p. 49) and would continue to do so until late in the decade. The Catholic bishops supported the Government, too, as did the majority of Catholics. The war was considered a necessary crusade against communism and, moreover, there were Catholics in Vietnam who, if not already casualties of the war, might imminently be so. Santamaria was at the head of the crusade and, with his NCC, continued to campaign in support for the war.

Through 1964 and 1965 the attention of Catholics – and all Australians – gradually became more focussed on Vietnam, as the war escalated and Australia became more involved. In August 1964, President Johnson seized on what commentators now say was a contrived conflict in the Gulf of Tonkin between North Vietnamese torpedo boats and American warships to justify a bombing campaign on North Vietnam (Karnow, 1991 Ch. 10). Armed with Congressional authorisation to wage war as necessary against “the Communist regime in North Vietnam” (“Joint resolution”, 1964) and to determine himself when the job was done, Johnson began, at first, limited airstrikes in North Vietnam then, in March 1965, an extended and intense bombing campaign that would last until November 1968. The flawed rationale was that the insurgency in the south was under the direct control of Hanoi. Australia, since 1962, had military advisors stationed in Vietnam and, shortly, America would make its first overtures for Australia to make a “substantial Australian military commitment in Vietnam” (Edwards, 1997, p. 23). In November 1964, a month before this American overture, the Menzies Government announced it would re-introduce conscription, requiring 20-year-old males to serve in the Australian Army for a period of twenty-four months of continuous service.¹³⁷ While this decision appeared to be related to Vietnam, the Government’s “principal external concern” at the time, according to Vietnam War historian Peter Edwards, was Indonesian aggression in Malaya and Singapore and a desire to be less dependent militarily on America (Edwards, 1997, pp. 21-22). Nevertheless, with the possibility of Australian conscripts being sent to the conflict, voices of doubt began to be raised about government policies.

During the First World War, Mannix had famously stood against conscription for overseas military service, and that historical position gave the *Advocate* editor a precedent for a similar stand now in regard to the reintroduction of conscription. Responding to Menzies’ proposal to re-introduce conscription, a November

¹³⁷ The National Service Act (1964), November 24 1964.

editorial in *The Advocate*, “Plans for conscription”, put the case against, quoting Mannix’s assertion that “conscription is a hateful thing”. The editorial reminded readers that during the First World War Pope Benedict XV had said that “disarmament and the abolition of compulsory military service were prerequisites of peace and prosperity”. While conscription was “in itself ... not a good thing”, the editorial allowed the possibility that a nation might have the right to impose conscription where there was an enemy that had “great conscript armies” but it warned against the “sabre-rattlers who are never at a loss to find or to exaggerate whatever can be made to appear a military necessity” (“Plans for Conscription”, 1964).

Three months before this editorial, in a column entitled “Challenge in Tonkin Gulf”, Jackson had appeared to typify one of these sabre-rattlers in his comments on the Gulf of Tonkin incident. Jackson acknowledged there was some ambiguity over what had actually happened, but he said that Johnson’s retaliatory response over the alleged North Vietnamese aggression was “a neat, spectacular piece of chastisement for an insult to the American flag” (“Challenge in Tonkin Gulf”, 1964). The November editorial represented a significant change in editorial tone, and it was noticed. The Vietnam War was a high-profile arena in which Costigan might differentiate the *Advocate*’s editorial line from the policies of the NCC.

The Australian newspaper sensationalised Costigan’s editorial in a front-page article a few days after it was published, entitled “Church hits draft”. It combined the *Advocate*’s comments on conscription with similar comments by other church leaders. Again calling *The Advocate* “the official Catholic newspaper”, it said the paper “had attacked the principle of conscription ... The newspaper is considered to reflect the views of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne”.

Simonds was in Rome for the third Council session at the time of the November editorial and made no response (Costigan, 2015c). In the following edition of the newspaper, *The Advocate* said the *Australian*’s characterisation of the previous

week's editorial as an attack on the government was misconstrued, and cited witnesses in high places in its condemnation of the *Australian's* report:

The *Australian* quoted only excerpts from *The Advocate's* editorial ...
[Its] use of *The Advocate's* editorial was described by Senator G.
Hannan in the Senate as "completely mendacious". Senator
Paltridge, Leader of the Government in the Senate, also said that the
Australian's article was "mendacious" and, on the face of it,
"deliberately misleading". ("Press confusion on conscription", 1964)

The Advocate again took the opportunity to correct the *Australian's* description of the Catholic paper as an official mouthpiece: "It should be stressed that the Advocate or any other Catholic newspaper is not "official", as it is described by the *Australian*. The Archbishop is the only person competent to give an official Catholic view." On the front page of the same edition of the newspaper, the Vicar General of the Archdiocese, Monsignor Laurie Moran (whom Costigan said was not a Santamaria supporter (Costigan, 2013)) provided an official Church statement saying the *Advocate's* editorial was not an attack on the Government's conscription plans and that there was no Church position on conscription. *The Australian* had got the editorial wrong, Moran said. On the matter of supporting the Government in its conscription plans, Catholics would be guided "by their conscience and not by misleading summaries on the part of *The Australian*". Costigan said that, while Fox and the pro-Santamaria clerics in the Cathedral presbytery would have put some pressure on Moran to make a more critical response to the editorial, Moran's statement was not "the vehement kind of approach that Fox would take" (Costigan, 2015c). Others were not so gentle in their response to the editorial. One correspondent, Frank Mount, a colleague of Santamaria, wrote in a November 19 letter to the editor: "I appeal to all Catholics who are Australian patriots to support Sir Robert Menzies' defence measures. The editorial comment in *The Advocate* shows that a bigoted section of the Catholic community has not yet forgotten the triumph of 1917" ("Reason gone", 1964).

Santamaria himself, when Johnson had begun his bombing campaign of North Vietnam, had said on his “Point of View” television program that the appropriate response was “to go down on our knees and thank God that the Americans had decided to engage themselves 7000 miles away from their own shores in an area critical to Australia’s safety” (Noone, 1993, p. 82). This was a matter of high principal for Santamaria, and the pressure would have been on Jackson to continue representing the hawkish NCC viewpoint. As Costigan moved in a direction against the war, the need to keep Jackson “off his hobby horses” was becoming more pressing.

In April 1965, Menzies announced a commitment of a battalion of Australian combat troops to Vietnam. In May, the Defence Act was amended to provide that conscripts could be obliged to serve overseas. The possibility of 20-year-old conscripts fighting in Vietnam had become a stark reality.

Conclusion

The world was changing for Catholics – and for all Australians – as the 1960s reached their midpoint. Anxiety over Vietnam grew as Australia was drawn into the conflict in that country, and parents were faced with the possibility of their sons dying for a cause some were beginning to question. The Vatican Council was bringing change to Catholic thinking and practice, most visible at the weekly gathering for Sunday Mass. The liturgical rites of the Church was one of the first topics addressed by the Council Fathers and the Council’s 1963 Constitution *Sacrosanctum Consilium* had called for more active participation of the lay people in the rituals and, most significantly, the translation of the rites into the vernacular. Whether and when the local language should be introduced into the liturgy was a decision to be made by the local bishops. Simonds implemented significant changes in mid-1965, with English replacing Latin at Sunday Mass (Noone, 1993, p.113), and *The Advocate* reported these developments in detail.

Not all Catholics were comfortable with what was happening in their Church and with what they were seeing in their Catholic newspaper. During the 1950s, the political tensions created by Santamaria's Movement had divided Catholics. But the Vatican Council and the disruption within the Church which it presaged, were set to disturb the equanimity of Catholics even more. Costigan was an enthusiast for the changes the Vatican Council was signalling and was finding his own voice as *Advocate* editor. His eschewing of the *Advocate's* former editorial line cannot, however, be interpreted as the rebellious actions of a young priest, nor as self-promotion. In these years, he was consistently acknowledged by his peers for the excellence of his writing, winning in 1964 the Catholic Press Association's annual Father Murtagh Award "for the best article by an Australian Catholic author published in any Catholic magazine or newspaper in Australia",¹³⁸ and in 1965 the CPA's inaugural James Kelleher Award for Best News Story.¹³⁹ He considered Archbishop Simonds one of his key supporters. However, in the forthcoming years, the Archbishop's health would significantly deteriorate, ultimately requiring him to delegate the responsibility for running the Archdiocese to Fox, his Vicar General, whose support for the NCC and Santamaria appeared more enthusiastic than for the policies of his Archbishop. Fox's view of the Catholic press, too, was that it should be virtually a public relations tool for the hierarchy – or for the views the hierarchy endorsed – rather than an organ for the encouragement of dialogue or the development of public opinion. So, with Simonds in hospital through much of 1966 and 1967, Fox would see an opportunity to attempt to make *The Advocate* more representative of the NCC line and of Santamaria. He would ride rough-shod over any idea of a liberal project for the Catholic press and create a significantly stressful environment for the newspaper's associate editor. The next chapter will survey the interregnum between two archbishops which will bring Costigan into conflict with diocesan

¹³⁸ *The Advocate*, 16 April 1964. The award was for "Tenth Anniversary of Hilaire Belloc's Death", *The Advocate*, 11 July 1963.

¹³⁹ *The Advocate*, 16 April 1964.

authorities in a most painful way, a period made the more distressing by his own personal conflicts over the future of his priesthood.

Chapter 6: Breaking the Santamaria hold (Interregnum, 1966)

Introduction

Throughout 1966, *The Advocate* was in full flight, modelling a Catholic newspaper that did not just present the “official” view but which reflected a more open discussion of the issues that touched the lives of Catholics, within and outside their Church. But there remained nervousness and resistance to this liberal project, and argument persisted over the role of a Catholic paper, with powerful people criticising *The Advocate* for not restricting itself to the exclusive promotion of the views coming out of “The Cathedral”. The support Michael Costigan had felt from Archbishop Simonds had strengthened his confidence in pursuing this editorial line. However, that support was fading as the Archbishop’s health deteriorated through 1965 and 1966 and the Archbishop was increasingly unable to attend to the affairs of the Archdiocese.

The marginalisation of Santamaria that Simonds attempted in his sacking of the “Sunday Magazine” presenter was also a marginalisation of Santamaria’s supporters, in particular the senior bishop in the Archdiocese and Simonds’s Auxiliary, Arthur Fox. Fox was not converted to Simonds’s point of view, and Fox’s frequent sermons targetting communism and Catholics who proposed a more irenic approach to the Vietnam War appeared to follow the same Santamaria-inspired script that Fox had been reading from for years. Now, with Simonds’s health declining, Fox was able to reassert himself. In September 1966, Simonds appointed Fox Administrator of the Archdiocese, virtually putting Fox in charge. At the end of that month Simonds was admitted to the Mercy Hospital, where he would spend “most of the last twelve months of his life” (Costigan, 2002). Simonds’s resignation as Archbishop was announced in May 1967 (“New archbishops for Melbourne and Canberra–Goulburn”, 1967), six months before his death on November 3. Before his replacement took up office,

there was an interregnum, during which the *Advocate* associate editor could see how difficult the task of opening up the pages of the newspaper would be, despite the victories that had been won.

This chapter will canvass two key issues in which Costigan encountered significant conflict in his attempt to implement a liberal project at *The Advocate* – the Vietnam War and contraception. Those issues threw into sharp relief the questions about the proper role of a Catholic newspaper. There was a back-story for Costigan, too. He was on a personal journey that was leading him in a direction away from the priesthood. The liberal project had a special resonance: while Costigan fought for greater editorial freedom at *The Advocate*, he was also, at least at this stage in his own mind, untying the bonds of his clerical role. And, because he could see, as he put it, that he “wasn’t there for the long term”, his taking of editorial decisions might be done with less fear or favour (Costigan, 2015c). In any case, the pressures on Costigan, professionally and personally, would impact him severely in this and the following years; and, in standing up for positions which went against the party line, it seemed that diocesan authorities took vengeance.

Conscription 1966: Costigan takes a stand

The proposition that the Melbourne Catholic paper might not represent the official views of the archdiocese, found sensational expression in an *Advocate* editorial of March 17 1966, St Patrick’s Day.¹⁴⁰ A new Liberal Prime Minister, Harold Holt, had replaced Menzies who had retired in January. A week before the editorial, Holt, in his first major speech to Parliament as Prime Minister,¹⁴¹ had announced that Australian national servicemen would be sent to fight in Vietnam. The national servicemen would be included among a new cohort of regular troops to reinforce Australia’s existing Task Force. The extra troops in fact

¹⁴⁰ St Patrick is the patron saint of the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

¹⁴¹ March 8 1966.

represented a trebling of the size of Australia's existing military commitment (Strangio, 2002, p. 161).¹⁴² The general population in Australia up until this point, if they considered the war in Vietnam at all, were supportive of the Australian Government's military commitment. Yet a groundswell of opposition to Canberra's position on Vietnam was building in some sections of society. A report in the *Bulletin* in December 1965 suggested that: "while it is certain that a clear majority of the electorate support Government policy, in the opinion-forming circles – in universities, among school-teachers, journalists, clergymen ... the 'antis' appear to be in the ascendancy."¹⁴³ The "antis" were not ascendant among the Catholic hierarchy, nevertheless. The Catholic bishops' absolute conviction about the justness of the cause of defeating communism in Vietnam did not appear to allow for any meaningful discussion of the justness of the means. Moreover, this position was reinforced by pronouncements of the DLP and Santamaria's NCC, and it would be a brave Catholic who spoke against their edicts. While a minority of Catholics in Melbourne raised doubts about the war, their voices were not generally heard inside the Catholic institution (Noone, 1993, p. 140) – that is, until St Patrick's Day, 1966.

Holt's announcement had not come as a surprise to the *Advocate* staff. "Rumours had been going around for some time that the Government was going to send conscripts to Vietnam," Costigan later recalled (Costigan, 1969). He and editorial writer Frank Murphy decided to register opposition to the Prime Minister's decision and declare that the government had no right to take this step. Costigan knew the *Advocate's* stand risked a hostile response from the Church hierarchy but he would later claim, in a private letter to Archbishop Knox,¹⁴⁴ the publishing

¹⁴² Menzies had announced the original commitment of a battalion of troops (about 800) in April 1965, with very little public discussion or response.

¹⁴³ *Bulletin*, 25 December, cited in Edwards (1997), p. 75.

¹⁴⁴ The long letter "Off the Coast of Angola" was written to the new Archbishop of Melbourne on April 13, 1969, on the ship that was bringing Costigan back to Australia after a period of leave in the United Kingdom. During this time Costigan had taken the decision to leave the priesthood and, consequently, *The Advocate*. The letter is a frank

of the editorial marked the definitive moment when “the Jackson-Santamaria throttle-hold on Catholic public opinion” was broken. “One of the channels by which the Catholic people had been systematically brain-washed over the years into accepting their policies as a kind of orthodoxy had at last deviated on at least one point” (Costigan, 1969). It was also a moment which marked Costigan as a prime target of attack for the Santamaria side of Church politics. In response to the editorial

Bishop Fox denounced us from the pulpit and Bishop Stewart in Sandhurst. All the Victorian bishops were that way inclined ... Lyons in Sale. So it was a time of great pressure. Some of the parish priests wouldn't sell *The Advocate*. They sent *The Advocate* back, saying we're not selling this. I said to Fox on one occasion, I think if we published an article denying the truth of the Blessed Trinity no one would take any notice, but if we deviate from the DLP line then all hell breaks loose. (Costigan, 2011)

The *Advocate* editorial had begun positively enough, with praise for Holt for his announcement of changes to Australia's immigration laws that aimed to remove discrimination against Asian migrants. This initiative was a “gratifying aspect” of the new government's policy statement. “The liberalisation of the former rigid laws will do much to improve Australia's image among Asians and are more in accord with Christian principles,” the editorial said. But it went on:

Not so gratifying, however, was the Prime Minister's announcement ... that conscript 21-year-old National Servicemen will be sent to Vietnam. The Government has no mandate whatsoever for the sending of conscripts into battle outside Australia, particularly since no war has been declared.

recounting of some of the stressful and controversial events at *The Advocate* in the previous few years and constitutes a form of “apologia” for his editorial policies.

Conscription is in itself an evil thing, justified only in an emergency, when other means for the defence of a country are inadequate. Military conscription without this necessity is a violation of a basic human freedom and leads to a militarisation of civil life and civil mentality ... A Conscript State is, in effect, a Slave State. ("Asians and Conscription", 1966)

In support of this standpoint, the editorial cited a Gallup Poll and the similar views of other church leaders. The quoting of non-Catholic church leaders in the absence of the views of any Catholic Church leaders was not likely to win favour with the latter, as it soon appeared. In the following week, *The Advocate* defended its position, noting that the paper's previous week's editorial had provoked a number of letters of protest which, the editorial said, suggested that "a letter-writing squad has been called into action" ("Conscription and Principle", 1966). The editorial said a common theme in the letters was that *The Advocate* was following a communist line, a suggestion which was "rather whimsical".

The line followed is not a communist line but a papal line. As we have said, Pope Benedict XV, in calling for disarmament as a necessity for peace, said that a requisite was the abolition of military conscription, which was "for more than a century the true cause of countless evils". In similar words, the late Archbishop Mannix declared that conscription was a "hateful thing ... almost certain to bring evils in its train". Neither Pope Benedict nor Archbishop Mannix was a communist. ("Conscription and Principle", 1966)

Citing Archbishop Mannix was no doubt intended as a shield against criticism but it may have been an insubstantial one. Costigan later agreed that the circumstances of the Vietnam War were not the same as the First World War and said it was likely Mannix, especially under the influence of Santamaria, would have changed his position if he had lived.

Frank [Murphy] would quote passages from the First-World-War Mannix, in which he was opposing conscription, not because we

were being asked to fight in a foreign war ... but because conscription, per se, is an evil ... Frank would say, because he [Mannix] was totally opposed to conscription, he would have opposed it. But I think Santamaria's stranglehold on Mannix was such that he would have gone along with it. (Costigan, 2015c)

This new Catholic take on the Vietnam War was noticed beyond the Church community. "Some days later [after the *Advocate* editorial], the daily press noticed what we had done, and it became national news," Costigan said (Costigan, 1969). The reaction to the St Patrick's Day editorial marked the beginning of what Costigan called his "bad period". The negative response of the Church hierarchy had been anticipated, but the intensity of it was not. Costigan recalled the reaction in his 1969 letter to Knox:

At his next opportunity, Bishop Fox fiercely attacked *The Advocate* from the public platform, at a school opening at [Melbourne suburb] Altona. He said that we were in error in our stand against conscription. He didn't have the grace to say that he thought we were mistaken. No. We were in error, pure and simple. We had committed the cardinal sin of coming out against one of the planks of the DLP platform ... In the meanwhile, Bishop Stewart¹⁴⁵ insultingly accused us of moral posturing.¹⁴⁶ (Costigan, 1969)

The Advocate reported Fox's Altona speech on the front page of the March 31 issue. The bishop appears to acknowledge the *Advocate's* editorial independence, but panned the paper's judgement:

Editorials in *The Advocate* do not necessarily reflect the mind of the Church authorities. In this particular case I want to make it perfectly clear that *The Advocate* had no authority whatever from His Grace the Archbishop, or from anyone empowered to speak for him, for

¹⁴⁵ Bishop Bernard Stewart, Bishop of Sandhurst 1950 to 1979.

¹⁴⁶ This accusation was in the *Age* of March 23, p. 1.

making such a moral pronouncement. I will go further. The *Advocate's* moral judgement was not only unauthorised, it was mistaken ...

It is the avowed policy of the communists to take over the whole of this part of the world of which we are part. Consequently, the Federal Government is acting within its rights in reluctantly but firmly deciding to send national Servicemen to join our allies in fighting that common enemy. ("Government within rights says Bishop Fox", 1966)

Other than a non-committal statement in *The Age* in the week following the publication of the editorial, it is not recorded whether Simonds made any comment either for or against the sending of conscripts to Vietnam (Noone, 1993, p. 115). Nevertheless, Costigan argued that

The line *The Advocate* was taking was a plausible interpretation of the kind of position Archbishop Simonds might have been expected to take, if his failing health and mental powers had not excluded him from the debate. Certainly it was unimaginable that the Archbishop with his full faculties would have endorsed Bishop Fox's ardent championing of NCC-DLP policy. (Costigan, 1969)

Alongside Fox's anathema on the front page, and apparently agreeing with the bishop's sentiments, was dark satire from a reader, Gordon Chancellor:

Sir, Weather permitting, it is the intention of the writer (not an official member of any letter writing group) to organize a burning of *The Advocate* after the 11 o'clock Mass on Sunday 2 April.

I invite all Papal Knights, Knights, NCCs (especially), Children of Mary and practising members of the *Catholic Worker*. ("Letter to the Editor", 1966)

Other correspondents were in sympathy: *The Advocate* had "aligned itself with a communist-instigated and directed 'Peace Movement'," one letter writer

complained in the previous week's issue; "It was with disgust that I read your Leader ... You are following the Left-Wing Calwell line," said another ("Conscription", 1966). This was the beginning of a lively debate which, despite the occasional invective, was surely at least the sign of a healthy dialogue, even if some readers did not wish to hear the other side of the argument: "How could such an irresponsible, ill-considered statement spew forth from a Catholic paper" ("Letters on conscription issue", 1966); "Please do not let our Catholic newspapers jump on the communist bandwagon" ("The conscription issue", 1966).

This first wave of hostile letters had convinced Costigan that "the NCC's letter-writing squad was called into action ... When we checked the addresses, we found that many of those attacking our stand were bogus" (Costigan, 1969). The following weeks, however, produced more support for the *Advocate's* stand. J. Willason wrote on March 31: "How wonderful it was to read that such an article was written by a Catholic newspaper ... I was beginning to wonder if we Catholics had lost all our backbone for speaking out against something that was so wrong." ("Letters on conscription issue", 1966) Costigan said support for the editorial grew after Fox's attack.

Quite a number of priests, including some of the most senior and respected in the diocese, contacted me to express solidarity, not with our point of view necessarily, but with our right to hold it. They felt that the bishop had been very unfair in what he had said about us. (Costigan, 1969)

Indeed, behind the debate about whether sending conscripts to Vietnam was right or wrong, was another issue – whether Catholics in general, and a Catholic paper in particular, might legitimately express differing views on matters which were not otherwise already determined by Catholic dogma. Some readers appeared to understand the need for editorial freedom in reporting on such matters and others did not. The feedback revealed that Catholics themselves had a diversity of views on conscription and Vietnam. It also revealed a rigid

dogmatism among some in the Catholic community who not only thought the *Advocate's* views about the sending of conscripts was wrong – a legitimate position – but that the Catholic paper had no right to express it.

Costigan particularly noted a letter of March 31 from Melbourne University academic and parish priest of the Parkville Parish, Eric D'Arcy, who was also chaplain to Santamaria's NCC. D'Arcy's letter quoted a notice that "was read today at Masses in this parish":

In last week's *Advocate* an editorial condemned the Federal Government's sending national Servicemen to Vietnam as a violation of human rights. In Wednesday's *Age* a spokesman for His Grace the Archbishop [Simonds] made it clear that such a condemnation was quite unauthorised by him. The parish notice was read so that people would know that in pronouncing on the morality of this grave matter *The Advocate* has no authority whatever from the Catholic Church in Melbourne. ("Letters on conscription issue", 1966)

D'Arcy's interpretation of the spokesman's statement was somewhat overblown. That statement was a brief two paragraphs at the end of a longer story and read: "A spokesperson for Archbishop Simonds said he had made no pronouncement on the conscription issue. No policy had been formulated in the archdiocese." The substantial part of the *Age's* story – on page one and headed "Bishop's stand" – was a report of the response to the *Advocate* editorial by the Bishop of Sandhurst, Bernard Stewart. The bishop "strongly dissociated" himself from the editorial. The Government was "in the best position" to judge what needed to be done "for Australia's defence and that of sorely pressed allies," Stewart was quoted as saying. "Political movings [sic] and highly emotional posturing are not the right approach to questions that could well decide Australia's survival" ("Bishop's stand", 1966).

Costigan said he had reason to believe that D'Arcy had written his letter "in collusion" with Fox and that he had a hand in Fox's Altona statement. Certainly the themes in Fox's statement and in D'Arcy's parish notice – and even the words in some places – mirror each other. It was Costigan's plausible view, moreover, that the hand of Santamaria was behind what appeared to be an orchestrated campaign against *The Advocate*.

[The Altona] statement was placed very efficiently in the hands of all the dailies and television-radio channels and was given maximum publicity within a few hours of its being made. Such expert use of public relations was unprecedented in the diocese in my experience, and I can only conclude that the expert machinery controlled by Mr Santamaria was used on this occasion to see that the Bishop's rebuke of *The Advocate* was as widely disseminated as possible. (Costigan, 1969)

The Altona statement that *The Advocate* reproduced had, indeed, appeared in the Monday morning *Age*, the day after Fox's address ("Full burden on NS men ultimately – Labor", 1966). Needless to say, such collusion by Santamaria and Church authorities in promoting their point of view was not illegitimate. It does, nevertheless, indicate the intensity of the pressure exerted on the *Advocate's* associate editor, through the combined weight of a bishop, a prominent priest-intellectual and Santamaria.

The issue of whether a Catholic paper might publish views contrary to those of the local Church authorities – and even publish views critical of those authorities – surfaced again, in the form of a provocative letter to the editor published on December 15. The correspondent, Michael Sexton, was 20 years of age when he wrote it and about to enter Melbourne University law school.¹⁴⁷ Sexton argued

¹⁴⁷ Sexton went on to a distinguished legal career, being appointed the Solicitor General for New South Wales in 1998. He is the author of *War for the Asking: Australia's Vietnam secrets* (Penguin, Ringwood, 1981), which used secret cables between Canberra and Washington to show that the Australian government had orchestrated the request from

the case against conscription by citing a book review in *The Advocate* three weeks earlier. The book under review¹⁴⁸ recounted the life of an Austrian Catholic farmer, Franz Jägerstätter, who was a conscientious objector during World War II and who was subsequently executed by the Nazis.¹⁴⁹ Jägerstätter “was urged by certain members of the clergy to abandon his stand” but was proved by history to have been the one “who adhered to true Christian principles”. Sexton said history would have no praise for Bishop Fox and Santamaria in their advocacy of “a holy war against communism which can justify any means of achieving its end”, and concluded: “It is disappointing that it has been left to members of the Protestant clergy to stand up for the true precepts of Christ in this matter” (“Franz Jagerstaetter”, 1966). It was not normal for a Catholic newspaper to carry a letter so critical of the local bishop, and the singularity of the *Advocate*’s approach to Catholic journalism in this period of Costigan’s editorship is noted in Sexton’s later reflection in a 2015 memoir, *On the Edges of History*:

It is hard to imagine such a letter being published at any other time in *The Advocate*’s history. It not only attacked a bishop but also the heroic layman, Santamaria. And it said the Protestant clergy had behaved better. But the editor at this time, Michael Costigan, was more liberal-minded than any of his predecessors – or successors.
(Sexton, 2015, p. 51)

Sexton’s memoir also observes that his letter “was designed to be hugely offensive to most of the paper’s Catholic readership” – and, indeed, offence was taken. An angry response came the next week from D’Arcy, who demanded an apology from the *Advocate* editor. The problem with Sexton’s letter was that it ascribed to Fox and Santamaria a principle that any means justified the end, something which Fox “neither holds nor teaches”. It was “bad ... that a Catholic should write

Saigon that Prime Minister Menzies cited when announcing his government’s decision to commit combat troops to Vietnam in April 1965.

¹⁴⁸ Zahn, G., *In Solitary Witness*, Chapman, London (1966).

¹⁴⁹ The review was in *The Advocate* of November 24. Jägerstätter was declared a saint by Pope Francis in 2007.

such a thing; but that a Catholic newspaper should publish it is unsupportable". D'Arcy said that criticising Santamaria was "quite a different thing" to criticising the bishop and he made clear that the heinousness of Sexton's offence – and the seriousness of the *Advocate's* complicity in it – came precisely from the fact that Fox was "at present administering our own diocese" to whom particular "respect and courtesy" was required by Catholic tradition ("False Ascription", 1966).

D'Arcy's attempt to seize the moral high ground on the matter was contested. A further response to Sexton's letter came in a different vein three weeks later, from a "friend and colleague" of D'Arcy in the Department of Philosophy at Monash University, Jenny Teichmann. Teichmann's letter suggested that D'Arcy's demand for an apology was "entirely misconceived". She noted that D'Arcy had conceded in his letter that debate about the moral principles involved in the sending of conscripts to Vietnam was legitimate. Sexton's letter was precisely a contribution to this debate, she said, and the publishing of it was therefore also valid. While D'Arcy might be right to say that any suggestion of a bishop being "in any state of error at all" was a grave breach of respect, she was not qualified to express an opinion about it. Nevertheless, she argued, if a debate on a topic of moral importance was indeed legitimate, it should not be contingent on the status of the participants. Teichmann, clearly enjoying herself, concluded:

Finally, I think in his letter Dr D'Arcy treats Mr Santamaria very badly. Poor Mr Santamaria is faced with the spectacle of his Defence Counsel flatly stating that he is Not Guilty of espousing a very wicked principle, yet producing not one skerrick of evidence in support of the plea. I hope that if ever Dr D'Arcy has to defend me against the imputation of error he will marshal the evidence and arguments with all the skill with which I know he is gifted. ("Proper Debating Subject", 1967)

Here was a strong argument, if mischievously put, for the liberal project: for the right and necessity of a Catholic newspaper editor, where there is a matter of

significant public interest, to publish articles which might be critical of positions taken by diocesan authorities, given this was done with respect. A final letter came in response to D'Arcy's letter from another academic in the Department of Philosophy at Melbourne University, Kevin Presa. Presa endorsed Teichmann's letter, but his rebuff to D'Arcy was harsher. While Fox and Santamaria would no doubt reject any suggestion that they held to a theoretical principle that the ends justified the means, Presa said their public statements on Vietnam suggested they followed this principle in practice. Sexton's criticism of Fox and Santamaria was therefore valid and it was "inexcusable that a professional philosopher [D'Arcy] should be so obtuse in construing your correspondent's letter" ("Serious Charges", 1967).

The Advocate was on its own among Catholic newspapers in its stance against sending conscripts to Vietnam. On the same day *The Advocate* published its editorial, the *Sydney Catholic Weekly* (a newspaper "always much more 'tame-cat' in its editorial policies than *The Advocate*", according to Melbourne Catholic academic and peace activist Max Charlesworth) came out in support of the sending of conscripts to Vietnam. The only defender of Costigan's stance in the Catholic press came – cautiously – from Brisbane *Catholic Leader* editor Brian Doyle:

Mr Brian Doyle deplored the accusations against *The Advocate* that it was running a Communist line, and then made the point that the government had no right to introduce conscription before it presented "the full facts and a detailed case in support of its policy" to the people of Australia. Mr Doyle refrained from making a judgement as to whether conscription was or was not justified by the facts of the situation in Vietnam. (Charlesworth, 1968, p. 249)

The St Patrick's Day editorial showed that, in the few years Costigan had been at *The Advocate*, his position on Vietnam had moved away from that held by a majority of the Catholic and Australian population – somewhere between

acceptance of the Government's policy and indifference – to a position of rejecting the “all-the-way-with-LBJ” attitude of Prime Minister Holt. A number of factors influenced this change, not the least of these being Costigan's Rome experience when he covered the second session of the Vatican Council. Costigan said questions were beginning to form in his mind about the Vietnam War, even before he left for the Council, which was in itself “a very transformative experience, particularly theologically and in terms of attitude to the Church. It could have contributed even in a small way to rethinking about issues like the war, like Vietnam” (Costigan, 2015c). The experience of travel, to Rome and to the United States, also enabled Costigan to stand aside for a while from the environment of the Melbourne Church, where only one view on the war prevailed. But even at home, Costigan had connections with those who had themselves begun to question the war, among them being Costigan's twin brother, Frank, who, in 1966, was active in the Labor Party¹⁵⁰ and in a newly-emerging Catholic peace movement in Melbourne (Noone, 1993, p. 158). The controversial stand *The Advocate* took might not have been possible, moreover, without the support Costigan had of his editorial writer Frank Murphy. The two had worked out the editorial line opposing the sending of conscripts to Vietnam in advance of the Prime Minister's announcement. The nominal editor, Denis Murphy, was also in the know and, according to Costigan, had approved of its publishing “even if he disagreed privately with us – and, if he did, he didn't say so” (Costigan, 1969). Not everyone on the staff was happy, however.

Mr Jackson didn't agree with us, but we decided that it was time to contribute something of our own to the paper's policy on this issue. Mr Jackson could speak his mind in the *Tribune*, *News Weekly*, and on the “Catholic Hour”. We weren't presenting our view as **the**

¹⁵⁰ According to Michael Costigan, Frank was “part of a group which helped Whitlam get into government”. Gough Whitlam replaced Calwell as the Australian Labor Party leader in February 1967 and led the party to government in 1972.

Catholic view, but as one view that could be taken by Catholics.

(Costigan, 1969)

Costigan had taken a risk in publishing the editorial and so had Frank Murphy in writing it – and, as a layman, he was the more vulnerable of the two.

This issue would have been really, I think, the first time in his [Murphy's] career at *The Advocate* when he did chance his arm a bit. He would have known Bishop Fox's form. But I'm not sure whether he would have expected such a frontal attack as we experienced after this from Fox and Stewart and many of the clergy. (Costigan, 2015c)

According to Costigan, Fox was anxious to pin the blame for the editorial on Murphy, since the bishop could more easily assert that the editorial did not really represent the *Advocate's* view if it was written by a layman, rather than "Fr Costigan" (Costigan, 2013).

Well, the next step was to "get" the man responsible. And it was apparently decided that Frank Murphy was the one. I know that outside the office Denys Jackson was openly attributing the anti-conscription editorials to Frank. Neither Frank nor I would admit to authorship, since, we regarded editorials as a joint expression of the opinions of the editorial staff, not as a vehicle for the airing of purely personal ideas. In the following months, Bishop Fox made several efforts to persuade me to attribute the authorship to Frank.

"Anyway, I know it was Frank Murphy who wrote them," he would say, after vainly trying to make me admit this. (Costigan, 1969)

According to Noone, the *Advocate's* questioning of the Vietnam War in the St Patrick's Day editorial and other articles represented only "some mitigation" of the Melbourne Archdiocese's support for the war as "morally correct action" (Noone, 1993). Nevertheless, as far as Costigan was concerned, the editorial was a well-considered position that substantially shifted the paper's line on Vietnam,

which would be challenge enough for many of the newspaper's core readers, even if it might not satisfy those already with minds made up against the war. It also represented a well thought-out position in regard to the role of a Catholic newspaper.

The kind of conclusion we would jointly have come to was that, yes, the paper is owned by the bishop, and in that sense it's the bishop's paper. But it had never been a paper which confined itself to expressing, through its own voice, the bishop's thinking. [While] the paper could publish, and would publish, anything the bishop had to say – like his public addresses and opinions on things ... it did have an independence ... We always had this idea, particularly through Vatican II, of the right to information and the nature of journalism. (Costigan, 2015c)

Implementing this policy was, nevertheless, going to be a considerable challenge, and the very strong reaction to the *Advocate's* stand in the St Patrick's Day editorial well illustrated the essential problem – and perhaps fatal flaw – in the liberal project. Notwithstanding the declarations in *Advocate* editorials, and the statements of other Catholic editors, that their publications did not represent the official views of Church authorities, many readers and those same Church authorities expected their Catholic paper to do that very thing and would remain uncomfortable with any other approach to the Catholic press. Some, nevertheless, were on board with a model of a Catholic press that was at least once removed from the official viewpoints. A month after the St Patrick's Day editorial, *The Advocate* published a long letter from an anonymous correspondent, "Simplicius", which quoted the Vatican document on communications, *Inter Mirifica*. The writer referred to the document's emphasis on "supporting and advancing public opinion" and said that it seemed

to suggest that the Catholic press is not envisaged as being the mouthpiece of the Bishop of the diocese in which it is located.

His Lordship Bishop Fox is reported in the *Age* (28 March) as saying: “the *Advocate*’s moral judgment was not only unauthorised it was mistaken.”

At no time have I imagined that *The Advocate* should be regarded as expressing necessarily the views and opinions of the Archbishop and I am sure that that would be an impression not peculiar to me, but shared by many others, priest and laity. This repeated assertion that such and such a statement is “unauthorised” seems to me very much like flogging a dead horse. (“More on conscription issue”, 1966)

Simplicius further cited *Inter Mirifica* in its endorsement of the right of people to information that is in their interest and which is “true and complete within the bounds of justice and charity”, and concluded: “In my opinion the editor of this maturing paper has kept strictly within these bounds, not merely in his recent controversial editorials but throughout this excellent paper.” The writer’s expectations of the ability – or willingness – of readers of Catholic newspapers to make these distinctions were perhaps optimistic, and Elizabeth Hall, writing to the newspaper on April 14, makes the case (if a little tortuously) that the Catholic paper should only represent “official” views:

I wish to express strong disapproval of the inclusion of the statement “conscription is in itself an evil thing, justified only in an emergency” ...

It is unfortunate that views expressed in the editorial of such a paper do not always remain as such, but are in danger of being taken by many as the official view of the Catholic Church. To say that this should not happen will not prevent the error occurring.

The editor is, of course entitled to a personal opinion. However, in such a position, it would seem desirable for an *Advocate* editor to accompany a public announcement of such a serious nature by

substantial – if not irrefutable – evidence of its moral accuracy.

(“More on conscription issue”, 1966)

Contraception confusion: the pressure mounts on Costigan

The negative reaction to the St Patrick’s Day editorial was anticipated, and Costigan knew the risks involved in publishing it, both to the paper’s editorial freedom and, more personally, to himself and his staff. One risk at a time might have been enough to promote the liberal cause, but the St Patrick’s Day issue of *The Advocate* also carried a front-page story that Costigan recognised was “dynamite” (Costigan, 1969) and which produced an equivalent negative response from Church authorities. This time it was birth control – a topic much closer to the lives of ordinary Catholics than was the Vietnam War. The *Advocate* story announced the names of the Pope’s appointees to a new, scaled-down Vatican commission which had been looking at birth control in the light of recent advances in medical science. These advances – specifically the availability from the early 1960s of the contraceptive pill – had made birth control much more problematic in the context of Catholic doctrine. Traditional Church teaching held that every act of sexual intercourse should be open to the creation of new life and that no artificial means of preventing that outcome should be employed. Every Catholic was aware of the teaching, a position based on an understanding of “natural law” and long held. But there had for a long time been ambiguity about the Church’s position, and the pill had just made that position more ambiguous, as it began to dramatically influence the sexual relationships of couples around the world, including Catholics. How Church teaching should be applied was by no means clear. In 1951, Pius XII had given approval to so-called “natural” means of birth control.¹⁵¹ In other words, controlling fertility was morally acceptable as long as it was for legitimate reasons. If the Church made no prohibitions against

¹⁵¹ Pius XII, in an address to the Italian Catholic Society of Midwives on October 29 1951, approved the “rhythm method” for couples as long as it was for legitimate reasons, such as economic hardship. The rhythm method depended on the unpopular strategy of periodic abstinence during the fertile period of a woman’s ovulation cycle.

the use of other artificially created medicines, what was the problem with the contraceptive pill in controlling fertility?

In 1963, Pope John XXIII established a small commission of theologians¹⁵² to look at the issue. The strategy was partly to take discussion of the controversy away from the deliberations of the bishops at the Vatican Council. Soon after his election, Paul VI expanded the commission to a group of over 70 experts, lay and clerical but, in early March 1966, he appointed a more restrictive commission. By this stage, there was a strong expectation among many Catholics, bishops, priests and lay people, that there would be a lifting of the ban on the pill. There had been a significant lack of consensus among the members of the original commission and the smaller committee was meant to make the production of a consensus more manageable. *The Advocate* reported statements by the three senior members of the Commission, firstly by its new head, Cardinal Ottaviani, who made no comment on the issue of birth control itself but noted that one obstacle to reaching a “speedy solution” on the matter of birth control was the “unwieldy nature” of the larger group. *The Advocate* also quoted the statements of the two vice-chairmen of the newly-constituted commission. The first, the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, John Heenan, said that, as a member of the commission, he was unable to comment on the matter until the Pope had pronounced on it. The cardinal was defending himself against claims in the English *Daily Mail* that, by his silence, he was “ignoring the anguish and anger of Catholic women”. The other vice-chairmen of the commission was the Cardinal Archbishop of Munich, Julius Döpfner. *The Advocate* quoted at some length a statement that had been released in Döpfner’s archdiocese, with his approval but before he was nominated as a commissioner, “for the guidance of his priests”:

¹⁵² The Papal Commission on Population, the Family, and Birth, which met in Rome from 1963 to 1966.

In present circumstances [young partners] can after only a few years of marriage easily find themselves in the distressing situation in which it would be irresponsible to have another child ...

When such partners, who try to build up their marriage in Christian responsibility for each other and for the serious good of the child, believe that in such a distressing situation they cannot forgo contraceptive intercourse they cannot simply be accused of abuse of marriage ...

Responsible partners who see themselves obliged to contraceptive marital intercourse, not lightly and habitually, but rather as a regrettable emergency solution, may take it that by doing so they do not exclude themselves from Communion at the Eucharistic table.
(“Birth Commission’s New Members Named”, 1966)

This was a revolutionary statement from a Catholic cardinal and it was immediately picked up by the *Melbourne Age*, which published the Cardinal’s words as reported by *The Advocate* the next day. The story accurately summarised the controversial point but also suggested this was an official Catholic view:

Married couples who used contraceptives when it would be irresponsible to have another child would not be excluded from the Roman Catholic communion.

This is according to a statement published yesterday in the “Advocate”, official paper of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne.
(“Cardinal’s view on birth check”, 1966)

The following day, *The Age* carried a statement from Archbishop’s Simonds’s secretary, Father J. Murray, under the heading, “Birth control view rejected by local archdiocese”.

Whatever may be said about it, it [the Döpfner statement] is purely a personal statement ... and whatever the circumstances prompting this statement are, they are of no concern of ours.

Our policy is to follow the decisions of the Holy Father, and this suggestion has not been endorsed by him. ("Birth control view rejected by local archdiocese", 1966)

Costigan could see that the *Age's* reporting of the Döpfner statement was likely to confuse people, especially considering the *Age's* implication that *The Advocate* had published an official Catholic view. He wrote a letter to *The Age*, attempting to provide some justification for the publication of this alternative viewpoint:

I interpret his statement as the attempt of a pastor to help his clergy to solve difficult problems afflicting the consciences of married couples.

His emphasis on "marital unity", "the inner stability of the marriage", and "a mature marital love" suggests that he considers that these aspects have sometimes been given insufficient attention in the solution of these problems. His statement is also a reminder to confessors that the gravity of a moral lapse can be lessened or even removed altogether in particular cases. ("A cardinal and birth control", 1966)

The Advocate quoted Murray's statement to *The Age* in full on the front page of the next week's issue. In the same issue an editorial, entitled "Function of the Press", gave a succinct explanation of why *The Advocate* not only felt justified in publishing the Döpfner statement alongside the statements of the other senior members of the Pope's commission but that such an objective reporting of news was an obligation for a Catholic newspaper. This position was supported by the highest authority, the editorial argued:

The publication of these three statements, by the cardinal chairman and the cardinals vice chairmen of the commission, was objective,

and was a clear exercise of the Catholic press's function to furnish information. Yet some surprise, and even protest, was expressed at the publication of Cardinal Döpfner's statement, which some readers thought should have been censored.

We would like to point out that the publication of information as a function of the Catholic press has been emphasised strongly in international congresses of the Catholic Press and has been upheld by Popes, notably Popes Pius XII, John XXIII and the present Holy Father, Paul VI. ("Function of the Press", 1966)

The editorial reminded readers of one of Pius XII's comments, published in a recent issue of *The Advocate* (March 10), which reinforced the editorial's viewpoint. In 1955, an Italian newspaper had been about to publish an account of a vision of Christ that the Pope said he had experienced when he was sick, a private event that a priest had "imprudently revealed" to a journalist. Certain Vatican officials, attempting to stop publication, showed the story to the Pope, who said: "This journalist is simply doing his job, and what he has written is accurate. Therefore we do not have the right to prevent its publication." ("Scoop Recalled", 1966)

Paul VI's successor, John XXIII, had provided further articulation of the "guiding beacons" for a Catholic journalist in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. These were described at the 1965 World Conference of the Catholic Press in New York as two "inviolable, inalienable" rights: "the right to freedom in searching for truth and in expressing and communicating one's opinions [and] the right to be informed truthfully about public events" ("Function of the Press", 1966). Costigan showed in this editorial that he was very clear about his responsibility as a Catholic newspaper editor and the direction *The Advocate* should be taking. It was also becoming clearer to him that he would not be able to look for support for this stand from many of his colleagues in the Church hierarchy. "I was told by [Vicar General] Monsignor Clarke that the priests on the cathedral staff were ready to

tear me limb from limb for printing the Döpfner statement at all. I would cheerfully accept martyrdom for the cause: the right of the Catholic press to do its duty” (Costigan, 1969). Neither could Costigan rely on support from all of his readers for a more open policy at *The Advocate*. On April 7, a correspondent, J.M. Flynn, wrote: “Your comment on the “Function of the Press” ... does little or nothing to clear up the confusion that arises in the minds of many Catholics because of the publication of statements such as those made by Cardinal Döpfner.” Flynn argued, reasonably, that the Döpfner statement appeared to be a departure from the Church’s current position – an impression reinforced by Fr Murray’s need to remind people of that position. Döpfner did not help Catholics to make a united response to Church teaching, Flynn concluded. At least one *Advocate* reader did appear to understand the point made in the “Function of the Press” editorial. P. Wertheim, in a letter published two weeks after Flynn’s letter, wrote to thank *The Advocate* for printing the Döpfner statement. “It is encouraging to note that at least one diocesan paper in Australia is prepared to make available to its readers important statements on controversial matters, even if these cut across ‘local orthodoxies’” (“Freedom and Truth”, 1966). Wertheim also thanked *The Advocate* for its St Patrick’s Day conscription editorial, saying that “it is good to see public discussion initiated on this important matter in the Catholic Press”. The Döpfner statement was also published in two English independent Catholic weeklies, *The Tablet* and the *Catholic Herald*. In a letter published soon afterwards in *The Tablet*, Döpfner expressed his regret that the statement had appeared:

[The pastoral guidelines] have now reached the press through an indiscretion—exactly at the moment of my appointment to the papal commission—and, to my deepest regret, have caused a great stir there. These guidelines must, of course, be understood in their context, a context which for the most part has been ignored or even misrepresented by the press. What is concerned is merely the

subjective judgment of actions of married people. (“Cardinal Dopfner on Birth-Control”, 1966)

For Catholics, discussion of the continuing dilemmas and difficulties raised by the birth control pill was not something that could be hosed down by the backtracking of a cardinal or the statement of an archbishop’s secretary. Further discussion, speculation – and divided opinion – would be seen among theologians and bishops, not to mention priests and laity, both before and after Paul VI eventually published his ruling on the matter in 1968. Anyone who was able to look into the future in 1966 may have been startled by the statement of a future Archbishop of Melbourne, Frank Little, who on October 1974 said: “provided a person’s conscience is formed ... and every effort has been taken to clarify the position, and that it has been prayerfully accepted, then most certainly artificial birth control can be used” (Henderson, 2015).

In 1966, the Melbourne Archdiocese was anxious to prevent the sowing of confusion among lay people over Church teaching, to avoid any disunity in thought or practice. But there were other issues at stake. The need for unity needed to be balanced by the need and right of people to know about discussion of issues that affected them and on which there was in fact a range of differing and conflicting views. It was not as if the Munich pastoral statement to priests was the work of a renegade theologian; it had been approved by one of the Church’s cardinals. Murray’s statement that the circumstances of Catholics in Munich were “no concern of ours” was blinkered; the argument of *The Advocate* that they were of concern was well founded. In the event, Paul VI did not move on the Church’s traditional teaching on artificial contraception. Catholics, however, did.

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Birth Commission's New Members Named

The cardinal chairman and the two cardinal vice-chairmen of the new papal commission on birth-control have all made statements recently, although none of them has indicated the likely nature of the commission's eventual findings.

The prelates on the new commission include seven cardinals: Cardinals Ottaviani, Heenan, Dopfner, Shehan, Suensens, Gracias and Lefebvre.

The other prelates are Archbishop Dearden of Detroit; Archbishop Binz of St. Paul, U.S.A.; Archbishop Morris of Cashel, Ireland; Archbishop Wojtyla of Cracow, Poland; Archbishop Dupuy of Albi, France; Archbishop Zoa of Yaounde, Cameroun; Coadjutor Archbishop Pulido Mendez of Merida, Venezuela; Auxiliary Bishop Reuss of Mainz, Germany; and Bishop Carlo Colombo, rector of the seminary of the Milan archdiocese and personal theologian to Pope Paul.

THE chairman, Cardinal Ottaviani, pro-prefect of the Roman Curia's Doctrinal Congregation, told the N.C.W.C. News Service (7 March) that the new commission has been charged with analysing the information prepared by a group of some 70 experts who have been studying the birth-control problem since they were commissioned by Pope Paul in June 1964. The new group will then prepare a statement based on their findings which will be submitted to the Pope for his decision, the cardinal said.

A group of about 20 experts from the older commission will prepare a programme and plan of action for the new commission. The older group include scientists, doctors, demographers and historians as well as theologians. It was charged by Pope Paul when he established it to investigate the entire problem of the control of birth with an open mind, setting aside preconceived theological opinions. It has been widely reported that the larger commission was sharply divided in its findings and has to date reached no consensus. No official statement has ever been released, however.

The establishment of the new more restricted commission has been expected since the Pope departed from the prepared talk to participants in the nation congress of the Italian Women's Centre on 12 February to announce that he would soon reorganize the older commission to accelerate its work and give its decisions "greater authority".

CARDINAL OTTAVIANI INTERVIEWED



Cardinal Ottaviani

The Pope also said then he would not avoid a decision on the problem of birth-control despite its difficulties. The formation of the present commission is assumed to be what he referred to in this talk.

Cardinal Ottaviani told the N.C.W.C. News Service that the larger commission, which is almost two years old, will not cease functioning. It will assist the new commission with consultation and advice and continued study of the problem of birth-control.

One of the difficulties involved in reaching a speedy solution, the cardinal said, was the unwieldy nature of

the large group. He said it is hoped the new restricted group will find this less of a problem.

The exact structure and operation of the new group is not yet known, he said. "They have not even met yet. But it is hoped more will be known about how we are to proceed after the 7 March meeting of the smaller group of experts has prepared a definite agenda" for processing material, he said.

CARDINAL HEENAN

The London *Catholic Herald* reports (11 March) that one of the commission's vice-chairmen, Cardinal Heenan, called the Catholic Press to Westminster last week to tell them why he is unable to make any statement on birth-control.

He explained that he is in the individual position that anything he says can be attributed with an authority which it does not deserve.

He cannot speak on problems as a whole, because these could be attributed to him as spokesman for the Vatican birth-control commission — which he is definitely not.

As for domestic issues, such as a controversial story in the *Daily Mail* on Monday about Catholics using contraceptives, he said he could not speak. Here, again, he feels his words might be misinterpreted.

Charged with ignoring the anguish and anger of Cath-

olic women, Cardinal Heenan believes he has no alternative but to wait until the Pope makes his pronouncement, perhaps in early summer.

"It would be worse for the Church to give a snap decision on this thing. It is a sign that the Church does care that it is waiting to give a full-informed pronouncement," he said.

Meanwhile, in Germany, Cardinal Doepfner, the other vice-chairman of the new commission, has released the text of a statement he made for the guidance of his priests. The statement said:

"It is of decisive importance for the good and blessed success of Christian marriage that young partners should put themselves determinedly under the will of God from the very start of their marital life. In present circumstances they can after only a few years of marriage easily find themselves in the distressing situation in which it would be irresponsible to have another child, at least for some time, while marital unity is and remains of the utmost importance for the inner stability of the marriage and the maturing of their marital love."

DISTRESSING SITUATION

"When such partners, who try to build up their marriage in Christian responsibility for each other and for the serious good of the child, believe that in such a distressing situation they cannot forgo contraceptive intercourse ('nicht-natuerliche') they cannot simply be accused of abuse of marriage. In view, however, of factual questions currently being intensely debated by moral theologians, and ecclesiastical statements made up to the present time, neither can the doctrinal and pastoral authorities of the Church simply give general approval to such practice."

"Responsible partners who see themselves obliged to contraceptive marital intercourse, not lightly and habitually, but rather as a regrettable emergency situation, may take it that, by doing so, they do not exclude themselves from Communion at the Eucharistic table. They will realize in all humility that they are only on the way towards a mature marital love in full harmony with God's will, and that they must honestly strive to res-

MELBOURNE LAYMAN APPOINTED CONSULTOR TO VATICAN SECRETARIAT

Pope Paul VI has nominated Dr. M. J. Charlesworth of Melbourne a lay consultant of the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Believers.



Dr. Charlesworth

Dr. Charlesworth, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Melbourne, received notification of his appointment as a "Consultor not residing in Rome" in a letter from Fr. Vincenzo Miano, S.D.B., secretary of the Secretariat.

Fr. Miano referred to Dr. Charlesworth's writings and to his collaboration towards the *Enciclopedia on Contemporary Atheism* being prepared by the Faculty of Philosophy of the Pontifical Salesian University, Rome.

The proposal for Dr. Charlesworth's nomination was made by Fr. Miano himself.

He has been invited to contact Bishop Cahill of Cairns, who is a member of the Secretariat for Australia and who is in charge of forming a study and research group, both to ascertain the forms, diffusion and extent of non-belief in this country and to promote philosophical-theological pastoral reflection on the problems raised by this phenomenon.

SUGGESTIONS

Dr. Charlesworth has also been asked to offer suggestions to the Secretariat concerning the possibilities and limits of the dialogue of Christians with contemporary atheistic humanism.

The Secretariat was established by Pope Paul last April and is headed by Cardinal Koenig, Archbishop of Vienna.

A graduate of Melbourne University, Dr. Charlesworth received the Doctorate of Philosophy with the highest distinction at Louvain University, Belgium. He was one of the early recipi-

ents of the Archbishop Mannix Travelling Scholarship.

After a period as lecturer in philosophy at University College, Auckland, he received his present appointment at Melbourne University in 1958. In 1963 Dr. Charlesworth received a Nuffield Travelling Scholarship to further research in England on medieval philosophy.

His published works include *Philosophy and Linguistic Analysis* (Dunquene University Press) and *St. Anselm's Proslogion* (translation with introduction and philosophical commentary, Oxford University Press).

He has contributed many articles to philosophical journals and is editor of the quarterly *Sophia* and a member of the editorial board of the *Catholic Worker*.

A parishioner of St. Cecilia's, South Camberwell, Dr. Charlesworth is the father of seven children. He is a member of the Academic subcommittee of the Melbourne Archdiocese's Catholic Education Council.

Dr. and Mrs. Charlesworth are active members of the Family Group of Our Lady, an international movement for groups of married couples.

He added that it was not to be excluded that a plenary session of the older and now expanded commission — consisting now of a total of about 75 — might be summoned for special meetings. However, he indicated that a more profound and intense study would take place within the more restricted groups.

Asked directly if any decision concerning the birth-control pill had been reached, he replied that it was a "false problem" to reduce the problems facing the commission solely to that of the pill. He said this aspect has been under study in the past and is still being studied.

Asked directly if any decision concerning the birth-control pill had been reached, he replied that it was a "false problem" to reduce the problems facing the commission solely to that of the pill. He said this aspect has been under study in the past and is still being studied.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 18)

Diocesan Jubilee Mission

THE Melbourne Diocesan Jubilee Mission will begin in St. Patrick's Cathedral next Sunday (20 March) at 7.30 p.m. The mission will continue for two weeks and will consist of Mass and sermon every evening at 7.30. Confessions will be heard before Mass from 7 p.m. and again after Mass. This is the programme of sermons for the first week of the mission.

MARCH	TITLE OF SERMON	PREACHER
Sunday 20	The Post-Conciliar Era. The Church's Confrontation to the Modern World. True and False "Aggravations".	His Lordship Most Rev. L. P. Moran, D.D.
Monday 21	The Mystery of the Church. Values and Responses.	Rev. E. J. Cuskelly, M.S.C.
Tuesday 22	The People of God.	Rev. Nicholas Croft, C.P.
Wednesday 23	The Shepherds of the People of God.	Rev. M. B. Ahern.
Thursday 24	The Universal Call to Holiness in the Church.	Very Rev. T. F. Little.
Friday 25	The Christian's Sense of Responsibility for the World.	Rev. B. Burke.
Saturday 26	Manifesting Christ in a Secular World.	Rev. F. C. Shortis, O.Carm.
Sunday 27	The Hope of the Pilgrim Church.	Rev. Camillus Hay, O.F.M.

St Patrick's Day contraception story, 1966, The Advocate (State Library Victoria).

THE ADVOCATE

Prime Minister's Report:

Asians And Conscription

A GRATIFYING aspect of the Prime Minister, Mr. Holt's, first Report to the Nation was the announcement that immigration laws in regard to non-Europeans are to be modified in order to allow qualified Asians to migrate to Australia more easily and to seek Australian citizenship more quickly. A statement outlining the new policy was afterwards made by the Minister for Immigration, Mr. Opperman.

The categories are still limited, but the liberalization of the former rigid laws will do much to improve Australia's image among Asians and are more in accord with Christian principles.

Commenting upon the new policy in the *Herald* (10 March), Mr. Denis Warner said: "That an Asian who now meets the qualifications laid down will be accepted without consideration of colour or race is not just a step forward. This is a milestone that will go down in history along with such events as the ending of transportation."

Mr. Warner pointed out that for the first time the arguments about the homogeneity of the race have become valid. It is clearly not in the interests of any society to accept more immigrants from any quarters than it can assimilate by marriage and employment, but the admission of immigrants without discrimination because of colour or race, although limited, removes the stigma that has been attached to Australia's so-called "White Australia" policy.

NO MANDATE

Not so gratifying, however, was the Prime Minister's announcement in the same report that conscript 21-year-old National Servicemen will be sent to Vietnam. The Government has no mandate whatever for the sending of conscripts into battle outside Australia, particularly since no war has been declared.

Conscription is in itself an evil thing, justified only in an emergency, when other means for the defence of a country are inadequate. Military conscription without this necessity is a violation of a basic human freedom and leads to a militarization of civil life and civil mentality, described by Pope Benedict XV as "for more than a century the true cause of countless evils." A Conscript State is, in effect, a Slave State; hence, it is something to be resisted unless in a last resort.

Letters to the press, i.e., by Mr. John Dynon, known for his firm stand for principles of family life, and by Mrs. Joan Anderson, for the Save Our Sons Committee, have made a reasoned protest against the sending of voiceless young men to Vietnam and it is pointed out that under the National Service Act (introduced by the Government without mandate from the people) conscripted service can be extended.

PUBLIC OPINION

A Gallup Poll has shown that a majority of Australians are opposed to the sending of conscripts outside the country and public resentment is being expressed throughout Australia. The *Australian* has given good coverage to this demonstration of public opinion which is given articulate expression by the former Anglican Bishop of Armidale, N.S.W., Bishop Moves, who said: "It is unethical of the Government to take young people who have no vote and send them to fight overseas where no war has been declared." Similar protests have been made by other church leaders, and the Australian Council of Trade Unions will be asked to convene protest rallies.

We believe that the Government has not any moral right to conscript Australian youth for military service overseas and we hope that strong public protests will be effective in preventing a violation of human rights which the tradition of Australian democracy has hitherto been proud to preserve.

FURTHER COMMENT

INDIA'S FOOD CRISIS

INDIA'S present food crisis, which has been the subject of intense concern to Pope Paul VI, is the result of several factors that combined to form a dangerous situation in 1966, says an N.C.W.C. message from New Delhi. The end of the crisis, it says, must depend on a number of steps which demand generosity from outside and planning from inside the country.

The real threat of the food shortage to the people of India has yet to be realized. It is estimated, however, that the lives of 100,000,000 persons are endangered by starvation, malnutrition and disease because of the lack of food. Officials are hopeful they can import enough surplus grain to ride out the storm, but their hopes depend on several uncertainties.

India expected to produce about 88,000,000 tons of grain in 1965-66, which is 7,000,000 tons less than it needs for a subsistence diet. The balance was to be purchased from other countries, primarily from the United States.

The planning went awry when an unusual drought, the worst in 70 years, caused a sharp drop-off in grain production. Rather than harvesting 88,000,000 tons, India will bring in about 76,000,000 tons of grain this year. Besides, a 2 per cent increase in the popu-

lation has provided an additional 11,000,000 mouths to feed.

As a result of all this, India has a grain deficit of about 20,000,000 tons for the current year.

The government hopes that a better distribution of grain and smaller individual rations will solve some problems, but the main relief must come from overseas.

It is at this point that Indian officials and experts elsewhere are faced with several imponderables.

LACK OF TRANSPORT

First, it is claimed that port facilities and transportation inside the country are not sufficient to handle large stores of imported grain. This was one reason why some of the funds collected by Pope Paul went to purchase trucks that will be used to carry food supplies.

Next, most of India's poor population will not be able to afford the higher prices of imported wheat. Moreover, the poor people, as in most Asian and African countries, are unused to eating wheat. They lack the ovens and bakeries necessary to convert it to edible food.

Finally, there is a possibility that reduced rations of grain, while preventing actual starvation, may weaken thousands of persons so that they die of malnutrition and disease. The

U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization has estimated that between 50 per cent and 75 per cent of Indian citizens do not have a balanced diet even in non-famine times. Between 25 per cent and 30 per cent of them are always hungry.

Even if India's present food crisis is met without a great loss of life, there are many larger problems that still remain if the threat of famine is to be removed for good. One important measure is teaching India's people modern methods of farming. Practical work in this direction is being done by such bodies as the Society of the Divine Word, which reports successful experiments in a "land of unexploited possibilities". Soil improvement and conservation, drainage and irrigation, control of disease in plants and animals, financing and marketing, new and improved machines, are part of the project, in which Christians and Hindus share alike.

But whether by this help on the land or by gifts of wheat and other food or by contributions, India needs our assistance, as do hungry peoples everywhere. As we are aware, self-denial during Lent is dedicated to helping those in need, for which a special fund has been opened by the Australian bishops. In addition, there are appeals organized specifically for India by such groups as the "Aid for India" campaign.

Overseas News Coverage

AUSTRALIA'S need for a better news coverage of overseas events, especially in Asia, was highlighted at a recent seminar organized by the Australian Journalists' Association in Canberra. The theme of the seminar, which was attended by 140 journalists, was the Australian Press and Foreign News.

It was pointed out during the discussions that while most Australian papers have London staffs they have few correspondents in the whole of East and South-East Asia. The bulk of their news from these areas is supplied by Australian Associated Press, whose dependence on American and British agencies gives it coverage an Atlantic-centred bias.

We believe that the question raised by Denis Warner of the *Herald*, whether or not Australia is getting a proper and adequate news service from the regions closest to this nation, is one that needs to be faced now by newspaper proprietors. Events taking place in these areas are of immense relevance to Australia and it is important that public opinion in this country should have access to full and reliable information on these events.

It is true that services of this kind are expensive, but some improvement could surely be managed by the re-assessing of priorities for the placing of overseas personnel. In any case, most of the Australian daily newspapers appear to be doing well enough financially (many of them raised their price with the introduction of decimal currency, although they were careful not to draw much at-

tention to that fact) and one suspects that they could afford a more imaginative policy for covering happenings in our "near North".

One of the struggling exceptions is, according to rumours, the Canberra-based daily, the *Australian*, and that journal is, in our opinion, nevertheless managing to set new standards in the breadth and depth of its international news reporting. It would be regrettable if the *Australian* were to be forced out of existence. We have in the past taken issue with some of its editorial statements and even on occasion with its presentation of news, but it merits respect for the prominence

given in its pages to serious national and international questions.

We trust that the *Australian* has made up any ground lost through the cancellation of subscriptions by readers who objected (with good reason) to one of its early editorials on State Aid. Its more recent editorial policy has, in our view, been more balanced and realistic on this and other topics. Even when cause is found for dissent on our part from another newspaper's views, however, we find it hard to sympathize with angry campaigns aimed at doing economic damage to the publication in question.

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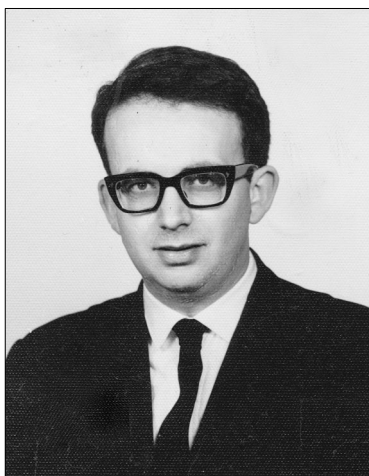


St Patrick's Day editorial 1966, The Advocate (State Library Victoria).



Catholic Press Association delegates at June 1966 conference, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Monastery, Kensington, Sydney. Front centre is Brian Doyle. Michael Costigan is behind and just to the left of Doyle, two steps up. (Photo: M. Costigan)

"Function of the Press"
editorial, March 24 1966
(see page 143 ff).



Michael Costigan, 1967
(Photo: M. Costigan)

FURTHER COMMENT

Function of the Press

THE function of the press, Catholic as well as secular, in providing objective information was brought again to mind during the week following *The Advocate's* report, in last week's issue, on the new members named to the papal commission on birth-control.

Announcing that the prelates appointed to the new commission included seven Cardinals, and that Cardinal Ottaviani, Pro-Prefect of the Roman Curia's Doctrinal Congregation, was chairman, and that Cardinal Heenan, Archbishop of Westminster, and Cardinal Doepfner, Archbishop of Munich, were vice-chairmen, *The Advocate* stated that the Cardinal chairman and the two Cardinal vice-chairmen had all made statements recently, although none of them had indicated the likely nature of the commission's actual findings.

INTERVIEW

The Advocate's story was sub-headed "Cardinal Ottaviani Interviewed" and the first part of the report was that of an interview given by the new commission's chairman to the N.C.W.C. News Service. Then followed a statement given by Cardinal Heenan to the English Catholic press, as reported in the *Catholic Herald*, London, and a report of a statement by Cardinal Doepfner, released in Germany and reported in both the *Catholic Herald* and the *London Tablet*.

The publication of these three statements, by the cardinal chair-

man and the cardinals vice-chairmen of the commission, was objective reporting, without comment, and was a clear exercise of the Catholic press's function to furnish information. Yet some surprise, and even protest, was expressed at the publication of Cardinal Doepfner's statement, which some readers thought should have been censored.

We would like to point out that the publication of information as a function of the Catholic press has been emphasized strongly in international congresses of the Catholic Press and has been upheld by Popes, notably Popes Pius XII, John XXIII and the present Holy Father, Paul VI. Only recently (on 10 March) we republished from the New York Jesuit weekly *America* an article recalling the late Pope Pius XII's comment on efforts made within the Vatican to stop publication of an Italian journalist's story about a vision of Christ said to have been seen by the Holy Father. Pope Pius said: "This journalist is simply doing his job, and what he has written is accurate. Therefore we do not have the right to prevent its publication."

Mgr. S. J. Adamo, in the *America* article, remarked that meditation on the Pope's statement could "solve many unfortunate and unnecessary misunderstandings about the function of a Catholic journalist".

At the Seventh World Congress of the Catholic Press, held last year in New York, the 800 Catholic journalists from five

continents were told that the guiding beacons in the discussions were two "inviolable, inalienable" rights stressed by Pope John XXIII in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*: "the right to freedom in searching for truth and in expressing and communicating one's opinions," and "the right to be informed truthfully about public events." Another was the section from the Constitution on the Church which emphasizes the need for an informed people of God.

MORE MATURE

Last year, also, a Vatican Radio broadcast stated that discussion on birth-control in Catholic circles was becoming "more widespread and mature" and that Catholic newspapers and radio were discussing the problem "with the openness and seriousness that it rightly requires".

On the delicate subject of birth-control it is inevitable that what some secular newspapers consider as the more "newsy" bits will be lifted out and, in some cases, sensationalized; it is inevitable, too, that some readers will draw unwarranted conclusions from what they read, perhaps because of their ignorance or defective comprehension. But on this subject Catholics have been well instructed that the norms at present in force are to be adhered to, according to the instruction of Pope Paul VI, who, in the light of the commission's findings, will in due course make an authoritative statement.

The Advocate.

"The Weak and all who lack for Strength
Have his at their Command."—WORDSWORTH.

No. 1.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1868.

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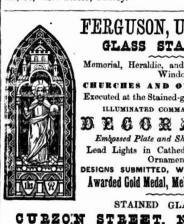
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The first and last front pages of
The Advocate: February 1, 1868,
(National Library of Australia) and
September 6, 1990 (State Library
Victoria).

THE LAST REFLECTION AND OPINION

THE ADVOCATE
YOUR CATHOLIC PAPER

Editorial

THE circle is complete—the Catholic community in the Archdiocese of Melbourne has returned to where it was 122 years ago—without a newspaper.

On 1 February 1868, the Catholic people of Melbourne were given a voice, a journal to provide a full and accurate coverage of news, a channel to report and analyse issues confronting the Church.

In the first front page leader in 1868, The Advocate left no doubt to the minds of its readers that it was a newspaper, a medium of news and pious religiosity.

During its 122 years, your Catholic newspaper has created a proud history. It established itself as one of the great Catholic publications of the world during the Marist era, always prepared to address contentious issues.

The Advocate will be long remembered for its public stance on conscription during World War I, capital punishment, state aid to private schools, abortion and justice for the poor.

Respect for The Advocate extends beyond the Catholic community as demonstrated by the large volume of calls from Anglicans and Protestants deeply regretting the passing of this paper.

For many Catholics, The Advocate has been an essential part of their family life for decades. Through its pages, they have found inspiration, challenge and solidarity.

Following the re-launch of The Advocate in November last year, a significant number of the Catholic younger generation have been introduced to this paper, a source of its wide-ranging articles, contemporary debate that impact on their lives and the space that The Advocate created for Christian debate and reflection.

That interest extended to students in our Catholic schools who were frequently asked to do the day's reading of the Gospel, the Jesus, the disciples of the 90s are called to take up their cross and follow him.

That call of God to his Church was powerfully captured by the late Oscar Romero when he said that we must all be involved in "A preaching that awakens, a preaching that enlightens, as when a light is turned on awakens and awakens a sleeper that is the preaching of Christ, calling the light of the Gospel. That is the Church's authentic preaching. Naturally, such preaching will meet conflict, must spoil what is mis-called prestige, must disturb, must be persecuted."

The Advocate has taken seriously its commission to communicate an awakening and enlightening message, very humbly and sometimes imperfectly and misunderstood.

The decision has now been made to close The Advocate. Over its 122 years your newspaper has provided a unique link and challenge within the Victorian Catholic community.

With our passing that link must remain, welding us together in common mission.

Take courage again from the words of Oscar Romero: "If they close down our newspaper, if they do not let us speak, if they kill all the priests and the bishops too and you are left each one of you must be God's microphone, each one of you must be a messenger, a prophet. The Church will always exist as long as there is one baptised person."

As God's microphone, we must be the proclaimers of the Transfigured Christ, the Jesus who asks for lives lived in service to establish a just order, the uplifting of the wretched, the values of the Gospel. We must reject a Christ made to the specifications of our whims and according to the petty interests of our world.

We have been appointed as Conventors of the People and Light of the Nations, to open the eyes of the blind and free the captive.

No matter how formidable that mission might appear, we must not be afraid. We do not travel alone.

For now let us all go in peace and love to serve the Lord and to be an advocate for his poor and exploited.

GOOD-BYE!

The Advocate.



As we were... the front page of the first issue of The Advocate, Saturday, 1 February 1868.

President's statement

IT IS an unhappy task for me to announce our readers on this, the final issue of The Advocate, after its 122 years of publication.

The policy statement by his devoted staff. This small band gave their best to produce a first-class publication and can be proud of its achievements.

The committee is aware of the many additional hours all members have been willing to devote to their tasks. Our sincere thanks go to them.

To Mr Philby who displayed outstanding leadership and prudence in obtaining new subscribers from the young generation.

However, we are unable to create sufficient additional revenue to operate profitably under today's difficult economic conditions.

We were greatly assisted by the encouragement of an increasing number of our readers who have helped us to carry on through the years.

In our supporters we say thank you and God bless you.
D. J. BRENNEN
President, Advocate Publishing Inc.

Archbishop announces closure

IT IS with the most profound regret that I announce to the priests and Catholic people of Melbourne, the closure of The Advocate after 122 years as the official paper of the Melbourne Archdiocese.

Before coming to this decision, I consulted with the regional bishops, the Diocesan Finance Council and the president of Advocate Publishing Inc.

While sharing my sadness at the closure of The Advocate, I recognised in 1986 that it is unrealistic to attempt to continue publication, at least in its current form.

The Advocate, like so many enterprises in the current economic climate, has been caught up in a cycle of continuing decline, with no prospect of recovery in the increasing costs associated with the production of a Catholic paper of such a high standard as The Advocate.

When the production of the paper was recognised in 1986 that it is unrealistic to attempt to continue publication, at least in its current form.

Incorporated, a capital base was provided to the paper from the sale of the Beckett Street building. The appointment of a new managing director in 1988 was the major step in the process of restructuring.

Nevertheless, no advances, after close scrutiny of the accounts of The Advocate for the last two financial years, reached the conclusion that despite the capital restructuring in 1988, the paper was not generating from its capital, the call on funds was such that The Advocate was becoming a burden on the archdiocese.

I express an earnest hope that a means of this group in the grey robes of all the parishes and Catholics of Melbourne should be available as possible.

To advise me on the most appropriate way

to achieve this, as well as determining the best and most economic way to develop and foster Catholic communications, I have appointed a working group under the chairmanship of Mr John Dacey, formerly chairman of the Board of the Weekly Times Limited, to report to me as soon as possible on the options that are available.

I commend the work of this group to the prayers of all the parishes and Catholics of Melbourne.

ARCHBISHOP LITTLE

ARCHBISHOP LITTLE

ARCHBISHOP LITTLE

ARCHBISHOP LITTLE

ARCHBISHOP LITTLE

ARCHBISHOP LITTLE

Costigan punished, difficult years ahead

In April 1966, in the wake of the controversies over the conscription editorial and the publishing of the Döpfner statement, Costigan was moved without warning from his home in the Armadale presbytery to Glen Iris, which made for a longer journey to and from the *Advocate's* city office in A'Beckett St. At Armadale, Costigan had no regular parish duties, other than the saying of Masses on Sundays. At Glen Iris, where the parish priest, James Murtagh, was suffering ill health, there was an expectation that he would take on extra duties (Costigan, 2011). Costigan had the feeling the transfer was a punishment for editorial misdeeds. "I do not say that there was any connection between the sin I had allowed (the *Advocate's* opposition to conscription) and my transfer. But I did wonder at the time if I was being taught a lesson. Such a thing has happened in other cases" (Costigan, 1969).

In one respect, Murtagh, as a long-serving former associate editor of *The Advocate*, was an appropriate companion for Costigan, and Costigan recalls sharing useful information about the newspaper with him (Costigan, 2013). Costigan said that Murtagh, nevertheless, tended to support the Santamaria line – though "not in a fanatical way" – whereas Costigan had undergone a "total revision" (Costigan, 2015c) of his theology through his experience of the Vatican Council. Costigan was not the only priest going through a process of rethinking and questioning of Church teaching, and in this period there was an increasing number of reports of priests leaving the ministry. Among the priests who left in 1966, was a prominent English theologian and seminary professor, Charles Davis. *The Advocate* reported the events surrounding Davis's departure and marriage ("Defection of Fr Charles Davis", 1967) and was "taken to task" for so doing.

I think we have handled reports on clerical celibacy with discretion. Certainly, the big majority of the many reports coming to us on this topic were kept out of the paper. But I still believe that we had a

duty to give our readers some idea of current developments overseas in this area ...

I am ready to accept the possible validity of this criticism [of giving too much space to the Davis case], but I deny that we could have ignored this altogether. It was too important an event in the life of the Church in the English-speaking world to be over-looked altogether. (Costigan, 1969)

Obligatory celibacy was one of the Church disciplines that many priests were questioning. Many thought it was a discipline which would soon change, as did Costigan himself (Costigan, 2013). In this period at Glen Iris, anxieties about his own priestly vocation had begun to come to the surface, compounding the stresses of work. In July 1966, Costigan's younger brother Paul was ordained to the priesthood. Costigan recalls a photo taken on the ordination day outside St Patrick's Cathedral that showed Costigan wearing a grey coat. This was unusual – a priest's coat in those days would have been black.

My memory is that I had bought [the coat] before the ordination so that I would be presentable going round with Paul, and I think that I chose a grey overcoat because I knew, even if I hadn't articulated it in words, that I was heading towards departure; and that I'd chosen grey because it would be good to have ... when the moment came. (Costigan, 2015c)

There was more personal suffering for Costigan at the end of the year with the death of his 67-year-old father, Joseph, on December 18. *The Advocate* of December 29 carried a report of the requiem Mass for Joseph, concelebrated by his two sons, "Fathers Michael and Paul Costigan". ("Concelebrated Requiem for Mr Joseph Costigan", 1966) In the same edition there was a memorial notice for Costigan's uncle, Eugene Costigan, who had died in Ballarat on October 15. Nephews Michael and Paul had officiated at the funeral.

Catholic Press ‘Manifesto’

Costigan was not alone in his battle for more editorial freedom – the right to provide for his readers what he believed was as a more truthful and fearless reflection of the complexity of the post Vatican II Church. Colleagues in the Catholic Press Association supported his viewpoint. The CPA met in Sydney in late June 1966 for its annual conference, and discussion of the 1964 “Views of the Catholic Press Association” document was on the agenda. Ignored in 1964, that document was about to take a new form, and another advocate of the liberal project in the Catholic press would come front-of-stage. The formal photo taken on the occasion (*see page 149*) shows 33 delegates, mostly male and mostly resplendent in black clerical attire with Roman collars. There are two religious sisters in full habit.¹⁵³ Four lay people can be seen, and prominent among them at the front of the group is the *Catholic Leader* editor Brian Doyle, who had just completed his first term as the organisation’s first lay president. Costigan said Doyle took a leading role in promoting a new version of the 1964 document, which was adopted by the CPA as its “Manifesto” (Costigan, 2017b). According to a report written later by one delegate, the editor of the *Marist Messenger* (New Zealand), Fr M. Mulcahy SM,¹⁵⁴ there was talk at the conference of a “crisis of the Catholic press” which Doyle had “made much of”. Other delegates wanted to minimise this crisis altogether, and Mulcahy quoted one as saying that it was no more than “a row at an altar boys’ picnic compared to other moments in Church history”. The delegates apparently did not support Doyle’s lurid depiction of the state of the Catholic press and they passed a motion which read: “it is not a crisis in the Catholic press ... but rather difficulties and growing pains” (McAloon, 2009, p. 14). The new “Manifesto” was nevertheless published in full in Doyle’s *Catholic Leader* (“Manifesto of Australia’s Catholic Press Association”, 1966) and in *The Advocate* (“Manifesto of the Australian Catholic Press”, 1966) during

¹⁵³ From the religious order the Little Company of Mary, representing *Calvary* magazine (McAloon, 2009, p. 13).

¹⁵⁴ The first New Zealand delegate to attend a CPA meeting (McAloon, 2009, p. 13).

“Catholic Press Month” in August. In addition, *The Advocate* summarised the main points of the “Manifesto” in a front-page story, entitled “Catholic press speaks its mind”. There were two main obstacles to the growth of the Catholic press in Australia, the article said: a lack of resources and a “lack of understanding within the Church of the press medium”. Policy changes were needed which would see:

more adequate information on the life of the Church and greater maturity in the public expression of opinions on the life of the Church ...

Secrecy or deliberate silence on matters affecting the community should be adopted only when necessary ... A complete and true Catholic press requires reporting not only of what is successful and perfect in the life of the Church, but also of what may be imperfect or controversial ... A greater scandal than an occasional controversial item would be a Catholic Press that was habitually less frank, informative and searching than the reputable secular press.

(“Catholic press speaks its mind”, 1966)

The drafters of the “Manifesto” were well attuned to the climate of openness in the post-conciliar Church and were aware of the new spirit of frankness being reflected in parts of the Catholic press around the world. They could also see trouble ahead. There would be repercussions, were the Catholic press to put its collective head in the sand in this time of upheaval and were Church officials to continue their past policies of silence. Any suppressing of information on controversial issues, for “fear of provoking misunderstanding and controversy”, would result in Catholics questioning “the sincerity and objectivity” of everything published. The long-term consequences would be the loss of the Catholic press’s credibility. Catholics would turn to the secular press (not really to be trusted for its accuracy) for information about the Church, spelling disaster for circulation. “Prudence” was no longer justification for the short-term advantages of,

supposedly, not disturbing Catholics. In the light of the right of people to information, as enunciated in *Inter Mirifica*, and the consequent need to present a “true and complete” picture of matters that were of public interest, that policy of silence needed to be rethought, the document said. The anxiety of the editors in this regard was prescient.

In reality, *Inter Mirifica* was not especially helpful in outlining any strong philosophical framework to support the editorial freedom of Catholic editors that the CPA’s “Manifesto” suggested, and an editorial accompanying the original report noted that the decree had been “received without enthusiasm” (“A Catholic press manifesto”, 1966). There was nevertheless a hope, the editorial said, that “its shortcomings would be repaired” by a Pastoral Instruction currently being prepared by the Vatican Pontifical Commission on Mass Media, the body set up by *Inter Mirifica* to spell out the details of its general principles (Second Vatican Council, 1963, No. 23). A member of that commission was the Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney William Muldoon, the Bishops’ Delegate for the Catholic Press, who addressed the CPA delegates at the 1966 meeting. Muldoon had endorsed a proposal that Doyle be made a “consultant” to the Commission (O’Donnell, 1966).¹⁵⁵ Doyle would spend the next two years lobbying Muldoon about the CPA’s concerns and was most anxious that these concerns be heard by the Commission (Doyle, 1968b). He would also, with increasing disappointment, seek news of the “fate of the draft of the Pastoral Instruction” (Doyle, 1967c). He and other CPA members no doubt were hopeful that the Pastoral Instruction would deliver a framework that supported the CPA “Manifesto”. In the event, the Pastoral Instruction, *Communio et Progressio*, was not published until 1971. The document did endorse the formation of public opinion within the Church and

¹⁵⁵ Doyle also had enthusiastic approval for the position from his Archbishop, Patrick O’Donnell (O’Donnell, 1965), who had sent the formal petition for Doyle’s appointment to the President of the Commission (O’Donnell, 1966). The petition also had the endorsement of the Apostolic Delegate, Domenico Enrici (Enrici, 1966). A series of letters between Doyle, Enrici and O’Donnell over the subsequent months appear in the Doyle archives but there is no correspondence confirming Doyle’s nomination.

the right of Catholics to have “all the information they need to play their active role in the life of the Church”, but not in the strong terms of the “Manifesto”. In any case, by the 1970s, the doors were closing on the liberal project in the Catholic press. Even at the 1966 CPA meeting, the tone of Bishop Muldoon’s comments signalled the continuation of the editorial caution and defensiveness that was the default position of bishop-proprietors of the Catholic press. Mulcahy reported that Muldoon cautioned delegates “to keep things in the right perspective and not unnecessarily offend by stressing what need not be stressed.” An open forum of opinion in the Catholic press was acceptable “if we know when to stop ... more freedom is important and right, but move slowly until your readers get used to it (McAloon, 2009, p. 14).” Here was evidence of the underlying fault line for the liberal project, as alluded to in the “Manifesto”: “The special effects of ownership of some publications by Church authority cannot be overlooked ... in the new climate in which the Catholic Press now operates.”

While there were no signs of the Australian hierarchy endorsing the views expressed in the “Manifesto”, the *Advocate* editorial on the topic argued that the document was “solidly based on papal and conciliar teaching and on the best Catholic studies made on the subject in recent times.” The editorial conceded that the views contained therein may be “unfamiliar” to some readers, even if Catholic papers in Australia had for some time been trying to apply the principles – despite some readers’ “misunderstanding their motives”. The editorial also cited one “unjust and hurtful” letter from a priest some months earlier who had accused *The Advocate* of a “deplorable exhibition of irresponsible Catholic journalism”. The *Advocate* editorial of April 24 defending its right to publish the previous week’s conscription editorial “was interpreted by him of childishly defending ourselves with the old cliché, ‘freedom of the press’”. The editorial concluded:

We quote these remarks as examples of the kind of
misinterpretation of the current policy of the Catholic press with

which Catholic publications all over the world have had to contend lately.

We trust that the CPA's "Manifesto" will help to foster better understanding of the press medium in this country. It should now be plain that between the indefensible libertarianism of certain secular publications and the starchy, irrelevant triumphalism of the house organ or the propaganda sheet, there is a golden mean. Our Catholic newspapers and periodicals, whose defects we humbly acknowledge and positive criticism of which we gladly welcome, do not claim to be yet in full possession of that mean; but they are striving towards it to the best of their ability, confident that they will have the support of both clergy and laity. ("A Catholic Press Manifesto", 1966)

The hope was worthy but, in light of the future direction of the Catholic press in Australia, faint.

Paul VI calls for peace

There was a significant escalation of the war in Vietnam in 1966, with the number of US military forces doubling between December 1965 and December 1966, from nearly 200,000 troops to 400,000. The troop growth would continue until a peak of 540,000 in 1968 (Karnow, 1991, pp. 696-697). Among the many disturbed by this escalation of the war was Pope Paul VI. In October 1965, the Pope had made a historic visit to the US to address the United Nations on world peace. The next year, in September, he issued an encyclical¹⁵⁶ calling on the combatants in Vietnam to negotiate a peaceful solution, "even at the cost of some loss of convenience". The price of not finding a way to immediately stop the conflict would be "enormous slaughter", the Pope said (Paul VI, 1966). Noone remarked in *Disturbing the War* that people in Australia had noticed that "Pope Paul VI's

¹⁵⁶ Christi Matri ("Mother of Christ"). The encyclical included an appeal to Catholics to pray for peace using the Rosary prayer.

position on the Vietnam war to the left of that of the Australian hierarchy". The Pope, Noone said

continued Pope John XXIII's policies of détente with the Eastern bloc, opposition to the arms race and support for Third World Peoples. In particular he met with the Soviet foreign minister Gromyko and urged the United Nations to admit the People's Republic of China. (Noone, 1993, p. 156)

An indication of the division in the Church over Vietnam was seen in an exchange of letters in *The Advocate* in October between one of Costigan's colleagues, *Southern Cross* editor Bob Wilkinson, and Santamaria. Wilkinson, too, had begun to question the morality of the war. The front page of *The Advocate* on September 29 carried a summary of a Wilkinson editorial from the *Southern Cross* of the previous week, under the heading "Pope Paul and Allies differ?". The report said Wilkinson saw an "opposition between the view on which the Allied policy in Vietnam is based and the Pope's view". (Wilkinson actually said: "Some of the truths the Pope hammers at seem already the cornerstone of Allied policy; others seem to be at variance." *The Advocate* published the complete *Southern Cross* editorial two weeks later, with a comment by Wilkinson that the original publication was a "fair and adequate" news report ("Southern Cross' Editorial", 1966).) Wilkinson's argument was that, whereas the Pope said the risks associated with continuing the fighting "outweigh the risks involved for either side in ending their fight", the Allied view was the risks involved in a ceasefire were too great, "the opposite of the Pope's view" ("Pope Paul and Allies Differ", 1966).

The *Advocate's* summary of Wilkinson's editorial was accompanied by its own editorial about the Pope's encyclical which suggested there were policy makers "in Washington, Saigon and Canberra" who saw the war as "a clearly-defined crusade against evil and one that ought to be resolved by the immediate application of maximum military force". The Pope had rejected such an approach,

the editorial said. However, certain “ecclesiastical and lay” voices could still be heard promoting that view, and the editorial cited the bellicose remarks of one such voice, that of an American Jesuit, Daniel Lyons, to prove the point (“Another papal move for peace”, 1966). The editorial did not say there might be clerics closer to home with similar views, but others, later, would not be shy to so typify the Victorian hierarchy. In her article *War and Peace: The Catholic Church, Max Charlesworth and B.A. Santamaria*, Church historian Kathleen McCarthy said:

The [Victorian Catholic] bishops and Santamaria saw the Vietnam conflict as a kind of “holy war” against communism, despite the fact that Pope John XXIII in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* ... identified decolonisation as one of the signs of the times ... advising that “disputes between nations must be resolved by negotiation and agreement and not by recourse to arms”. (McCarthy, 2015, p. 435)

Seemingly on cue, Santamaria wrote a long rebuttal of the Wilkinson editorial in a statement published in *The Advocate* the following week. Wilkinson had “misstated the Allied policy” and misinterpreted the Pope, Santamaria said. The encyclical bore no interpretation other than that “all powers and interests concerned in the Vietnam conflict should meet around a table, without preconditions, in an attempt to end the conflict”. Wilkinson was welcome to his interpretation of what the Pope meant, Santamaria said. What was “objectionable” was to suggest to Catholics that such a personal view was what the Pope meant. Wilkinson had not claimed his view was what the Pope suggested. However, in a reply published in *The Advocate* the following week, he said he now believed the Pope’s appeal could be “answered by the Allies in a unilateral cease-fire, but not unilateral withdrawal”. This was suggested “under no illusions” and in the understanding that it carried “big risks” (“Unilateral cease-fire advocated”, 1966). In a further response the following week, Santamaria gave an apocalyptic reading of Wilkinson’s proposal:

I cannot credit that Fr Wilkinson means his proposal to be taken seriously. If he does, it would quite soon hand the South Vietnamese over to the Vietcong ...

There is no difference in terms of practicalities between a unilateral cease-fire and a unilateral withdrawal. One, in fact, leads to the other. And both lead to further aggression – and more unnecessary bloodshed – in South-East Asia. (“Fr Wilkinson's Proposal”, 1966)

Wilkinson made a final response two weeks later:

Mr Santamaria's purely destructive response to the suggestion of an Allied cease-fire is tragic. He must be shrewd enough to know that our urging a cease-fire lends itself to a more realistic interpretation than the one he parodies.

We are dealing with tactics for peace, not permanent pacifist measures. (“Cease-fire proposal”, 1966)

The response of readers to this exchange also reflected the divisions – and anxieties – of Catholics over Vietnam. Those opposing Wilkinson saw his position as a call for “peace at any price”. A correspondent, Fr M. Shadbolt, wrote: “There will be many Catholics who will share with me certain misgivings brought into focus by Fr Wilkinson's article ... Obviously, the Holy Father wants a just and lasting peace, not a ‘peace at any price’.” Shadbolt concluded by suggesting that the *Advocate's* editorial policy reflected a left-wing bias:

In your editorial of 29 September you do not once mention the fact of communist aggression. You are very quick to condemn the bellicose utterance of some unknown American Jesuit, but you make no reference at all to the bellicose actions of the communists. Does this measure the success of Leftist propaganda to convince the world that the Vietcong are the innocent ones and the Americans are the villains? (“Peace at any price”, 1966)

Other correspondents applauded Wilkinson's viewpoint. Rod Watson said Wilkinson was right in saying that Allied policy differed from what the Pope proposed, and L. A. Coutts said "It is my prayerful hope that Fr Wilkinson will not be the last Catholic to put forward in the Catholic press a specific proposal for peace." He said he was concerned that Wilkinson's proposal had been met "with the 'you don't know what you are talking about' criticism of Mr Santamaria".

Bishop Fox had the last word on the argument for the time being. On November 17, *The Advocate* published a statement by Fox in which he set out "to correct some misconceptions":

Pope Paul pointed out very clearly that it was not peace at any price, but a just peace that he was advocating ...

I would deplore the use of the Pope's statements on peace out of their context.

To abandon our fellow Christians in Vietnam to the terror of communist evil would be unprincipled on our part and a denial of brotherly charity. ("Pope's conditions for peace", 1966)

Perhaps the best clarification of the Pope's view about the way forward in Vietnam was made by the Pope himself. On December 15, the *Advocate's* front-page headline was: "Pope calls for armistice in Vietnam War". The combatants had agreed to two cease-fires, over the coming Christmas and New Year periods and Pope Paul had "today urged both sides in the Vietnam war to merge the truces into a single, longer 'armistice' that could lead to peace". A few days later, Santamaria, in his GTV-9 television program, commented on the Pope's proposal, on which *The Advocate* reported on December 29. Was this a softening of his condemnation of Wilkinson's approach?

Many voices in Australia and elsewhere have demanded an end to the killing in Vietnam, just as the Pope does. The Pope has shown

the way; ways and means are part of the kernel of the problem. The demand for an immediate armistice ought to be pressed by every genuine lover of peace. ("Pope Paul and peace in Vietnam", 1966)

There can be no question that *The Advocate* in 1966 was a forum for a genuine dialogue in the Catholic Church in Melbourne and, if there were strong disagreements between people, at least their voices could be heard. While Costigan suffered accusations that he had taken *The Advocate* to the left, the newspaper's editorial policy could hardly be called radical, and Costigan was constrained by the expectations of his clerical superiors, as well as an instinctive drive for fairness and balance. Not so restrained were other Melbourne Catholics, including one of Costigan's brothers, Frank. In late November, the day before a critical federal election, some of these Catholics, including Frank, placed an advertisement in the Melbourne *Herald* with a statement commenting on the Pope's encyclical and the Pope's "urging of a settlement" in Vietnam. It was clearly a response to the debate in *The Advocate* over the interpretation of the Pope's words: "We are disturbed at attempts to minimise the significance of the [Pope's] statement and to give the impression that present Allied policies can easily be reconciled with the Pope's views" ("On Vietnam", 1966). The *Herald* advertisement – there were 45 signatories to the statement – concluded with a call for a stop to the bombings and for negotiations between all parties.

1966 federal election: Fox interferes

Archbishop Simonds had attended all four sessions of the Vatican Council (1962 to 1965) but, according to Costigan, the trips back and forward to Rome – especially the stressful and premature return when Mannix died during the second session – "took such a toll of him that he was able to make few public appearances and was generally unavailable for those wanting to see him". On the way home from the final session of the Council in 1965, Simonds, according to Costigan, had suffered a stroke and was in hospital for extended periods during 1966 (Costigan, 1969). According to Catholic historian Patrick O'Farrell, the

Archbishop's ill health prevented him "pursuing any vigorous policy" against the Santamaria bloc (O'Farrell, 1977, p. 403). Costigan's view was that Simonds "was never effectively in charge of the diocese" (Costigan, 1969).

In early 1966, Simonds had been able to attend to a few important affairs of the Archdiocese, establishing, in particular, significant long-term structures that would promote and support Catholic education. However, his sight was poor and became worse after the removal of cataracts. According to his biographer, Max Vodola, "he was often found stumbling along the path trying to find his way. During ceremonies at the cathedral, two large and very bright lamps were often placed behind his shoulders in order for him to read the texts" (Vodola, 1997, p. 95). Simonds had suffered two slight strokes during the year (B. Duncan, 2001, p. 383) and by September Fox was administering the archdiocese. Costigan considered that, at least from the beginning of the year, the Melbourne Archdiocese was "really being administered by others ... and in fact for some time before that" (Costigan, 1969). Fox was free to put his own stamp on diocesan policy – and to bring *The Advocate* into line.

At the end of November, a federal election was held, which resulted in a landslide victory for the Liberal-Country Party government led by Holt and a stinging repudiation of the Labor Party and its leader Arthur Calwell, who had said "that he would 'live or perish politically' on the issue of conscription" (Edwards, 1997, p. 135). Both Calwell and Holt had made it clear that the election would be principally fought over Vietnam, and the emphatic result – with a three per cent swing towards the Liberal Party (Edwards, 1997, p. 137) – confirmed the general approval of the public for the government's policies on the war. It echoed, too, the general Catholic support for the government's policies. Nevertheless, Calwell's was not the only Catholic voice against the war. In October, an advertisement in the form of a full-page petition had appeared in the Melbourne *Herald*, calling for an immediate cessation of the American bombing, for peace negotiations with the National Liberation Front (the Viet Cong) and for a serious

consideration of whether Australia should be in Vietnam at all. The signatories represented academics, professionals, clergy and others in Victoria, among whom were the names of some prominent Melbourne Catholics.¹⁵⁷ Shortly after the petition was published, a correspondent to *The Advocate* remarked of the advertisement: “I was struck by the absence of the names of even one Catholic bishop or priest. Are our clergy mindful of Pope Paul’s plea for peace when he said that the war in Vietnam should be settled ‘even at the expense of some inconvenience or loss’” (“Vietnam statement”, 1966)?

What would *The Advocate* say about the election? It was normal for the paper to run an editorial on elections, which Denys Jackson might have written on this occasion. Instead, “because of the delicacy of the issue”, Costigan decided to write the editorial himself, as he recounted in his 1969 letter to Knox. Costigan said he

had spent a couple of weeks gathering material, studying policy speeches, etc. I had decided that, for this first Federal Election since Archbishop Simonds had succeeded, it was not right that the paper (his paper) should give its customary exhortation to the Catholic voters to support the DLP. (Costigan, 1969)

Unbeknown to Costigan, Jackson had already met with Fox to discuss the election editorial, and Costigan and Murphy were “staggered” to discover the fact when Jackson announced it in the office one morning. Costigan told Jackson he need not bother to write the editorial, since he would be doing it himself. This news got quickly back to Fox who went to see the editor, Denis Murphy “to find out whether in fact I was writing the editorial. When Fr Murphy said that he didn’t know, but that I could write it if I chose, as I had often done in the past, Bishop Fox said that in that case I must bring it to him for his inspection.” Costigan wrote the editorial, taking great care to avoid “any giving of support to a particular party”. He did obediently take the draft to Fox who, clearly not happy, “ordered a few changes to passages which could conceivably be interpreted as

¹⁵⁷ Including Max Charlesworth, Jenny Teichmann and Paul Ormonde.

unsympathetic to the DLP". Fox did not ask to see the final proofs. The published editorial said, "We do not wish to sway anybody's vote", and there appeared no attempt to do so. Should voters consider Vietnam to be the principal issue, at least the policies were clear, the editorial said,¹⁵⁸ even if two issues which were really separate – Australia's commitment to the war and the policy of sending conscripts – had been conflated. If, on the other hand, voters thought the issue of State aid to Catholic schools was more important, then "The DLP has promised most, the ALP has promised something worth while, and the Liberal-Country Party has promised very little" ("The Federal Election", 1966).

Costigan's justification for writing the editorial himself raises a question. His argument that the newspaper should reflect the views of the current proprietor – "it was not right that the paper (his paper) [Costigan's emphasis]" should support the DLP – departs from what might be described as pure "liberal project" doctrine, where a newspaper might **not** be expected to represent the views of the bishop-proprietor. It might be argued that Costigan, in wishing to counter the DLP line, was merely replacing the select views of the Santamaria coterie with the select views of another authority. Nevertheless, the evidence is that, whereas Santamaria and Fox were quick to denounce views expressed in *The Advocate* that did not support their outlook, Simonds rarely, if ever, intervened in editorial decisions. Moreover, Costigan's strategy was not to censor the views of those he himself (and Simonds) might have disagreed with, but to allow a diversity of viewpoints. Costigan's concern was not about conforming to any "official" line but, rather, about removing the newspaper from the narrowing political influence of the Santamaria disciples.

¹⁵⁸ Namely, "(a) continue the commitment, including the sending of conscripts (Government parties); (b) end the commitment, withdraw the conscripts ... (ALP); (c) continue the commitment and extend the national service program ... (DLP)" ("The Federal Election", 1966).

Conclusion

By the end of 1966 Costigan knew he had made enemies in the “Cathedral” and among the staunch supporters of the DLP–NCC line. Catholic press colleagues supported him in the editorial direction he had been taking at *The Advocate* but his ability to keep up the fight in Melbourne was uncertain. Moreover, the ordination of his brother Paul to the priesthood had, rather than reinforce his own priestly commitment, brought to the surface doubts about his own perseverance. It had been a rollercoaster year, nonetheless, with *The Advocate* taking clear and well-argued stands for the principles of Catholic journalism Costigan believed in. In these efforts he had been well supported by his news editor, Murphy, and he knew there was a body of Catholics in Melbourne – albeit not in the corridors of power – which was supportive of the *Advocate*’s new direction. At the same time, the efforts to maintain his editorial standpoint were wearying, even demoralising, given his own internal crises. As the year came to an end, the news on Archbishop Simonds was not good. On December 1, *The Advocate* reported that Simonds

has been in the Mercy Hospital for nine weeks. He had a stroke four weeks ago and was anointed¹⁵⁹ ... Bishop Fox said that his Grace the Archbishop had improved a little during the week but that any improvement, he was afraid, was not going to be of a lasting nature. (“Archbishop Simonds”, 1966)

It was not going to be long before the Archdiocese had a new Archbishop, and it would only be a few months before his name was announced. In the following two years, the pressure from the authorities who opposed the *Advocate*’s standpoint would continue relentlessly, and resistance would be made the more difficult by the appointment of an Archbishop who was not inclined to encourage any sort of a free press. The next chapter will describe some key events in these

¹⁵⁹ The “Last Rites”.

final years of the Costigan *Advocate* and the momentous decisions with which Costigan himself was faced.

Chapter 7: Hopes fade on the liberal project (Knox, 1967-1969)

Introduction

The battle to implement what this thesis has described as a “liberal project” in the Catholic press was taking place at a time of great upheaval both in the wider world and in the Catholic Church, itself undertaking its own liberal project. The Vatican Council had precipitated a movement of change wherein many priests and lay people took the Council’s urging to take note of “the signs of the times”¹⁶⁰ as a call to move beyond a fortress mentality and establish a new relationship of dialogue with the contemporary world. It turned out to be a watershed moment in which many Catholics left the Church body or, at least, withdrew from active participation. The two significant issues addressed in the previous chapter, Vietnam and contraception – one a matter of global politics and the other of morality – were, if not entirely the cause of the haemorrhaging of Church membership, certainly its occasion. That haemorrhaging, according to historian Alan Gilbert, first became evident in 1967, and it affected all churches.

A survey conducted in 1966 discovered that about 23 per cent of Australians had not been to church during the previous year. Only a decade later the figure was over 50 per cent. Meanwhile, the 30 per cent weekly churchgoing rate, which had held with only slight fluctuations from 1939 to 1966, had fallen to around 20 per cent. A million and a quarter Australians had ceased to be churchgoers within ten years; and, whereas in the past virtually every Australian had at least professed to believe in God, by the second half of the

¹⁶⁰ The Vatican Council Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, says “the Church has always had the duty of scrutinising the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (Second Vatican Council, 1965).

1970s one in five admitted to being an unbeliever. (Gilbert, 1987, p. 211)

Gilbert speculated that the failure of the Catholic Church to initially support the growing movement against the Vietnam war contributed to the marginalisation of those Catholics who opposed the war, making them “targets in a general conservative reaction to the liberalisation of the church following the second Vatican Council” (Gilbert, p. 211). But this was not the only group of Catholics which found itself outside the Church’s definition of the loyal Catholic. Those Catholics who were expecting the Pope to relax the ban on the contraceptive pill would be bitterly disappointed. While that disappointment did not necessarily translate into defection, in the sense of leaving the Church completely, there was a defection by many, nevertheless, from the observance of the encyclical’s ban. In any case, the departure of many of the more progressive thinkers from regular Church involvement increasingly left a readership for the Catholic press dominated by the more conservative. This created a problem for the editor of a Catholic paper who wanted to present more liberal views.

Michael Costigan was one such editor and, certainly, there were readers of *The Advocate* who wanted to hear the more liberal views. There were also numbers of readers who agreed with the stance of Santamaria who supported the war in Vietnam and who increasingly took issue with the direction the Church appeared to be taking in the wake of the Vatican Council. This chapter will describe the final years of Michael Costigan’s term as associate editor at *The Advocate* and the battles between the two sides of Church politics that were reflected in the newspaper’s pages. During the last months of this period, Costigan took leave, for personal reasons, that would end with his resignation as *Advocate* associate editor. By this stage it had become apparent that the new Archbishop, James Knox, whose appointment was announced in April, was of a mind to limit the wider range of views formerly expressed in *The Advocate* and would not support any sort of liberal project.

Vietnam: Catholic opinion becomes divided

In May 1966, the first Australian conscript had been killed in Vietnam, 21-year-old Errol Noack, bringing the war much closer to people's consciousness. The rationale for the American prosecution of the war and for Australia's support of its efforts was the combatting of communist expansion. While this had been the dominant narrative in the Australian community, and drove the argument of Melbourne Catholics who supported the war, it could also be argued that the conflict was as much about "nationalist aspirations" and the throwing off of Vietnam's colonial past as it was about communist expansionism (Cf. Strangio, 2002, p. 74). Moreover it was a war that was appearing increasingly difficult – if not impossible – to win. A growing understanding of the more complex nature of the conflict, reinforced by the graphic evidence of the human suffering – for the soldiers and civilians on both sides – which confronted Australians on their television screens, drove a growing protest movement against the war through 1967.¹⁶¹

Nevertheless, in Melbourne, the hard line against communism, and support for maintaining, if not increasing, the military offensive, was maintained by NCC members and their supporters, who were ever on the alert for any softening of that line in the Catholic community. *The Advocate* was now a prime target of their criticisms. In September 1966, Paul VI had sent a personal friend, the Apostolic Delegate to Canada, Archbishop Sergio Pignedoli, on what was described as a "strictly religious mission" to South Vietnam ("Pope gives Vietnam mission to friend", 1966). Pignedoli arrived in Saigon on September 28 (CIA Directorate of Intelligence, 1966) with the official purpose of attending a conference of Vietnamese bishops, but speculation also arose that he might undertake a peace mission to Hanoi, a proposal the archbishop said he was open

¹⁶¹ Peter Edwards details this movement, particularly in Chapter 8, "The rise of dissent and protest, 1967", of his authoritative work on the Australian response to the Vietnam War, *A Nation at War* (1997).

to, if asked.¹⁶² An article in *News-Weekly* six months later reported that, while he was in Saigon, Pignedoli was asked by a Catholic journalist, the veteran Vietnam correspondent Fr Patrick O'Connor, whether the Pope "favoured peace at any price". This label had been applied by supporters of the war to the views of certain Catholics who called for a cease fire.¹⁶³ The archbishop vehemently rejected that proposition, *News-Weekly* said ("The Pignedoli interview", 1967a). According to Costigan, O'Connor (whose reports on Vietnam were regularly carried by *The Advocate*) was closely associated with Santamaria, and the *News-Weekly* article was "a worthless attempt to interpret an off-the-cuff reply to a newsman's question at Saigon airport as a proof that the Pope and Archbishop Pignedoli were aligned with American policy" (Costigan, 1969). Costigan had chosen not to publish the report of this exchange, which had been received at *The Advocate* in October, considering it as an optional "filler" that conveyed nothing new or unexpected. Nevertheless, the NCC's mouthpiece, *News-Weekly*, accused *The Advocate* of having "suppressed" O'Connor's story. That allegation was "curious", *The Advocate* said in an editorial in March 1967.

It seems to us to be a strange proposition that the Pope, having spoken so often and so forthrightly on peace, needed to have his meaning clarified by his legate in an interview given to a priest-journalist in Saigon. If, as *News Weekly* says, Archbishop Pignedoli answered his questioner "with the greatest force", one may suppose that he was astonished that such a question should be asked at all. ("The Pignedoli interview", 1967a)

It seemed that *News-Weekly* had been ruminating on the earlier debate in *The Advocate* between Santamaria and Wilkinson over whether the Pope and Allies differed on Vietnam (see page 158 ff). The *News-Weekly* editor, Ted Madden,

¹⁶² Such a mission was never undertaken.

¹⁶³ For example, Bishop Fox used the phrase "it must not be peace at any cost" in a speech in 1966 in support of the Government's sending of national servicemen to Vietnam (*The Tribune*, 1966).

wrote a long letter of response to the *Advocate* editorial a fortnight later, accusing *The Advocate* of a “failure of a Catholic paper to do its job”. Repeating Santamaria’s accusation, Madden said *The Advocate*, by publishing Wilkinson’s commentary, had raised the question of whether the Pope might have advocated “peace at any price”. Surely, Madden argued, *The Advocate* would have wanted to clarify the Pope’s position by publishing the Pignedoli response? Surely not, was the *Advocate*’s reply in the same issue. *News-Weekly* had put words into Fr Wilkinson’s mouth which he had not said, and *News-Weekly* was attempting to reduce a complex debate to two extreme positions – unreserved support for the war or total opposition. *News-Weekly*’s oversimplification was a “poor reflection on the intelligence of Australian Catholics”, and its complaint about the *Advocate*’s reporting showed a surprising lack of appreciation of news values. *The Advocate* suggested to *News-Weekly* that: “For a further explanation of the way in which reporting of such episodes is currently viewed in enlightened Catholic Press circles, attention is directed to Mr Brian Doyle’s article in this issue”¹⁶⁴ (“The Pignedoli interview”, 1967b). Bishop Fox was on the NCC side of the argument and later told Costigan that he agreed with *News-Weekly*’s criticism and that the *Advocate*’s defence of itself was “some weak excuse or other” (Costigan, 1969).

The NCC might have been concerned, too, about the Australian bishops who, in April, appeared to soften their crusade mentality in regard to the Vietnam War. In April, the bishops issued a “Statement of Peace” which quoted Paul VI’s appeal for peace of the previous September. In referring to the Vietnam conflict, they refrained from any anti-communist rhetoric. Some commentators in the secular press characterised the statement as urging “dissent” from government policy.¹⁶⁵ However, the bishops made no judgment on Australia’s support for the war, and

¹⁶⁴ This was a long treatise by Doyle on the role of the Catholic press, which will be analysed later in this chapter.

¹⁶⁵ As observed by *Southern Cross* editor Bob Wilkinson in a *Southern Cross* editorial quoted in *The Advocate* on May 4.

Noone's assessment was that they thus gave "tacit support for the status quo" (Noone, 1993, p. 134).

1967 State Election and state aid

The inevitable resignation of the ailing Archbishop Simonds came in April 1967, accepted by Paul VI on the 13th of the month, just ahead of a Victorian State election on the 29th. At the same time, a new Archbishop of Melbourne, James Knox, was appointed.¹⁶⁶ Knox would not take up his post until July and in the meantime Fox continued as Administrator of the Archdiocese.

At this time, government funding for Catholic education remained a pressing concern for Catholics and their leaders and it was a prominent issue in the State election. The Church sought funding not simply for capital works (which the Menzies Government had provided) but support for the actual cost of educating Catholic students on a per capita basis. The Victorian election would mark a breakthrough in Victoria in this cause, which set a precedent for other states. Politics, rather than social equity, played the key part in the gains made, nevertheless. The Victorian Liberal Premier, Henry Bolte, faced with the undesirable possibility of having to form a coalition with the Country Party to win government, agreed to a deal with Santamaria. If Bolte agreed to introduce per capita grants to independent schools, the DLP would allocate its second preferences to the Liberals, rather than to the Country Party, as it had threatened to do. Bolte agreed to the deal and honoured his side of the bargain after the election (Mayrl, 2016, p. 227; "Why private schools get public money", 2004). While the DLP's strategy appeared to play a significant role in the securing of state aid to Catholic schools, Simonds's biographer Vodola said credit was due, too, to Simonds who, in September the previous year, had made the argument for per capita funding to Bolte in a "neatly worded eight-page letter". The way in which Santamaria had claimed credit for the victory "undermines the relatively

¹⁶⁶ This news was made public in *The Advocate* on May 18.

non-political efforts of Simonds and his Catholic education leaders to gain equity for Catholic schools,” Vodola said (Vodola, 1997, p. 95).

Before the election, all political parties were lobbying for the Catholic vote (Costigan, 1969) and had made promises about state aid. Fox rightly saw the potential for a positive benefit for Catholics as a result of the election. The bishop’s enthusiasm for an important cause was understandable but in his desire to put the topic firmly before Catholic voters, he rode rough-shod over the *Advocate* staff. A pre-election editorial was due in *The Advocate* and the managing editor, Denis Murphy, told the editorial team that he had a phone call from the Vicar General, Monsignor Leo Clarke, with an instruction – which Clarke represented as having come from Fox – that Denys Jackson should write the election editorial on the topic of state aid. As far as the editorial team was concerned, this was not the way in which editorials were planned. Fox’s action, Costigan said, was “an unprecedented interference in our running of the paper, and a clear vote of no confidence in Mr Murphy and myself, who were known to be the other two editorial writers” (Costigan, 1969).

At the least, Fox’s instruction was heavy-handed, if not a deliberate attempt, with Simonds unwell on the sidelines, to exert the controlling influence over *The Advocate* that the bishop had always felt was his prerogative. In any case, Costigan reacted immediately and “fired off” a letter to be hand-delivered to Fox, with a copy to Clarke. The scene was set for a humiliating encounter for the associate editor of *The Advocate*.

In a very short time the phone was ringing and I was being summoned to the cathedral. What followed was quite the most unpleasant experience of my whole clerical career.

Like a miscreant schoolboy I was confronted by two very angry masters. I hope that I can accept a reasonable remonstrance with good grace, but on this occasion it was clear that a rational

discussion of our difference was out of the question. (Costigan, 1969)

It was not easy for a relatively junior priest to confront a bishop and a monsignor who were in high dudgeon, but Costigan said he stood his ground. He told Knox of his concern about Fox's "championing of NCC-DLP policy", a line, he said, that Archbishop Simonds would have opposed.¹⁶⁷ Costigan's arguments did not go down well with Fox, who told Costigan he was not the editor of *The Advocate* and should consider himself "in the same position as a curate in a parish". Fr Murphy was the editor and in future Fox would only communicate with the newspaper through Murphy.

Costigan was dealing with personal issues about his vocation in the priesthood at this stage and, as he later conceded, the heavy-handed response of Fox and Clarke may have been provoked by "the affronted tone I adopted in my letter". It nevertheless gave occasion for Fox to

take me to task for all my personal misdemeanours and the sins of *The Advocate*. The conscription episode came up again. So did the Pignedoli affair ... I was told that nothing but complaints about *The Advocate* were coming in to the Cathedral from parish priests. Bishop Fox voiced his displeasure because I had interviewed Mr Arthur Calwell on the occasion of his resignation as leader of the Federal Parliamentary Opposition – and to think Calwell was the fellow who had disgraced the Church by recently demonstrating against the visit to Australia of Air Vice-Marshal Ky of South Vietnam!¹⁶⁸ (Costigan, 1969)

The interview was a personal put-down for Costigan, but it was also a climactic moment when two irreconcilable views of the Catholic press crashed hopelessly against each other. Costigan told the bishop that, while he understood he was not

¹⁶⁷ Simonds at this point was in his last days in charge of the Archdiocese.

¹⁶⁸ Air Vice-Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky was the prime minister of the Republic of Vietnam between 1965 and 1967.

the editor, he did in fact **edit** the paper. He reiterated the editorial policies *The Advocate* had espoused in recent years – the attempt at an open and balanced reporting of events and controversies that were in the interest of mature Catholic readers, even when a vociferous minority complained to Church officials. There was a need to develop public opinion and this was the purpose of the letters pages. No, said Fox, controversy was not what was needed in *The Advocate*. People found reports of matters such as the marriage of priests “disturbing” and, as for the letters page, if Fox had his way, “it would be completely suppressed” (Costigan, 1969).

Bishop Fox’s distaste for the letters page was in surprising contrast to a statement made ten years earlier by the conservative Apostolic Delegate to Australia, Archbishop Romolo Carboni, in an address to the third annual meeting of the CPA. Carboni remarked on

the space dedicated in your columns to letters from readers. I congratulate you for making available this forum of Christian discussion. In this manner the writer is brought into closer contact with his public. The Catholic Laity, in particular, are happier when they feel they are able to express themselves freely in an adult manner. No one of us should be reluctant to know the true thoughts of others even though the views expressed conflict with our own and perhaps are even displeasing to us. The confines of opinion or debate should for the most part be only the bonds of Christian truth, justice and charity. (“Achievement and Future of the Catholic Press”, 1957)

Costigan said Jackson was “very upset” because of the division caused in the office by the election editorial. Nevertheless, since this was the bishop’s instruction, Jackson wrote the editorial – but “a fairly moderate” one, which avoided any overt pitch for the DLP. Jackson canvassed the views of each political party, in particular their policies on state aid, and noted that Bolte’s “small” proposed

contribution to Catholic schools was based on a “shrewd political as well as economic calculation”, made in the light of the distribution of DLP preferences (“Points in the policy speeches”, 1967). Jackson also later told Costigan that he was in no doubt “that Bob [Santamaria] was really the man behind the manoeuvring which had ended up with Monsignor Clarke’s phone-call”.

The criticism of *The Advocate* was perhaps most painful for Costigan when it came from his fellow priests. He recounted how stories would come to him from priest friends about other priests criticising *The Advocate* in presbyteries over the paper’s statements on Vietnam, “denouncing the Advocate and saying something has to be done about it” (Costigan, 2011). These criticisms took their toll.

The catalogue of complaints directed at Costigan in meeting with Fox and Clarke made the hierarchy’s dissatisfaction with the editorial direction of *The Advocate* clear, a dissatisfaction that Fox claimed to be also represented by the readers. Indeed, there had been many letters from readers expressing unhappiness with views expressed in the paper. On the other hand, there had been many plaudits, but these often came from Catholics who expressed views contrary to the party line – and those people were also targeted by Fox. The bishop had begun a war with the peace movement, in particular. After the publishing of the *Herald* advertisement against the Vietnam War by a group of Catholics the previous November, Fox publicly said he was ashamed of these “Catholic intellectuals as they are called” (“Bishop pleased at poll result”, 1966).¹⁶⁹ A number of the signatories to the advertisement became the core of a new Catholic peace movement, “PAX”, which had invited other Catholics to join in a letter published in *The Advocate* in October. *The Advocate* published a number of reports about the group’s activities, to the unhappiness of the Melbourne hierarchy, who looked on the PAX members “as dangerous rebels and communist fellow-

¹⁶⁹ According to Niall Brennan, in his 1972 work *The Politics of Catholics*, “so-called Catholic intellectuals” had become an “epithet” by this time which described the left-wing Catholics who opposed the Santamaria-Jackson line, as distinct from the right-wing “NCC-DLP complex” (Brennan, 1972, p. 21).

travellers” (Costigan, 1969). Some readers were unhappy, too. Paul Terhorst wrote on June 29:

I am at a loss to understand the amount of space given in *The Advocate* to the PAX movement. *News-Weekly* gives a clear picture of these PAX movements ... this movement is only interested as another anti-Vietnam Protest group under a different name but run by the same people. (“PAX Movements”, 1967)

An editorial in the same issue rebutted the implication that the Melbourne PAX group had communist connections, as some overseas “PAX” groups were said to have. The editorial also wryly observed how thankless was a newspaper’s task of trying to please all its readers.

Together with other Catholic newspapers, we were, however, recently castigated for neglecting altogether to report the “PAX” convention at East St Kilda, which received some prominence in the daily press. We are accused, therefore, of two contradictory failings. Is it surprising if editors sometimes wonder whether they can ever be right? (“Confusion over Pax”, 1967)

After a number of reports about PAX had been published in *The Advocate*, Clarke contacted Denis Murphy forbidding *The Advocate* to report on the next meeting. Costigan had a thin line to walk between obedience to authority and the pursuit of what he saw as his obligations as a Catholic editor.

I interpreted that order literally as applying only to that meeting, and didn’t hesitate to publish accounts of subsequent meetings. I was just too weary at that stage to make an issue of this act of suppression, but I have no hesitation in saying now that it was an absolutely illegitimate act of interference by Monsignor Clarke in the carrying out of the paper’s proper task. (Costigan, 1969)

Last ditch stand by the Catholic Press Association

The push-back against the liberal project at *The Advocate* came at a moment when Catholic editors in Australia seemed most ready to push forward. The Vatican Council document on the media, *Inter Mirifica*, as insubstantial as it was, was nevertheless the first time a major Church document had addressed the role of the Catholic press, defining a “good press” as one edited “with the clear purpose of forming, supporting and advancing public opinion in accord with natural law and Catholic teaching and precepts” (Second Vatican Council, 1963 No. 14). The editors of Australia’s Catholic weeklies took this as their cue to document proposals for the practical implementation of such a programme. At their annual conferences in 1964, 1965 and 1966, the editors studied the document (“A Catholic press manifesto”, 1966) and reports of their deliberations were published in the Catholic press.

Two significant documents were also published by individual CPA members in 1967 which pushed the thinking about the liberal project further. The first, by the Association’s president, Brisbane *Catholic Leader* editor Brian Doyle, was more polemical than the CPA “Manifesto”. It filled three pages of an April 1967 issue of *The Advocate*, under the heading “Reporting ‘Imperfections’ in the Church”,¹⁷⁰ and was presented, “at this stage”, as Doyle’s personal views (“Reporting ‘Imperfections’ in the Church”, 1967). Doyle’s substantive point was that readers of Catholic newspapers should not expect their paper to hide from them embarrassing, scandalous or controversial events in the Church – that is, the Church’s “imperfections”. The Church “that the people must know, understand, love and eagerly desire to live in is the church that actually exists,” Doyle said. He asserted that people generally did not actually understand the role of the media in general or of the Catholic press in particular. Critics of the Catholic press needed to have more faith in Catholic press “operatives”, and readers in general needed to be better educated so that they understood there was likely to be more

¹⁷⁰ Doyle’s document was titled “Reporting ‘Imperfections’ in the Catholic Press”.

harm in not reporting scandals than in exposing them to public scrutiny. Doyle concluded with a call for journalistic professionalism in the Catholic press:

Catholic newspapers must, in fact, be what they claim to be. They must be NEWSPAPERS. They must report what is genuinely news within the Church – objectively, truthfully, honestly – where necessary, critically – without bias, bigotry, slant or prejudice, according to the best skills, ideals, traditions and techniques of the journalistic craft. Catholic newspapers, if they are to do their full and proper job, must not be seen as mere house organs, institutional journals, propaganda tools, apologetic instruments, public relations mouthpieces, diocesan drumbeaters or tub-thumpers of triumphalism. (Doyle, 1967a)

Notwithstanding the condescension in Doyle's assertion that readers needed to be better educated about the role of the press, his outlook was shared by other Catholic editors. The Hobart *Standard* editor, Terry Southerwood, told Doyle in a private letter that he "agreed with every syllable" of Doyle's statement, even though it was too long to publish in "this little paper" (Southerwood, 1967). What response there was by the hierarchy was cautious. Muldoon was interviewed by a Sydney newspaper following the publishing of the "Imperfections" statement in the Brisbane *Leader*. The bishop said more reflection on the document was needed "before an objective judgement could be made". But he offered this:

My immediate reaction is that it is not a matter of what is reported but of how it is reported.

There is a tendency in the Catholic Press to imitate the sensationalism of the secular Press instead of putting news in its

right perspective and educating readers to a balanced view of things.¹⁷¹

Later, Muldoon was more positive in a message sent to Catholic press editors, via Doyle, ahead of their 1968 annual CPA conference. The quality of the Catholic press was “constantly improving”, Muldoon said. But he suggested that the editors may deprive themselves of the full joy and satisfaction they might have from their labour because of their “closeness to the work” and their “preoccupation” with achieving ever better results. Perhaps they did not appreciate what had already been achieved, he suggested. Muldoon seemed to be saying that calls for any further development of the Catholic press at the present time – à la Doyle for instance – were superfluous to requirements. He went on to acknowledge the “difficult, delicate task” that the weeklies had in reporting the truth without the sensationalism of the secular press. The editors’ task should be to “‘build up’ the Church ... never to tear down ... to instruct, educate, inform and mature the People of God” (Muldoon, 1968). There would have been little in the principles Muldoon articulated in his message for the editors to object to. It was in the application of the principles where the clashes occurred – as much seen in the response of readers as in criticism by the bishops.

Doyle’s views in the “Imperfections” statement were passionately expressed and barely hid a note of exasperation. He would continue to promote a more open Catholic press for a few more years, but signs of growing personal disillusionment would appear. His final presidential address to the 1968 CPA meeting attempted a positive note, suggesting the Catholic press was “on the eve” of a new stage of implementing the reforms proposed by the Council. However, his general outlook was bleak: “There has not been much ‘joy’ in editing and producing Catholic publications in Australia or anywhere else in the past few years” (Doyle, 1968a). In a private letter in 1969 to a priest who had complained about *The*

¹⁷¹ The newspaper report, headed “More freedom for Church Press urged”, is in a clipping in the Doyle archives, clearly published in April 1967. It is most likely to be from a Sydney newspaper but is not identified.

Leader's reporting of the views of a controversial theologian, he was even more gloomy: "Any human joy that was once in this work, if it ever was there, has long since gone" (Doyle, 1969a).¹⁷²

Doyle's "Imperfections" statement was discussed at the CPA's annual conference in Brisbane in June 1967. Members were also presented with another paper that confronted the critics of the Catholic press even more directly than had Doyle's statement. This was *Southern Cross* editor Bob Wilkinson's "The Catholic Press: and assessment and forecast". Wilkinson's attack on the critics was merciless and, in lock-step with Doyle, he blamed the difficulties Catholic editors faced in doing their job on a failure of understanding of the Catholic press among Church leaders and some readers. Accusations by readers and clergy that the Catholic papers were "hindering the work of priests and the Church" or that they "confuse the simple faithful" showed that the message of the 1966 "Manifesto" had not got through. There was a crisis, but it was not in the Catholic press but "with some sections of the readership and leadership" (Wilkinson, 1967). If there was any erring by Catholic editors, it was on the side of excessive prudence. Present criticism of the Catholic press was "almost invariably unprincipled, uninformed, exaggerated and intolerant". It was the judgement of "bush lawyers" who did not understand the complexity of the task of a professional editor.

Wilkinson singled out *The Advocate* as a Catholic paper that got "nothing but praise ... from qualified critics". To accuse a newspaper which was "one of the most serious and traditionally adequate journals in the Church here" was "laughable", he said. Wilkinson had done an analysis of *Advocate* content which showed that the concerns expressed by the paper's critics about a very minor number of articles were highly selective and exaggerated.

My opinion would be that it was over-cautious and over-sensitive, like all our Catholic publications. I do know there were defections, criticisms, doctrinal questions reaching the *Advocate's* desk, like all

¹⁷² A more detailed discussion of this correspondence is in Chapter 8.

of our desks, that never appeared in its pages presumably because of serious doubt about possible injuries to truth and charity.

The Church must understand that the Catholic Press is not dedicated to preserving calm and giving encouragement to everybody at any price. Valuable as those effects are, they are not available when the price would be one of ultimately deceiving readers, or destroying their just freedom to hear and to speak in the communities to which they belong.” (Wilkinson, 1967)

In the final years of the decade, it seemed there were two tectonic plates in the Church moving against each other. Catholic editors pushed for more freedom to run their newspapers along journalistic lines; the bishops – faced with a questioning world and a turbulent Church – preferred a tame press which avoided controversy and did not disturb the faithful: Catholic editors should not shine any spotlights on problems or controversy. Wilkinson, in his 1967 paper, had described the problem:

Two spots make a rash for many critics of the Catholic Press at this time. There is little doubt that the emotional insecurity suffered by many during a time of change, like that in the world and the Church today, finds some outlet in attack, and who more suitable to attack than mass media, who must present over and over again the threatening realities around us? (Wilkinson, 1967, p. 2)

The editors would say they operated with excessive caution in the reporting of Catholic affairs. But, when the bishops read the Catholic papers, they saw sensationalism. A reconciliation of these diametrically opposed viewpoints was hardly in the offing.

The Knox regime - unpromising portents

Firmly in the mould of the Australian bishops’ generally antipathetic view of the media was the new Archbishop of Melbourne, James Knox, who was enthroned in

July 1967. Bishop Fox, in Melbourne, most combatively represented the anti-liberal view of the Catholic newspaper, but it was Knox – a man of significantly greater diplomacy – who put the final nails in the coffin of the liberal project at *The Advocate*.

Knox was born in Perth but had never exercised any clerical ministry in Australia – he was virtually unknown to Australian Catholics. In 1945, he had begun what would be an extended career as a Vatican official as the Vice Rector of Propaganda College in Rome. At the time of his appointment as Archbishop of Melbourne, he was the Apostolic Internuncio to India.¹⁷³ Patrick Morgan, in his 2018 book *The Mannix Era: Melbourne Catholic leadership 1920–1970*, contends that Knox was “seen as a Vatican envoy sent to sort things out after the mess left by the split” (Morgan, 2018, p. 255).

Before the new Archbishop arrived, warning signs about Knox’s attitudes to the media were noted in private correspondence between Costigan’s Catholic press colleagues. As early as March that year, there had been speculation that Knox would be nominated as the new Archbishop. On the basis of the rumours, *Catholic Weekly* editor Kevin Hilferty¹⁷⁴ wrote to a press colleague in India, Jesuit priest John Barrett,¹⁷⁵ seeking background on Knox. Barrett confirmed Knox’s imminent appointment to Melbourne, and Hilferty passed on Barrett’s letter to Costigan, with the comment, “He [Barrett] offers an alarming prospect of the Archbishop’s press relations, should he be assigned to Melbourne” (Hilferty, 1967). Costigan might well have been alarmed. Barrett recounted how he had sought an interview with Knox to get further information, but found Knox in defensive mood:

¹⁷³ Knox had been the Internuncio since 1957.

¹⁷⁴ *Catholic Weekly* editor 1964 to 1973.

¹⁷⁵ Barrett founded the Catholic News Service of India in New Delhi in 1960, the first Catholic news agency in Asia (“Church mourns death of noted missionary journalist Fr John Barrett”, 2001).

He questioned me as to who in Australia wants this information. I bluffed and swore it was for our files and would not be used otherwise. Australian correspondents in Delhi have been bothering Knox this past week and he refused to see them.

He is very tough on the press, Catholic or secular. He simply won't give information, and when the press invents and misses, he is furious. (Barrett, 1967)

For the time being, Costigan continued his liberal line at *The Advocate*, believing it to be the only way forward for the Catholic press in a time of a significant change in the Catholic Church. For the sake of steering the paper in this direction, he was prepared to take editorial decisions which might bring opprobrium from ecclesiastical authorities and from some sections of the Catholic community.

After James Knox ... succeeded Dr Simonds in 1967, our paper continued its effort to disseminate information and explanations about what was happening in the increasingly troubled post-conciliar Church. The attempt gave rise to controversies as we opened our news pages to reports about such matters as the clerical celibacy issue and the debate about birth control teaching ... and our letters pages to the expression, sometimes vehement, of diverse opinions about theology, the liturgy, the Christian Unity movement, the war in Vietnam, capital punishment, Christian-Marxist dialogue and the Council itself. (Costigan, 2009)

Knox was installed as the fifth Archbishop of Melbourne on July 30, 1967, bringing the long interregnum caused by Simonds's infirmity to an end. *The Advocate* gave prominent publicity to the new Archbishop, beginning with four pages in the issue that announced his appointment (May 18, 1967) and Costigan said "a lot of hard work went into it". There were four weeks of front-page reports around Knox's arrival in Melbourne and subsequent installation. The coverage

did not satisfy Fox, nevertheless, who complained that the front page of the July 20 issue announcing Knox's arrival in Melbourne the following week had been spoiled by the addition of a small article on another topic placed alongside the main feature. This was a report of the appointment of an Australian priest, Camillus Hay,¹⁷⁶ to an international commission to promote dialogue between Anglicans and Catholics.¹⁷⁷ It was, in fact, one of the big news stories of the year for Christians – newsworthy not only because it was about the beginning of a dialogue between two Churches which had not been on speaking terms for hundreds of years but because it featured a local priest who had been given a significant part in it. Dialogue with other Christians might not have posed the same threat for Fox as did dialogue with communists but ecumenism was one of those new Vatican II ideas that he was cautious about, if not actually suspicious. This may have explained his reaction when he saw one of the first copies of the July 20 *Advocate*:

The paper had been out only an hour or so when Mr Canavan [Advocate business manager] received an angry phone-call from Bishop Fox. What was that item about Father Hay doing on page one? That was of no importance whatever. Couldn't it be removed? His Lordship wanted all of page one given over to the new Archbishop's arrival. (Costigan, 1969)

It was, however, too late to stop the presses and the paper was published with the offending article on the front page – as well as a small news item about the Pope's forthcoming trip to Turkey, which apparently caused no offence.

¹⁷⁶ Hay was a Franciscan priest and lecturer in the Franciscan seminary St Paschal's House, Box Hill, Victoria.

¹⁷⁷ In 1966 Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, met with Pope Paul VI, the first official meeting between leaders of these two Churches. The two agreed to "inaugurate between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion a serious dialogue which ... may lead to the unity for which Christ prayed" (Ramsey & Paul VI, 1966). The agreement led to the first meeting of the Anglican–Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission in Italy in January 1967. Hay was appointed just prior to the second meeting of the Commission in England in August 1967.

A lack of enthusiasm for ecumenism may have partly explained Fox's response to the July 20 front page, but a desire to exercise external control over the *Advocate's* editorial content also appeared to be operating. Costigan recounted how, just two days after the announcement of Simonds's retirement and Knox's appointment, Jackson had received a phone call at *The Advocate* office from Vicar General Clarke to announce that diocesan authorities had decided to appoint – for the first time in the newspaper's history – an *Advocate* editorial board. The board was to comprise a number of clergy and laymen. Fox had ordered that the announcement and the names of the new board's members be published in *The Advocate* (Costigan, 1969).

Catholic editors in Australia were not in favour of editorial boards. The only main Catholic weeklies with an editorial board at the time were Sydney's *Catholic Weekly* and Melbourne's *Tribune*. Recalling his years at the *Weekly* 60 years later, *Catholic Weekly* editor Hilferty said his paper had a "clerically dominated" editorial board which met every week and that he always bore "a deep resentment" to the way in which it interfered in his editorial decisions. Hilferty's editorials were "always vetted by the board and sometimes changed substantially ... especially at election times". Hilferty said the situation "gradually got worse and worse" reaching the stage where, after *Humanae Vitae* was published in 1968, the board "demanded" they be shown proofs of all the letters to the editor before they were published. The editorial board of *The Tribune* was similarly unappreciated by its "unhappy but qualified lay editor", Ted Adams, according to Doyle, writing to a journalist associate who was looking for work in the Catholic press. Doyle told his correspondent that Adams found the board "pretty hard to get on with" (Doyle, 1966).

Fox's proposal of a board did not come to fruition on this occasion, however. The managing editor, Denis Murphy, who had not been consulted about the decision, "gently" put to Fox that Knox might prefer to make such a decision himself and

Fox, having thought the matter over, said the news item, already set in type, might be withdrawn (Costigan, 1969).

Knox's predecessor, Simonds, died on November 6 at the age of 77 in the Mercy Hospital, East Melbourne, where he had been a patient "for nearly 14 months" (*Advocate* 9/11/67). Tributes and reminiscences on the life of "this great bishop and brilliant scholar" filled eight pages of the next issue of *The Advocate*. Simonds's short term had been filled with "notable new developments" in the fields of ecumenism and the liturgy. Nevertheless, *The Advocate* noted, "the pastoral office for which he had shown such brilliant aptitude had come to him too late". Other changes in the Church hierarchy were in the offing, too. In what appeared to be a move away from past regimes, *The Advocate* announced on December 7 that Fox had been appointed the Bishop of Sale, in the Gippsland region of Victoria. While an editorial in that issue said Melbourne had lost "one of her most distinguished ecclesiastics", it did not appear that keeping Fox in his team was an essential requirement for Knox. While the new broom perhaps wished to sweep clean, Knox did nevertheless confirm the appointment of Lawrie Moran (a Simonds appointment) as one of his auxiliary bishops. The other appointment, announced in the same issue of *The Advocate* was a second auxiliary bishop, John Cullinane, who until then had been the Auxiliary Bishop of Canberra-Goulburn. Cullinane had been prominent in what became known as the "Goulburn Strike", a protest in 1962 by Catholic parents in Goulburn over the funding of their schools, which many saw as an influential moment in the fight for state aid for Catholic schools.

Knox wasted little time in putting in place structures of governance more in keeping with the times and with the reforms of Vatican II. Notwithstanding the promise of a new dawn for the Church in Melbourne, the *Advocate* staff would soon see at first hand the evidence of Knox's suspicion of the media that had been rumoured before the Archbishop's arrival. This was certainly a reflection of Knox's own personality, but it also marked the time when the hierarchy in

general began to push back more firmly against the liberal project in Catholic newspapers. Knox's anxieties about *The Advocate* were not personal to Costigan, and Costigan had been able to discuss his doubts about his continuing as a priest with Knox. The Archbishop had reacted kindly and suggested a move to another parish, to which Costigan agreed. By the end of March, Costigan had moved to the parish of Deepdene, where he was relieved of some of the extra clerical duties he had had at Glen Iris.

Costigan also believed that Knox's knowledge that Costigan "was on the way out" enabled the Archbishop to move more decisively to curtail the *Advocate's* liberal editorial policies (Costigan, 2015c). Knox's pastoral consideration for Costigan did not prevent him from criticising the associate editor's decisions. A feature written by a controversial Dutch priest in a January edition of *The Advocate* was a particular case in point. The highly opinionated story, entitled "A Modern Priest Looks at the Australian Church" was critical of some of the conservatism in Australian Catholic life ("A Modern priest looks at the Australian Church", 1968). Costigan said later he had some sympathy with Haas's views, but Knox told Costigan he was displeased that *The Advocate* had given those views such attention. The Archbishop said he was especially unhappy that the accompanying photo of Haas had shown the priest in collar and tie, rather than traditional clerical dress. Costigan, on the basis of later information, said he suspected another reason for Knox's displeasure, namely that Haas, on a visit to India, had criticised the recruiting of Indian nuns to do menial work in German convents and institutions. According to Costigan, Knox would have been involved in this recruitment, which Haas had described as a "kind of slave trade". For Knox, Haas was "very much persona non grata" (Costigan, 2011).

Before long, Knox instituted more specific instructions about *Advocate* content. In April 1968, Costigan received a formal letter, to the "Associate Editor", from the Archbishop's secretary:

His Grace, the Archbishop, has requested me to advise you that the proofs of all material concerning himself must be submitted to him before being printed in *The Advocate*.

This applies not only to the addresses and speeches he delivers, but also the reports of functions he attends. (Murray, 1968)

The letter was sent around the time of a dinner for some of Melbourne's liberal Catholics at which the Archbishop spoke. According to Costigan, another speaker "spoke critically" of some other bishops and Knox had reacted angrily, saying he "was not going to put up with criticism of his brother bishops". Costigan speculated that the event may have precipitated the edict, even though *The Advocate* had not reported the speech (Costigan, 2013).

While Knox sought to keep a closer watch on the *Advocate* associate editor, it seemed that others could find no fault with the newspaper. Two days before Knox's letter, Arthur Calwell (now no longer Labor Party leader) asked a question in Federal Parliament of the Prime Minister, John Gorton, in the course of which Calwell remarked that *The Advocate* was "the best Catholic newspaper in the country". *The Advocate* was pleased to publish the report – modestly, on page 14. Calwell had referred to a report in *The Advocate* that a Catholic relief agency, Caritas International, was "sending medical aid to both North Vietnam and South Vietnam". Moreover, the aid had been in response to an appeal of the Pope himself. What would happen to Church leaders, Calwell asked, who violated the "provisions of the Defence Forces Protection Act 1967, which makes it an offence to send money or medical aid to North Vietnam"? Calwell also wanted to know – "most importantly" – what would happen to himself, "a Papal Knight" if he sent money to the Pope to support the "humanitarian work of aiding the North Vietnamese civilians and others, who are the victims of the napalm and phosphorus bombs dropped on them by the United States Air Force"? Gorton replied that, in answer to such a "completely speculative question", he couldn't say what would happen

and especially what would happen to the right honourable gentleman, who is a Papal Knight, because I have no responsibility whatever for his being a Papal Knight and I would not have any responsibility for anything that happened to him in that capacity. (“Advocate’ Quoted in House”, 1968)

Costigan’s journalism also continued to be affirmed by his peers. At the Catholic Press Association conference in Melbourne in May that year, he received the Father James Murtagh Award for Best Feature.¹⁷⁸ It was at the same conference dinner, that Cullinane proposed the toast to “a free and responsible Catholic press in Australia”. A more realistic reflection on the reality of editorial freedom in the Catholic press may have been made by the editor of the monthly magazine *Monstrance*, Blessed Sacrament priest Anthony Lawless. Lawless preached a sermon at a Conference Mass at which Knox was present and described the press as “the Church’s nervous system”, which enabled a dialogue between Church leaders and an increasingly well-informed laity. Lawless also remarked that the Catholic press was “also quite often the Church’s most nervous system” (Lawless, 1968). Costigan appeared confident in his editorial role but he was less assured in his role as a priest. By 1968 he was on a journey which would see his resignation from the priesthood, after a period of leave, in 1969. For him, the years of establishing his editorial independence had also been years of personal crisis.

Rift over dialogue with communism

As Costigan drew closer, through 1968, to taking the decision that would lead him out of the priesthood, he had one final confrontation with Santamaria, over an issue that was becoming more controversial: dialogue with communism. The expansion of totalitarian regimes and the suppression of human rights and religious freedom that frequently accompanied such expansion was a legitimate concern for the wider Church. But through the latter part of the 1960s opinion

¹⁷⁸ A feature entitled “Calcutta’s Pied Pipers”.

had become divided over the degree to which these conflicts might be resolved by negotiation with this enemy. The godlessness of communists made any possibility of negotiating with them extremely problematic for many Catholics. A number of people, especially members of the developing peace movement, advocated dialogue – if not with communism itself, with individual communists – as the way forward. However, as Santamaria would point out, dialogue might have many meanings: philosophical discussion, diplomatic exchanges, or even material cooperation with communists. There was a dangerous confusion, Santamaria said, in the mind of a certain variety of naïve Catholic peace activist who did not distinguish these categories and who were thereby in danger of being manipulated by the communists. Some readers echoed Santamaria's concerns. K.M. O'Callaghan wrote in March 1968 that *The Advocate* itself was being used “unwittingly or otherwise ... as a medium of communist propaganda” (“Communist ‘Advocate’”, 1968). Another, Andy Breen, said in the following week's issue that the *Advocate's* direction was “a far cry from Christianity”. On the other hand, in the same issue, J.J. Orval congratulated *The Advocate* on its direction: “It has been fairly common among Roman Catholics, some of the clergy included, to name anything that was less pleasant because it was the naked truth ‘communistic’. I am glad this has changed in the last few years” (“Letters appreciated”, 1968).

Increasingly through the 1960s, the position of the hard-liners appeared to be running counter to the words and actions of the popes. John XXIII's 1961 encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, which urged the reconstruction of the social order and “the worldwide sharing of knowledge, capital and labour”, based on the inherent dignity of every human being, had caught the attention of the Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev. In November that year, Khrushchev sent the Pope an eightieth birthday greeting (Carrillo, 1991, p. 654). John XXIII's 1963 *Pacem in Terris* had met with wide acclaim, even from communist newspapers, proclaimed *The Advocate* (“Encyclical on Peace Universally Acclaimed”, 1963). In the encyclical, addressed to “all men of good will”, the Pope made careful distinctions

between communist doctrine and movements of economic and social reform. American Catholic historian Elisa Carrillo said

Pacem in Terris drew a distinction between historical movements that had economic, social, or political ends and “the false philosophical teachings” which had originally animated those movements. The pope declared that “those movements, insofar as they conform to the dictates of right reason, contain elements that are positive and deserving of approval.” The world press interpreted “historical movements” as Marxist movements, and thus Pope John could be said to endorse collaboration with both the Socialist and Communist parties. For an Italian Catholic electorate brought up on anti-communism, this was a startling reversal of the Church’s position. And insofar as the encyclical called for an end to the arms race, the pope seemed to be blessing the Soviet Union’s efforts to bring about disarmament. (Carrillo, 1991, p. 656)

A month before *Pacem in Terris* was released, John had met with Khrushchev’s daughter and son-in law in a private audience. Rumours of a possible meeting between Khrushchev and the Pope were provoked by the meeting, and caused some consternation in Catholic circles. *The Advocate* published a report of John’s secret meeting in September 1963 when its occurrence was finally revealed. The *Advocate* report invoked a 1942 speech of Mannix in which he appeared to be unconcerned about dialogue with communists. *The Advocate* remarked that suggestions of any meetings with communists would have been even more sensational 20 years previously. Yet Mannix in his speech had referred to reports that Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin had been writing to Pope Pius XII. Mannix had observed that some Catholics might have been “perplexed and disturbed” at this news. The reports had not bothered the Archbishop, whose words showed he was, according to *The Advocate*, “far ahead of his time”, when he said:

“I must confess that for my part I was delighted to hear the rumour that M. Stalin had written to the Pope ... We must not forget that the Pope is not a politician, but a spiritual father of all the faithful, and even of those who do not recognize his authority ... I am glad to believe that M. Stalin has been, perhaps, in communication with the Pope.” (“The Pope and Communists”, 1963)

There had been covert communication between the communist leader and Pope John for a number of years, which *The Advocate* had reported.¹⁷⁹ Certain officials in the Vatican were uncomfortable with this fraternising with communists. Carrillo pointed out the divisions over the birthday greeting:

John was delighted; Ottaviani was displeased; and the Osservatore Romano¹⁸⁰ made no reference to the telegram received from Khrushchev.

In reply Pope John XXIII sent a telegram of appreciation, in which he also expressed his good will toward the Russian people. Despite the criticism of the Curia, Pope John remained convinced that a reply had been in order. He decided that he would have to put up with the fanatics (“Zeloti”) in the Church, but he could not understand why it was not possible to collaborate with those of differing ideologies in doing things that were good in themselves ...

In December, 1962, Pope John did not hesitate to exchange Christmas greetings with Khrushchev. To Khrushchev’s suggestion that relations between the Soviet Union and the Vatican be improved, John replied that no impediments existed, provided the Soviet Union recognized human rights and religious liberty. That

¹⁷⁹ An article in December 1961 reported on “The strange case of Mr K’s greeting”, whereby Khrushchev, in the absence of any official diplomatic channels, had had a birthday greeting delivered to the Pope via a “forgotten envelope” left by the Italian Russian Ambassador (“The Strange Case of Mr. K’s Greeting”, 1961). The next month, *The Advocate* reported how the Pope had replied to the Soviet’s greeting (“Pope replies to Khrushchev’s greeting”, 1962).

¹⁸⁰ The non-official publication of the Vatican.

condition obviously would not be met, but early in 1963 Khrushchev reciprocated John's good will toward him by releasing from prison the Ukrainian Metropolitan, Joseph Slipyi. (Carrillo, 1991, pp. 655-656)

While some Catholics feared that Pope John was selling out to communism, one historian, Peter Huff, said John had "opened the door to dialogue" with communists (Huff, 2014, p. 7).

John's successor, Paul VI, took the idea of dialogue further in his first encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam*, issued in August 1964. It was "a new attitude of dialogue", according to the former president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity,¹⁸¹ Cardinal Walter Kasper. It was a dialogue in which the Pope sought to identify in the mind of the non-believer shared principles of human progress:

Though We speak firmly and clearly in defence of religion, and of those human, spiritual values which it proclaims and cherishes, Our pastoral solicitude nevertheless prompts Us to probe into the mind of the modern atheist, in an effort to understand the reasons for his mental turmoil and his denial of God. ... We see these men serving a demanding and often a noble cause, fired with enthusiasm and idealism, dreaming of justice and progress and striving for a social order which they conceive of as the ultimate of perfection, and all but divine ... They are sometimes men of great breadth of mind, impatient with the mediocrity and self-seeking which infects so much of modern society. They are quick to make use of sentiments and expressions found in our Gospel, referring to the brotherhood of man, mutual aid, and human compassion. Shall we not one day

¹⁸¹ This body was originally Pope John's Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, which he established in 1960. The Secretariat, together with his *Pacem in Terris* addressed to "all men of good will", were considered "milestones on the way to a Catholic theology of dialogue" (Carrillo, 1991, p. 7).

be able to lead them back to the Christian sources of these moral values? (Paul VI, 1964b No. 104)

Paul's encyclical was "the first church document to endorse dialogue with atheists" (Huff, 2014, p. 8) and *The Advocate* cautiously supported the proposal: it should be a dialogue conducted, nevertheless, "by Christians thoroughly conversant with the Marxist-Leninist ideology" ("Dialogue' with communism", 1965). The Pope's idea of dialogue did not appear to gain much traction among the Melbourne Catholic establishment, however. A year after the encyclical's publication, Santamaria was still warning readers of the "danger" of "so-called 'dialogue' between Catholics and Communists" ("Danger of 'dialogue' with Communists", 1965). Paul VI was also promoting a new way to peace in Vietnam with which Santamaria was also not comfortable, as evident in the debate with *Southern Cross* editor Wilkinson, described in the previous chapter.

In June 1968, Costigan was one of several guests on an ABC religious documentary, *Tiny Ship in Space*, which discussed the idea of dialogue between communists and Christians.¹⁸² Costigan spoke in favour of such dialogue. The program attracted strong criticism from Santamaria, among others, and the controversy spilled over into the pages of *The Age*. *The Advocate* received many letters, too, both in favour and against the views expressed. Costigan himself wrote a letter in *The Advocate* defending his position:

The Catholics who are implacably opposed to the whole dialogue movement should not gloss over the fact that they are in disagreement with papal policy. I have the impression that some have been glossing over the fact and apparently trying to make out that only a naïve and irresponsible fringe group of "leftist" Catholics is supporting dialogue. ("Valid Assertion", 1968)

Costigan did not name Santamaria as among "the Catholics implacably opposed to the whole dialogue movement" but his reference would have been transparent,

¹⁸² The program was broadcast on June 8 in Melbourne.

and Santamaria was quick to respond to the accusation of being out of step with the popes. The next edition of *The Advocate* carried a long response from Santamaria, which placed Costigan firmly in the camp of those Catholics who were confused about the meaning of dialogue and misunderstood what the popes had said about it. Santamaria first took issue with Costigan's assertion that there was a radical new policy on relationships with Communism and that those opposed to dialogue were in disagreement with "papal policy". He defined several different and distinct types of interaction with communists. On the one hand were the Vatican's seeking "to establish working relationships with any government-in-being", as well as the discussions among "philosophers of every school, including the Christian and the Marxist". On the other hand was the strategy proposed by "Fr Costigan and his friends", namely, a dialogue "with men who have no governmental power" and which "when the philosophising was over and the practicalities begun ... would lead to bad practical results." Santamaria said there had been no authoritative pronouncement from the Pope or the bishops on dialogue according to this understanding, and "in the meantime there should be no attempt to intimidate anyone by vaguely threatening references to the proper role of authority." It was not Santamaria who was out of step with the Pope; it was Costigan who was promoting disloyalty – and so was *The Advocate*. He thundered:

We are not disposed to accept lectures on obedience to authority from a newspaper, the motives of whose editors are excellent, but the contents of whose columns have too frequently confused the Catholic conscience and weakened respect for Papal authority in the proper fields of faith and morals. ("Two views of dialogue: Mr B.A. Santamaria", 1968)

Santamaria's response had been anticipated, if not deliberately provoked. Costigan told Doyle in a private letter a few days after his original letter had appeared in *The Advocate* that Santamaria had "risen to some bait which I deliberately laid in my letter in last week's *Advocate*". Costigan also wrote to

Wilkinson to tell him to look out for the reply he was about to publish to Santamaria's "long and rather nasty attack on dialogue, *The Advocate* and yours truly" (M. Costigan, 1968a). In these last months of his editorship, it seemed Costigan was spoiling for a fight, and he chose to take on the person who most represented the reactionary forces in the Catholic Church at the time. He had drawn Santamaria out from cover in a final skirmish in a battle for control over the ideas promoted by Catholic media, a battle that Costigan believed Santamaria had now lost. Santamaria's response had also confirmed in Costigan's mind that this had been a coordinated campaign against *The Advocate* that had been going on for some time. Costigan told Doyle that Santamaria's unnecessary and "nasty swipe" at *The Advocate* had confirmed

my suspicions that he and his organisation have been behind much of the anti-*Advocate* hate campaign in Catholic circles in recent months and years. Our real sin, of course, has nothing to do with faith and morals. It is simply that we have cracked the grip which Bob has had on Catholic news media in this part of the world. (M. Costigan, 1968b)

Costigan replied to Santamaria the following week. Santamaria had offered "so limited an interpretation of the meaning of 'dialogue' that it is little better than a parody of the policy which the Church is in fact pursuing," he wrote. What was being proposed by the Church was something for "highly-qualified people" to be engaged in, and the new Vatican Secretariat for Non-Believers' had affirmed the Church's wish "to enter into dialogue with unbelievers", which had been made explicit in Pope John's *Pacem in Terris* and Pope Paul's *Ecclesiam Suam*. Costigan added that this approach might have to be reassessed if, for instance, "Soviet arms were to crush the movement towards liberty in Czechoslovakia". Santamaria's barb that *The Advocate* had been "leading readers astray on matters of faith and morals" prompted Costigan to conclude his reply with his own swipe at Santamaria:

While simply denying that there is any justification for this unnecessary smear, I shall resist the temptation to answer in kind by formulating any harsh judgements of my own on the influence of Mr Santamaria and his policies on Catholic consciences and on the life of the nation in general. (“Two views of Dialogue’: Fr Costigan replies”, 1968)

The exchange continued for another two weeks. Santamaria’s next instalment was published the following week, in which he essentially repeated his previous argument and again dismissed Costigan’s. Costigan was “unaware of political realities” since his expertise was “primarily ... in ecclesiastical affairs, Santamaria said. Philosophers, also, were not best placed for practical discussion with communists, since they would be “taken in”. The NCC’s primary concerns, on the other hand, were with “political affairs and their impact on the security of the state” (“Two views of dialogue’: Mr Santamaria’s reply”, 1968). The tone of the response was that he, Santamaria, and the NCC were best placed to know what the Pope meant by dialogue and how communism needed to be dealt with, which was by firm “resistance”, rather than dialogue.

In his reply the following week, Costigan rejected Santamaria’s “‘stay-in-the-sacristy’ concept of the role of a cleric working in the Catholic press”.

Santamaria’s attempt to put Costigan in his place would have been more convincing, Costigan said

if it were applied simultaneously to those clerics and religious who, by supporting his organisation’s political dogmas and activities from pulpit, platform and teachers’ rostrum, seem to have given a number of Catholics the impression that adherence to those policies is a kind of eleventh commandment. (“Two views of dialogue’: Father Costigan continues debate”, 1968, p. 13)

Costigan conceded that “Christians taking part in these discussions run the risk of being duped” and said that it was a good thing they had Santamaria to warn

them of this danger. Nevertheless Santamaria's "suppositions about the gullibility of philosophers and the dependability of practical politicians do not do him credit. If we have anything to learn from history, it is surely that politics is too important to leave entirely to the practical men of politics" ("Two views of dialogue': Father Costigan continues debate", 1968, p. 15).

Another of Santamaria's supporters, Bishop Fox, weighed in on the argument, although not in the pages of *The Advocate*. Costigan later told Knox that Fox had sent a letter to Melbourne's priests while Costigan was engaged in the *Advocate* debate with Santamaria, in which "he denounced the idea of such dialogue". Fox's action had put further stress on him at a difficult time, Costigan said.

Well, he sticks to his friends, and when Bob Santamaria was trying to uphold an untenable position (that the Church does not seek to make such dialogue possible) he tried to come to his assistance, even using pastoral letters and long-distance phone-calls. Politico-religious in-fighting is the roughest game in the world. (Costigan, 1969)

Costigan said "hundreds of letters poured into the office" over the dialogue debate and that many of them were "bogus" (Costigan, 1969). "We checked the addresses. Bob had got his office to send letters over false names," he said (Costigan, 2013).

No further reply from Santamaria was published, although readers' letters on the topic continued to be published for many weeks. The debate, in any case, was taken over by events. On August 20, a coalition of communist countries, including the Soviet Union¹⁸³ invaded Czechoslovakia, ending a period of liberalisation in Czechoslovakia ("the Prague Spring"). In the next issue of *The Advocate* one reader, Fr R. Markey wrote: "Perhaps those Catholics who want this 'dialogue' should ask the unfortunate Czechs for their thoughts on the matter."

¹⁸³ The invasion of Czechoslovakia was by five "Warsaw Pact" countries: the Soviet Union, Poland, Bulgaria, East Germany and Hungary.

Another reader, Mr J. O'Sullivan, cited Costigan's comment that the approach to dialogue might need to be reassessed should the freedom movements in Czechoslovakia be crushed. "We await his re-assessment," he said. Costigan, "in the midst of preparations for an overseas trip", replied:

I cannot do full justice to the expectations of M.J. O'Sullivan or to the challenges hurled at me by the unknown person who sends indignant letters signed 'DESCUSTED' (sic).

I hope it is superfluous for me to state that I utterly deplore the actions of the Soviet and the other invaders of Czechoslovakia. Dialoguers and their supporters on both sides had as much reason as anybody to be dismayed by these events.

But it seems to me ... that the arguments for dialogue have, if anything, been strengthened by these events and its presuppositions confirmed.

The people behind the brutal invasion were not the ones with whom Christians have been conferring. I can see no reason for turning our backs now on those communists who are suffering oppression and on those who support them even in our own community ...

In any case, my personal re-assessment of the policy is of small moment. I have stressed throughout this discussion that my principal function has been to report the facts about the Church's policy. That I am in favour of that policy is incidental. ("Future of Dialogue", 1968)

This was Costigan's last written contribution to the *Advocate's* pages before he left on the journey which would end with his relinquishing the position of associate editor and leaving the priesthood. The same issue carried the notice:

The associate editor of *The Advocate*, the Rev M. Costigan JUD, STL, sailed for England on the *Castel Felice* this week. He intends to

spend some time in London, where he will be in touch with the English Catholic Press. Fr. Costigan, who is secretary to the Diocesan Ecumenical Commission, also hopes to study ecumenical developments overseas before returning to Australia early next year. ("Of general interest", 1968)

It was perhaps also the beginning of a parting of the ways between Santamaria and mainstream Catholic thinking at this end of the 1960s. Santamaria's bellicose answer to how to combat communism was in contrast with Paul VI's call for an end to the bombing in Vietnam. In the future, the approach of the heretofore marginal peace movements would be incorporated into mainstream thinking.¹⁸⁴

Bowing out

Costigan's departure on an overseas trip without much explanation was the occasion for some rumours, including the suggestion that the associate editor had been sacked because of his liberal views. An Arthur Ford wrote to *The Australian* in September:

A year ago, Dr Knox was welcomed to Melbourne as a prelate of international experience, but we now see him as one who removes any priest who disagrees with him.

Father Michael Costigan, the associate editor of the Melbourne Catholic Advocate, was doing a remarkable job in religious news presentation and had developed an open policy in the letters column.

It's known that Dr Knox was not happy with this, as it was disturbing many of the faithful.

¹⁸⁴ While it remained a controversial move, and was opposed by Santamaria, "peace studies" would be introduced into Catholic schools in the mid-1980s, with the approval of the Archbishop (McCarthy, 2015, p. 437).

Father Costigan was “invited” by Dr Knox to take six months’ leave, and left Australia last week. (“Dissent in the priesthood”, 1968)

Ford may have remembered a column in *The Age* in January that year that Costigan had written as a guest writer, entitled “The problems of spreading the good news” (1968), in which he had noted the tensions which were increasingly seen in the Catholic press between editors and proprietors. There may have been some truth in the writer’s belief that Knox was not happy with some aspects of *The Advocate* but there was no truth in the assertion that Costigan had been asked to leave – and Costigan’s denial in a letter to *The Australian*, written from Panama in October, was unequivocal:

Leave was granted to me by Archbishop Knox for personal reasons having nothing to do with the way in which *The Advocate* was being edited. I asked for the leave and was not “invited” to take it. (“Editor was ‘not invited’ to go”, 1968)

Costigan’s brother Paul also wrote to that paper to say that his brother had applied to Knox for leave of absence “on the recommendation of his doctor ... for health reasons” (P. Costigan, 1968). In December, Costigan wrote to Doyle about his “hasty departure from the Australian scene” and, with Doyle, he was a little more frank. The rumours about him were “based on speculation alone,” he said. However, he told Doyle: “Just between us, I am on a period of transition, as it were, and at present it is by no means certain that I’ll be returning to Melbourne on *The Advocate*” (M. Costigan, 1968a).

In fact, Costigan had already begun the paperwork necessary when a priest requested a dispensation from the duties of priesthood. This was with the full knowledge of Knox, although the Archbishop left plenty of room for a change of mind on Costigan’s part during the course of his leave. The reference to “health issues” was nevertheless no ploy. Costigan had been wrestling with the personal issue of his future for many months, if not years, and the stress induced, on top of the pressures of his editorship of *The Advocate*, had had an effect on his health.

In March he was granted three weeks' leave of absence from weekend parish duties under his doctor's advice (Episcopal Vicar for Clergy, 1968) and, in May, he suffered a bout of glandular fever which prevented his full participation in the annual CPA conference. In the last frenetic weeks of the communist dialogue arguments he was organising a part-time job as a ship's chaplain and negotiating some work with a Catholic newspaper in London, *The Universe*.

One of Costigan's assignments during the eight months he was away from Australia, was reporting on the post-Vatican Council reforms in the Dutch Church. He wrote a series of articles that were published in various Catholic newspapers,¹⁸⁵ which he called a "kind of swansong". Only the first article was published in *The Catholic Weekly*, since, as Hilferty told Costigan, "an instruction came from Manly [St Patrick's Seminary, Manly, Sydney] that these articles were disturbing the seminarians and no more were to appear" (Costigan, 2011). Costigan also had a reassuring meeting in Rome with the Rector of his old university college, Propaganda Fide, Monsignor Felice Cenci. Cenci gave Costigan his blessing to Costigan's decision to leave the priesthood and told Costigan he would always be considered "di famiglia" (Costigan, 1969).

Costigan returned to Melbourne in May 1969 and confirmed with Knox his decision to leave the priesthood. *The Advocate* of May 6 carried an official notice from Knox:

The Reverend Michael Costigan, STL, JUD, who has been a priest of the Melbourne Archdiocese since 1955, has received by Rescript from the Holy see permission to return to the lay state. He has been dispensed from all his clerical obligations, including that of celibacy.

The decision of Dr Costigan to apply for this dispensation was a conscientious one, taken after due consultation and reflection, and

¹⁸⁵ These included *The Southern Cross*, *The Record*, *The Advocate*, *The Catholic Weekly* and *The Universe*.

does not detract from his good standing in the Church community.

(“Archbishop’s statement”, 1969)

Alongside was Costigan’s last article as associate editor, “An associate retires” in which Costigan thanked Knox for his “great personal kindness” and expressed the hope that *The Advocate* would “prosper under its newly organised direction” (“An associate retires”, 1969). He would later reflect that he had been associate editor since November 1961, “during some bitter-sweet years” (Costigan, 2009).

Three months after his departure from the priesthood, Costigan’s first story as a reporter for the newly founded Melbourne *Sunday Observer* appeared in that newspaper. In September 1972, Costigan married his wife Margaret. The celebrant was Archbishop Knox and the marriage took place in the Archbishop’s chapel at his residence in Raheen, Kew (Costigan, 2015b).

Conclusion

In 1968 the American troop build-up in Vietnam had reached its maximum, but the tide of public opinion had turned against the war. A new President, Richard Nixon,¹⁸⁶ would begin withdrawing American forces in 1969, although the war was far from over. In Australia, in August, a Morgan Gallup Poll indicated for the first time that a majority of Australians supported the recall of Australian troops (Edwards, 1997, p. 183), while street protests against both the Australian commitment in Vietnam and against conscription became more violent.¹⁸⁷

The tide was on the turn, too, in the Catholic Church. Costigan’s final exchange with Santamaria over dialogue with communism well illustrated two camps inside the Church with substantially different outlooks – the progressive and the conservative. People’s allegiance to either side, and to the Church itself, was fluid. “Progressive” thinkers, such as those within the peace movements, would ultimately become more mainstream, while Santamaria’s positions would

¹⁸⁶ Elected in November 1968.

¹⁸⁷ See Edwards (1997), chapter 11, “Doubt, dissent, defiance and destruction, 1968-69”.

become increasingly marginal to the main Catholic body. Santamaria's thinking would no longer dominate the pages of the diocesan press and, in 1987, he would launch his own religious publication, *AD 2000*, which set about providing an alternative, conservative – “orthodox” in *AD 2000*'s terminology (Strangio & Costar, 2005, p. 212) – view of Catholic teaching.

While Santamaria's influence on *The Advocate*'s editorial line may have diminished by the time Costigan left the newspaper, there would be no victory for the liberal project. In fact, Knox's arrival and Costigan's departure was the occasion for the sidelining of that project at *The Advocate*. The newspaper would eventually close, in 1990, but, in the intervening period, it would rarely stray far from the official line. It had not been in Knox's interests to lose a priest but Costigan believed Knox was under pressure from certain “cathedral people ... to do something about *The Advocate*” (Costigan, 2015c), and Costigan's departure cleared the way for such action. One of Knox's first decisions in regard to the paper – taken while Costigan was overseas and before he had actually resigned as associate editor – was to appoint an editorial board.

Doors were closing on the liberal project throughout the world as the 1960s drew to a close.¹⁸⁸ The story of the *Advocate*'s final years and the fading of the liberal project will be discussed in Chapter 9. But what actually was the liberal project? Did it represent a coherent movement with any hope of success? The next chapter will gather the main threads of the liberal argument, tracing the project's origin and development and describing its essential sources, principles and argument.

¹⁸⁸ For instance, while Costigan was overseas, *The Advocate* reported the banning by the Archbishop of Auckland, James Liston, of the independent national Catholic weekly the *New Zealand Tablet*, apparently because of its publication of dissenting views on *Humane Vitae* (“NZ ‘Tablet’ church sales banned in Auckland”, 1968).

Chapter 8: The dream

Introduction: A new project for a new age

During the 1960s, a number of Catholic editors in Australia and overseas attempted to establish, in theory if not in practice, principles of editorial freedom whereby their newspapers would reflect the broadening range of views and opinions then emerging in the wider Church community. These editors believed a more open Catholic press would better meet the needs of a maturing Catholic readership. A dialogue was necessary, they said, between Church members and their leaders and between the Church and the world. Their approach brought them into conflict with bishop-proprietors and other Church authorities whose inclination was, rather, to restrict the range of views expressed in their newspapers. It also brought them into conflict with readers who preferred their Catholic paper to unswervingly and exclusively present what they considered were the “official” views of the Church.

The preceding chapters have characterised this push for more editorial freedom, which took place in the 1960s, as the “liberal project” of the Catholic press. The editorship of Michael Costigan at the Melbourne *Advocate* has been taken as a case study to illustrate the way in which the project presented itself in Australia. The wider liberal movement which had emerged in the Church itself has also been discussed, a movement encouraged by theologians and reinforced by statements of the popes, which envisioned a Catholic Church more open to the world and more ready to discern its future direction in the “signs of the times”. The liberal Catholic editors were not simply campaigning for more autonomy in their editorial decision-making; their purpose was to put their newspapers at the service of this wider movement of renewal. Moreover, they saw their professional service as an exercise of their personal mission in the world as Catholics. In the latter aim, they had good justification: Pius XII told participants in the Second World Congress of the Lay Apostolate in Rome in 1957: “The Catholic

newspaperman who exercises his profession in a spirit of faith is quite naturally a lay apostle” (Pius XII, 1957).

Success in their endeavours was mixed, and ultimately shaped, not by any failure of vision or lack of personal integrity or imagination but by an ongoing resistance to the project at the local level and, more globally, a counter movement in the Church which, by the early 1970s, appeared to be closing the very doors and windows that Pope John XXIII had thrown open. But was this “liberal project” in the Australian Catholic press a formal movement? Was there a clear set of principles that underlay it? And, if it had clear goals, to what extent could it succeed in what it had set out to do? This chapter will trace the origins and development of the liberal project, describing its foundational principles and argument.

No formal agenda, no program charter

It cannot be said there was a formal plan for a liberal project. There was no committee of Catholic editors which came together to draw up a blueprint. But intimations of at least a set of principles for such a project were apparent in Australia in 1955, when Murtagh presented his paper on “Problems of the Catholic Press” to the 1955 meeting of the CPA. This was essentially a commentary on Pius XII’s 1950 address to Catholic journalists (“The Apostolate of Public Opinion”, 1955). The congress theme was “public opinion”, which the Pope also took as the focus of his talk. Murtagh told his CPA colleagues the congress had made it clear the role of the Catholic Press was “something vastly greater than that of a ‘house organ’”. He had also raised what he called “the most difficult problem of policy” for diocesan newspapers: how to differentiate for readers what was official content and what was not.

By the mid 1960s, a number of other Catholic editors in Australia and in the United States had taken up these themes and were insisting that their newspapers had an essential role to play in the contemporary Church in the

facilitation of a free dialogue among members of the Catholic body, in the cultivation of public opinion. This was a service for the whole Church, and the Catholic newspaper was in a prime position – perhaps the best position – to provide it. The editors' mission would be hamstrung were their papers reduced to the role of house-organ, mere mouthpieces of officially-sanctioned views. At the same time, the editors were aware that, notwithstanding papal endorsements, their vision for the Catholic press had no clear definition. Certainly no definition, or argument, had been endorsed by those whose approval counted: their bishop-proprietors on the one hand and their readers on the other. It was clear to these editors, therefore, there was a problem to solve, were this project to be a success. While they saw themselves as newspaper editors and their role that of journalists, they were – as were all newspaper editors – aware of the hierarchy that determined the limits of their freedom; they knew who was in charge.

In regard to who made the editorial decisions, practices in Catholic newspapers differed sharply from those in their secular counterparts. Although secular editors sometimes needed to go into battle for their editorial freedom, they could generally claim, with a degree of justification, that their proprietors did not interfere in editorial decisions. Principles of editorial independence in the Western press were well established: editors might quote Milton and Locke or the American Constitution, should they wish to, in its defence. Catholic editors had no such established set of principles. Nor was there any enshrined charter to which Catholic editors might appeal, should their editorial decisions be countermanded. In an earlier time when Catholic newspapers were independently owned, Catholic editors had relatively more freedom. In the diocesan owned press, the negotiation by editors of any editorial freedom was essentially an individual and ad-hoc affair: a negotiation dependent on the convictions and personalities of the individual editor and the individual bishop-proprietor. At any moment a new proprietor-bishop might turn a Catholic newspaper into a diocesan house organ where the editor became a servant of diocesan policy, with little independence from management. Some editors in the

1960s declared that their bishop proprietors kept their distance. *Southern Cross* editor Bob Wilkinson said his proprietor, Matthew Beovich, “didn’t exercise a censorship” (P. R. Wilkinson, 2013), and *Catholic Leader* editor Brian Doyle said in a private letter, “I have been subject to no editorial interference from ecclesiastical authority” (Doyle, 1969b). Nevertheless, these editors, too, could see the need to establish more clearly in the minds of readers and proprietors an appreciation of the Catholic newspaper as a publication with a broader role and responsibility than that of a house journal. The concerns of these liberal-minded editors echoed those of fellow Catholic editors in the United States and, while the individual initiatives of these editors to further a “liberal project” were spasmodic and mostly uncoordinated, consistent themes in the outline of their arguments emerged, and the same names among the authoritative sources they cited kept reappearing. Not everyone supported their attempt to define a more open Catholic press. Some colleagues shook their heads, and certain commentators would later typify their movement as an aberration in the long history of the Catholic press.

Papal endorsement

Those who saw the liberal project as an aberration might wish to lay the blame at the feet of the popes, beginning with Pius XII. Pius started the conversation about public opinion in an address to Italian Catholic journalists in Rome in 1950.¹⁸⁹ Whether the Pope intended it or not, the advocates of a more liberal Catholic press frequently quoted his remarks in support of their argument. The Pope’s first concern was with the wider society. The free exchange of public opinion was “the prerogative of every normal society”, the Pope said, and there would inevitably be “a disease of social life” were it missing. Pius’s advocacy of such free thinking was no doubt strengthened by contemporary geopolitical

¹⁸⁹ This was the fourth international conference of UCIP. Pius XII, “Discorso di Sua Santità Pio XII ai Giornalisti Cattolici Convenuti a Roma per Il Loro Quarto Congresso Internazionale”, February 17, 1950.

realities. He did not mention communism by name but he condemned as “an attack on the rights of man” the oppressive regimes which “suffocate” the voices of its citizens. But even in non-totalitarian states, where people were supposedly allowed to think for themselves, most citizens were not easily able to resist the propaganda that went with modern society, the Pope said. “The abuse of power by giant mass organisations, which, taking up the modern man in their complicated machinery, easily stifle any spontaneity of public opinion and reduce it to a blind and docile conformism of thoughts and judgments” (Pius XII, 1950).¹⁹⁰

In supporting the cultivation of public opinion – free speech by another name – the Church stood “as a dam before totalitarianism,” the Pope said. The need to cultivate the expression of public opinion applied also to the work of the Catholic press, and people might be surprised, the Pope noted, to learn there were matters in the Church open to free discussion. Those in charge of a Catholic paper had to be able to steer a path between “mute servility on the one hand and uncontrolled criticism on the other,” the Pope said. In other words, Catholic editors should be free to report a wide range of different views, neither kow-towing to any party line nor reporting every sensationalist statement. The dichotomy Pius XII presented between a godless world and a redeeming Church hardly represented a new papal stance, but the Pope’s articulation of the Catholic press’s role in enabling the expression of public opinion was revolutionary and presented what appeared to be an acceptable charter for a Catholic editor, even-handed and liberal. Its successful implementation by those editors was, however, fraught.

The Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner, took up Pius’s ideas in a 1959 essay, *Free Speech in the Church*. Rahner noted that, until the Pope spoke of it, the phrase “public opinion” had “never been known before in the history of the Church”. Yet there was no mistaking, Rahner said, the Pope’s assertion of the need for public opinion; and there was no mistaking his justification of its existence “by the fact

¹⁹⁰ Author’s translation.

that the Church is a society of human beings and that human societies essentially involve public opinion. Any attempt to stifle it would be a mistake, for which both clergy and laity would be held responsible.” It might have been thought, Rahner said, that “such a thing as public opinion would be utterly impossible in the Catholic Church”. In secular democracies the will of the people was vital in determining government policy and public opinion was essential. The Catholic Church’s authority, on the other hand, was God-given and based on unchanging eternal truths, and faith and morals surely could not be determined by it. Rahner argued that, nevertheless, outside the area already defined by the teaching and directives of the hierarchy, there was a necessary place for public opinion in the Church, at the very least, “to make plain what people in the Church are really feeling, so that the Church leaders can take account of this in their own action”. It was particularly necessary in the current period in the Church’s history to extend public opinion and to counter “the strong tendency to narrow down far too closely the range of what parts of the Faith can legitimately be discussed”. This was, firstly, because the Church was undergoing a time of renewal, when some of the old ways of doing things were no longer fit for purpose. Secondly, it was necessary to differentiate the Church from totalitarian states that subjected their people to “sterile, silent obedience ... systems in which public opinion has become a Ministry of Propaganda” (Rahner, 1959, p. 38). The need to cultivate public opinion in the Church also implied an essential right of lay people to free speech, Rahner argued. The very strength and security of the Catholic faith was threatened when the free expression of opinion was narrowed down.

It is well for us to bear in mind the fact that, in the sphere in which this public opinion has a part to play, Church authorities have no gift of infallibility ... The clergy possessing official jurisdiction within the Church often have, it is true, a wider view of the real condition of the world and of men’s spiritual and intellectual life, as a result of their independent position, their remoteness from the pressures of secular activity, their deeper roots in Church tradition. Yet it is also

true that they are not infrequently in danger, for the same reasons, of knowing only a limited, merely “clerical” and traditionally sheltered segment of real life and the real position. If they do not allow the people to speak their minds ... they run the risk of directing her from a soundproof ivory tower, instead of straining their ears to catch the voice of God, which can also be audible within the clamour of the times. (Rahner, 1959, pp. 25-26)

Not long after Rahner wrote his essay, Pius XII’s successor, John XXIII, addressed a gathering of Catholic journalists in words which would also catch the attention of the advocates of the liberal project. The journalists were in Rome in 1960 for a meeting of the Catholic Union of the Italian Press. John, like Pius, painted the secular world in a somewhat negative light. Catholic journalists must be united against what he called a “worldly spirit” which, under the pretext of defending human freedom, stole society away from the civilising influence of the Christian gospel, “from the eternal values of divine truth, of love, of purity” (John XXIII, 1960). The Pope quoted one of the Italian language’s most famous novels, *I Promessi Sposi*,¹⁹¹ in which two blameless lovers fought against oppressive and corrupt officials – in the Church as well as the state – who sought the downfall of their relationship. Just as the two lovers had stood their ground, so did Catholic journalists need to stand fast in defending truth against a world opposed to Christian sensibilities, the Pope said. The Pope’s next words were startling, especially coming from the head of the Catholic Church: the Catholic journalist must be prepared “to defend and help defend truth, justice, honesty, even before religion and the Gospel”. Telling the truth, the Pope seemed to be saying, was more important than the defence of religion. This echoed a comment of a former

¹⁹¹ “The Betrothed” seems to have been a favourite of progressive popes. At an audience in May 2015, Pope Francis recommended the book to engaged couples, suggesting they would find great inspiration in the story of the two lovers who fought so hard for their marriage (“Pope urges engaged couples to take time, be open to God’s surprises”, 2015).

Archbishop of Adelaide, Robert Spence,¹⁹² in a “letter of appreciation” in the last edition of *The Advocate* under independent ownership.¹⁹³

A Catholic newspaper is not the mere partisan of a creed – its cause is also the cause of civilisation in the best sense of the word, and *The Advocate*, during its full and healthy life, has, by its vindication of the truth, not only helped the Catholic cause, but also helped the national life of Australia. (“Letters of Appreciation”, 1919)

Three years after his 1960 address to journalists, John, in *Pacem in Terris*, proclaimed another principle that would be frequently quoted by advocates of the liberal project to reinforce their argument. John said every human being had the right “to be accurately informed about public events” (John XXIII, 1963, No. 12).¹⁹⁴ This was a natural right – among many others that the Pope listed – based on the human dignity of the human person, created in God’s “own image and likeness”. This right was, as all the human rights the Pope enumerated, “universal, inviolable and inalienable” (John XXIII, 1963, p. No. 145).

A model rediscovered

The full implications for the Catholic press of Pope John’s words to the Italian journalists may not have been recognised at the time – a relatively comprehensive report published by the National Catholic News Service ignored the sentence about defending truth before religion¹⁹⁵ – but John’s words were not lost on the American Catholic journalist, John Deedy, as neither were the words of Pius XII. In his 1963 essay, “The Catholic Press: the why and the wherefore”, Deedy made the case for a more open Catholic press, setting it in the context of the history of the Catholic press in America. He described four distinct periods, the last which, he said, had begun with the opening of the Vatican Council. In

¹⁹² Archbishop of Adelaide 1915 to 1934.

¹⁹³ The last number of *The Advocate*, “under the proprietary of the Winter family”, before Mannix took over ownership, was March 3 1919.

¹⁹⁴ This echoed Article 19 of the 1948 “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”.

¹⁹⁵ The report was published in *The Advocate*, December 22 1960, p. 14.

this period “fresh winds ... may have blown the Catholic Press in America into a new and exciting fourth phase” (“USA: A Crumbling Catholic Press”, 1969, p. 68). In an argument rarely documented in such detail, Deedy set out the principles he believed would define a viable Catholic press for the future, built on a synthesis of the ideas of Pius and John. It was an enthusiastic advocacy for the liberal project, albeit qualified with concern about a climate resistant to change.

The starting point of Deedy’s argument was the role of the Catholic press in developing public opinion in the Church. His approach was more pragmatic than Rahner’s. There was an increasing number of lay staff working for the Catholic press in America, Deedy said. This made the issue of financial security more important, particularly in a situation where a new bishop-proprietor might replace an editor of whose editorial direction he disapproved. This was a consideration as real for the Catholic press in Australia as it was for the United States Catholic press. Through the 1960s, two of Australia’s mainland diocesan weeklies had lay editors (*The Catholic Weekly* and *The Catholic Leader*) and three had priest editors (*The Advocate*, *The Southern Cross* and *The Record*). Lay editors would be appointed at *The Advocate* and *The Southern Cross* in 1969 and 1974, respectively.

How free were Catholic editors to report all the news in the interest of Catholics, Deedy wondered? This was an unresolved question. The editors had no “ground rules” for their newspapers and could not carry out any role of cultivating public opinion with any confidence in the face of bishop-proprietors who were over-ready to take exception to what was published: “Whatever the protestations to the contrary, when conflict arises involving the will of the hierarchy and the disposition of the Catholic press, the laity suspects that the shepherds-and-the-sheep ethos will prevail” (Deedy, 1963, p. 99). A fundamental change in the way the Catholic press was viewed was needed, something no less than a new intellectual climate – one “much more reflective of the attitude of Pius XII as expressed in his 1950 address to the International Congress of the Catholic Press,”

he asserted. The acceptance of the need for a diverse public opinion in the Catholic press was the key, but the trouble was “so tight a closing of ranks on sensitive issues that a tendency develops to minimize, or to view cynically, the public discussion which goes on regularly” (Deedy, 1963, p. 96). Distinctions were needed, such as Rahner had made, between the settled doctrine of the Church – its “official” teaching – and matters which were open to discussion.

Of course the Catholic press is expected to be submissive to the hierarchy, the teaching Church, on doctrinal matters, but must it be subservient on the non-doctrinal as well? Is it to be allowed to excite and reflect public opinion on peripheral issues, and then be relegated to the role of publicist or propagandist on issues about which the episcopacy has reached a prior judgement? Or is it to stir frank exchange so that, as Fr Karl Rahner suggests, the Church might adapt the more conveniently and effectively to the extraordinarily varied and many-sided contemporary conditions that affect it as a society of human beings? (Deedy, 1963, pp. 99-100)

The degree of freedom of Catholic editors was clearly uncertain, Deedy said. But underlying the problem was the lack of agreement on just what the Catholic press was. This was a question which should have been settled “decades ago”. But there was an answer to it, Deedy claimed: it had “been lying around for a quarter-century”, in the appendix of Jacques Maritain’s 1938 work, *True Humanism*.¹⁹⁶

Maritain¹⁹⁷ was a Catholic French philosopher, a writer, and a friend of popes. John XXIII’s writings were influenced by his thinking, he was consulted by Pius XII and Paul VI called him “my teacher” (“Jacques Maritain Dies at 90”, 1973). Maritain was prominent in the intellectual life of the Catholic Church and wrote about the obligations of people and nations to take action in the world to protect and enhance human rights. The Catholic Church, he said, had a right to make

¹⁹⁶ First published in French in 1936 as *Humanisme Intégral*. An English translation, *True Humanism*, was published in 1938.

¹⁹⁷ 1882 to 1973.

statements about what was morally correct action in the political and social order and, moreover, it was incumbent on individual Catholics to take action on social and political issues according to their Christian beliefs.

The Christian must needs strive *as far as possible* to realise in this world (perfectly and absolutely in the case of himself as an individual; in a relative mode and according to the concrete ideas which belongs to each different age with regard to the world itself) the truths of the gospel. (Maritain, 1938, p. 103)

But Maritain also saw a problem about this: how does the Catholic Church influence the world for good without stepping outside its spiritual role? And how do Catholics act in the world, as Catholics, without implicating the Church? This was precisely the problem the Catholic Church in Australia had in the 1950s when Santamaria's Movement embroiled the Church in politics. Santamaria wanted the Church's formal endorsement of the political strategies of the Movement in its fight against communist influence in the union movement. Many considered that here a line had been crossed. But surely Catholics were allowed to get involved in politics if their Christian principles called them to act that way? Maritain said yes, of course – but as long as Catholics did so on their own initiative and responsibility and didn't seek the Church's official blessing. Here they were acting in what he called the temporal sphere, and this action, as such, was independent of the official Church. Of necessity, there was likely more than one way of interpreting what Christian principles meant in different times, places and circumstances, and there should exist a freedom for Catholics to take different paths in taking social action.

Maritain discussed these questions in the appendix of *True Humanism*. He distinguished three “planes” of action on which a Christian might operate in the world. The first of these was the purely “spiritual” and could be seen where a Christian was engaged in purely religious activity, such as in prayer or the rites of the Church or in applying their faith in “works of mercy”. The second, purely

“temporal” plane of action was where the Christian was engaged in the worldly affairs of the arts, culture, politics, science, etc. On this plane, a person may act as a Christian – and will often deliberately do so – but not in a way that could be seen as implicating the Church. They are not acting “as a Christian as such”. There was, however, a third plane of action, where the spiritual plane “joins the temporal”, and in which the Christian can be considered to be acting as a Christian *as such*. Maritain cited the social encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, as an example of where spiritual and temporal values intersected. The right of the worker to a just wage was a temporal “good” directly connected with the Gospel and spiritual values. A Catholic might well campaign for wage justice in terms of the encyclical and in so doing they were representing the Church. In this case, the Catholic “appears before men as a Christian as such and to this extent commits the Church”. The Catholic becomes a “collaborator” with the Church in “Catholic action”. Maritain made one further significant distinction: in the intermediate plane of catholic action, where the Church was implicated, the **unity** of Catholics was vital. In contrast, where the action of Catholics was in exercising their religion as individuals in the world, **diversity** was a key characteristic. “It is normal ... that Christians who communicate at the same altar should find themselves divided in the commonwealth” (Maritain, 1938, p. 298). Maritain said that, while a Catholic did not stop being a Christian when they acted in purely temporal matters, it was vital that the distinctions between the different planes of action were not confused.

A perfect illustration of how problems arose when these distinctions were ignored could be seen in the Catholic press, Maritain said. All the “highest authorities” in the Church said how important the Catholic press was, he observed. At the same time, everyone complained that the Catholic press did not do its job well. What could be done? To answer the question, Maritain proposed two models for the Catholic press, based on his framework of the different planes of Catholic activity. The first model was for a publication which was Catholic “by denomination” (*see Figure 1, below*). This model corresponded most closely with

diocesan-owned newspapers. There should be two sections in such a paper, rigorously differentiated. The first section – the “Catholic action” section – would restrict itself to the established doctrine of the Church. Such might be, for instance, the official statements of the local bishop, or the publication of the teachings of the popes. The other section he called “information”, which would be characterised by a wide diversity of viewpoints, including an “open forum” for readers. (In contemporary terms, this appears to equate with a balanced and objective news section.) Far from concealing the differences in the viewpoints of Catholics, this section would make readers aware of the “whole span of attitudes” that Catholics might represent, Maritain said. This might be seen “in political and social activities, national and international ones, as in those of aesthetics and literature, in painting or music, or the scientific activities of the hour”. The editor needed to ensure a “rigorous objectivity of this information section, to eliminate strictly everything with a more or less tendentious inspiration and to keep it rigorously distinct from that of *catholic action*” (Maritain, 1938, p. 302). In other words, articles in this section of the paper should not, on the one hand, promote partisan points of view and, on the other, should not be represented as official Church policy. This was in harmony with the prescription of Pius XII. Maritain was under no illusions that his model would be an easy one to reproduce. It would demand in an editor “a quality almost heroic”. Nevertheless, he said, “a Christian journalist is surely capable of it”; there was no doubt a readership which would welcome a publication that gave them objective information free from “an atmosphere poisoned with the lies for which party excitement is responsible”.

Maritain’s second model was a publication “Catholic by inspiration”, which would function purely on the temporal plane. In such a publication an editor was understood to present a viewpoint inspired by their Catholicism, but not one that implicated the Church. It was the individual action of a Catholic, as opposed to “Catholic Action”.

Periodicals of the second type belong to the temporal sphere as such, which implies that they have taken up concrete and determined standpoints on questions of this order and that they have adopted not only a social and political philosophy, but a well-defined concrete political and social line – not only in function of religious interests and the good of the Church, but also in function of the temporal and earthly good of the commonwealth and of civilisation.

... they draw their inspiration from Christian wisdom, and ... involve no other initiative than that of the particular persons or groups who have started them.

... such temporal ends are normally diverse, indeed contrary. That Catholics should form different groups on the temporal plane, and even ones which are mutually opposed, is normal. (Maritain, 1938, p. 303)

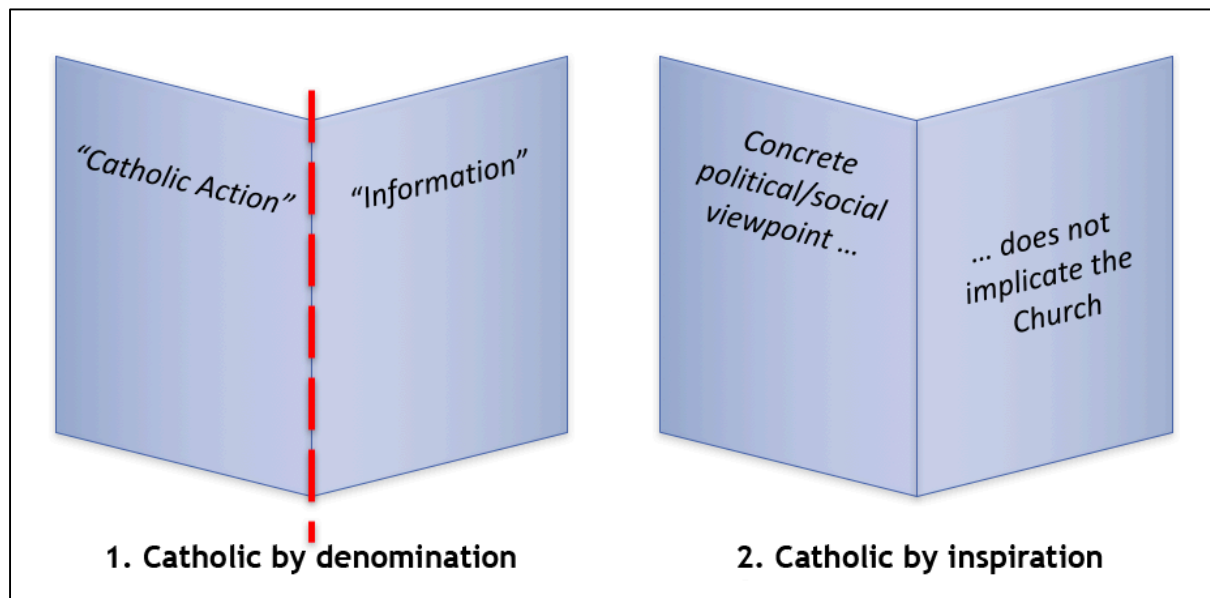


Figure 1: Jacques Maritain's models for the Catholic press

Maritain said both types of periodical were necessary in the Church, but that “it would be very harmful to endeavour to fuse the two or produce some sort of hybrid”. In Melbourne, the *Catholic Worker* and *News-Weekly* were good

examples of this second type of Catholic publication (although, depending on which side of the left-right divide a person stood, the use of the word “Catholic” in the title might be disputed). Not only should readers and Church hierarchy understand these distinctions and respect them, Catholic editors, too, should not make claims for their newspaper which clouded the newspaper’s purpose, such as when a publication proclaimed in its banner that it presented a “Catholic viewpoint” while proceeding to comment on a “temporal” matter. The idea of a “Catholic viewpoint” then became problematic, since there might be many different ways in which a Catholic might legitimately respond to “temporal matters”. Did the reader assume that the point of view expressed in a Catholic paper was also THE Catholic viewpoint? They might, but only if they did not understand Maritain’s distinctions between the different planes of Christian action.

A quarter of a century later, editors such as Costigan certainly made clear distinctions in terms of what was “official” and what was “not official” in the pages of his newspaper. However, it did not seem that these distinctions were yet understood – or accepted – by some readers and many among the Catholic hierarchy. Maritain’s analysis had pinpointed the issue for the Catholic press: the freedom of expression in a Church-sponsored newspaper would be a problem when the status of its authority was not absolutely clear and undisputed.

Deedy, nevertheless, saw great hope in Maritain’s proposals:

The Maritain theory of publication is one that promises consistency and focus for the Catholic press, while at the same time it widens the avenues for editorial pronouncement and public expression by eliminating the major bogey in the way of “involvement”. This is the bogey which leaves the Church press the choice between withdrawal and selected involvement, since the Catholic press as it is presently conceived seems to engage the responsibility of the Church as an institution. (Deedy, 1963, p. 101)

There was, however, “a considerable gap” between the ideal presented by Pius XII and John XXIII and the contemporary Catholic press, Deedy lamented (Deedy, 1963, pp. 113-114).

The liberal project takes off

The year of Deedy’s essay, 1963, was also the year of John Courtney Murray’s address to the International Catholic Press Union’s (UCIP) annual conference in Rome. Courtney Murray’s idea of the Catholic press was based on an understanding of the Church as a true society, analogous to civil society, even if (as Rahner had acknowledged) the Church was a society *sui generis* that claimed its authority from divine revelation. Catholics were citizens of this society, not mere passive subjects, and the Church’s societal character created “a public right to information about all that concerns the Church about her teaching, about her discipline and law, about her policies”. No “arbitrary limits” should be imposed on the provision of such information. The Catholic press’s role was not to create an acceptable image which did not truthfully reflect the Church’s real encounter with “the dirty stuff of history”. While it had no right to stand against authority and its legitimate exercise, the possibility could arise where the Catholic press even had “a responsibility to note abuses of authority”, which would in fact be to serve the true interests of the Church. The Church’s “societal character” created a right to information for all its people which corresponded to the function of the free press in the wider society, Courtney Murray said. “There ought to be no arbitrary limitations imposed upon the dissemination of public information within the Church,” he argued.

The Catholic press, I take it, is not the organ of some class within the Church. It does not exist to further certain interests of the Church merely, especially if these interests be conceived in some narrow and rather sectarian sense. The Catholic press does not exist to glorify the clergy. The Catholic press does not exist in order to create a public image of the Church that will be untrue to the reality

of ... the Church that trudges along the road of history and gets her feet dusty at times. (Courtney Murray, 1964)

Courtney Murray's speech was frequently quoted by advocates of the liberal project. Doyle published a large extract in the *Catholic Leader* for World Mass Media Day in 1967.

Listening to Courtney Murray's address in 1963 was UCIP's secretary general Emile Gabel. UCIP, and Gabel himself, had been long-time campaigners for freedom of the press – in civil society as well as in the Catholic press. At their 1960 meeting in Santander, Spain, UCIP delegates had closed their proceedings “with a demand for freedom of information as ‘the natural right of man’”, citing Pius XII's concern about stifling the voice of citizens (“Information freedom demanded as human right”, 1960). In an opening address to that conference, the editor-in-chief of *America* magazine, the Jesuit Thurston Davis, had told the journalists there would be no progress in the Catholic press without “full allegiance to the ideals of openness and freedom that characterise the mind of contemporary man”. Any muzzling of the Catholic press would take away its ability to reflect “authentic public opinion”, he said (“Catholic newsmen must promote press freedom”, 1960). Davis's call for freedom of the press brought applause from the delegates.¹⁹⁸

Gabel took up the theme of public opinion in an article published by the US Catholic Press Association the year after the Santander conference, entitled “The Catholic Press in the World”. “Public opinion constitutes the fourth estate,” he said, and the best tool for the formation of public opinion was the Catholic press.

¹⁹⁸ It is likely the delegates, who were attending the first UCIP conference held in Spain, wished to send a message to General Franco, the Spanish dictator, whose government had severely restricted press freedom in that country. Their sensitivity to press freedom was heightened, moreover, by the absence of their Polish colleagues. The communist government in Poland had apparently prevented the Polish Catholic journalists from attending. Those journalists, instead, had sent a telegram of good wishes. (“Information freedom demanded as human right”, 1960)

The Catholic press stood “at the crossroad where religion and life, Church and State meet” (“The Catholic press must form public opinion”, 1961a).

Many saw a positive reinforcement of UCIP’s call for freedom of information in *Pacem in Terris*, which had proclaimed the rights of all people to information. The next year and following the Rome UCIP meeting, Gabel wrote a further article in the French journal *Etudes*, “The right to information in State and Church”. Pope John’s affirmation of the universal right of people to accurate information, Gabel said, had provided great satisfaction for those who were looking for a theological foundation for “the problems of information” in the Catholic Church. It may have been a principle proclaimed somewhat late in the day – given the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights – but it was still ahead of itself in terms of Catholic practice. And it was a principle immediately relevant to the Catholic press, Gabel argued, relying on Courtney Murray’s analogy between the Church and civil society.

Gradually, as the people take part in a democracy, in the life of a nation, they need to be informed. In like manner, as the laity gradually assume their responsibility in the life of the Church, they experience the need to be informed ...

A society is healthy and vigorous when it is in a state of dialogue. Dialogue requires truth and confidence; it needs a climate of liberty. Now only an objective information, full and reliable, about events which concern the whole of society, renders the dialogue possible and effective. (“The Right to Information”, 1964)

The idea of dialogue suggested a new relationship between the hierarchy and the laity, a relationship in fact which needed to be overturned in terms of the Catholic press. The Church community did not exist for the hierarchy, Gabel asserted. “Rather it is the latter which exists for the Christian people.” The notion that the role of a Catholic paper was purely to serve the teaching role of the hierarchy was false, Gabel insisted.

The purpose of the Catholic newspaper is not to expound, ex professo, Catholic doctrine but to clarify it in the current scene, to find in Catholic doctrine ... whatever is necessary to judge the event, and to confine itself only to what is necessary. ("The Right to Information", 1964)

This overturned a common understanding of the Catholic press. Nevertheless, the idea that there was a wider purpose for the Catholic press had eminent endorsement.

Pope John XXIII, in many allocutions to journalists, broke the mould, which had become too narrow, of the traditional idea of the press and its duties to truth ... This, however, is not an entirely new doctrine; it is in line with the teaching of Pius XII. Repeatedly, this Pope has concluded that from the duty to speak the truth comes the right to know it; however, he did not employ any expression so concise and universal as that of John XXIII: "Every human being has the right to information." ("The Right to Information", 1964)

A Catholic press which focused on presenting objective, not opinionated information was not avoiding its responsibility of forming people, Gabel argued. The cultivation of public opinion was in itself the formation of the community, since it put people in a better position to understand and to act. If, as Pope John said, the right to information was universal, inviolable and inalienable, the Church should not "despoil any of her members of a right possessed by virtue of the dignity of his human person" ("The right to information", 1964). Extensive extracts from Gabel's paper were published in *The Advocate* of April 16 1964.¹⁹⁹

In 1963, there was a new Pope, Paul VI, and the advocates of the liberal project saw further encouragement in his pronouncements. Paul was pleased to claim a personal relationship with the profession of journalism. The day before his

¹⁹⁹ This was the same issue of *The Advocate* that reported Bishop Fox's definition of the function of the Catholic Press – "to spread Christ's teaching and to defend His Church" (see page 107).

crowning as Pope,²⁰⁰ he proudly told a group of Italian and foreign journalists gathered in Rome for the event that his father, Giorgio Montini, had been a journalist and for many years “editor of a modest but courageous provincial daily”. He said his father “considered the press a splendid and courageous mission in the service of truth, of democracy, of progress; in a word – of public welfare” (Paul VI, 1963a). Later in the year, at the end of the second session of the Vatican Council, the Pope addressed the Catholic journalists gathered for the annual UCIP conference, at which Costigan was present. The Pope repeated his earlier theme. There was only one rule for Catholic journalists, he said: “the truth, the truth that liberates” (Paul VI, 1963b). The truth the Pope had in mind was not simply that found in immediate events, “at ground level”, but the truth discovered from a reflection on those events from a religious perspective.

The following year, Paul addressed members of the Catholic press who had come from northern Italy on a pilgrimage to Rome. The Pope, as did Gabel, saw the Catholic press standing at the crossroad between the Church and the world: “We admit that a newspaper, even if it qualifies itself as Catholic, is a profane thing. It is, in fact, the reflection of the non-sacred character of life as it is lived.” This was as it should be, the Pope said, because “a paper is a mirror, and it must be an ample and faithful mirror” (Paul VI, 1964a).²⁰¹

While this metaphor allowed for different interpretations, it was an idea of truth sourced in the world of real events and suggested a more open way of reporting Catholic news than that prescribed by those episcopal proprietors of Catholic newspapers whose idea of the truth was of the more proselytising kind. While noting his predecessor’s affirmation of the right to information of all people, Paul said there was also a formative role in providing this information. The facts should be presented in such a way that provoked readers to make their own informed judgement that brought them to “a liberating and saving truth”. To that

²⁰⁰ Paul VI was the last Pope of modern times to be crowned with the triple “tiara”.

²⁰¹ Cf. page 107.

end, a Catholic newspaper was not “a superfluous luxury or an optional devotion” but a necessary part of faith formation, the Pope concluded.

Paul sent a letter of greeting to the participants in the seventh world congress of UCIP, held in New York in 1965 and attended by members of the US Catholic Press Association, who were attending their annual convention at the same time. The Pope noted that “the combined notion of truth and liberty” was dear to the hearts of all Christians. “Employed in the service of truth, a free press helps its readers to be better informed with a view to better understanding and thus better action” (“Church is ‘Minister of Liberty’”, 1965). Robert Hoyt, now head of the newly-founded *National Catholic Reporter*, delivered a paper at this convention, “Liberty in the Catholic press”. Hoyt took up the *Pacem in Terris* principle of freedom of information and told the delegates that the “first responsibility” of Catholic editors was to their readers, who had “a right to be informed about what is going on”. This did not mean, he said,

... that there can be nothing confidential in the conduct of Church affairs, that any secret a journalist encounters must automatically be converted into a headline. It does mean that once in a while we have to make a tough decision. And I would add that asking permission to publish something is not a tough decision. (“Catholic press has key role”, 1965)

The Catholic Press Association takes up the baton

In Australia, the Catholic Press Association was developing its own take on the idea of Catholic editors making the tough decisions. The Association had affiliated with UCIP in 1957, at the initiative of the then president, Murtagh. The CPA had begun a process of developing its thinking on the role of the Catholic press with Murtagh’s address at the Association’s first meeting in 1955 on “Problems of the Catholic Press”. *The Advocate* published only the first part of the address at the time and waited five years before publishing the second part.

Maritain's distinctions between the different planes of action had also not gone unnoticed by Murtagh and, in this second extract, he referenced Maritain's framework in discussing the problem of how to address "the most difficult problem" for a Catholic editor – how to make clear to readers, who understood their publication to be the official organ of the local bishop, the distinction between content that was official, semi-official, or not official.²⁰² Murtagh seems to acknowledge that Maritain's breezy confidence in a Catholic paper's ability to clearly distinguish the official from the non-official was optimistic:

In terms of the Lay Apostolate, a diocesan-owned weekly is not only approved and recommended but instituted by the Bishop. Part of what appears in it derives from the pastoral authority of the Bishop. Part from the teaching authority of the Church and the national Hierarchy. Part concerns applications of principles to concrete situations, most of which are written by laymen. Most of what appears is straight Catholic news. In short, "Catholic Action" and the "Action of Catholics" are all mixed up together. ("Four Rules and Tasks for the Catholic Press", 1960)

Those areas which, in Pius XII's terms, were left free for discussion among Catholics were those related to "temporal" affairs. There was not an "official" Catholic view on every question of public interest and Murtagh saw "no better way" than in the letters section of the newspaper to signal to readers that the paper was not published to merely present official Church teaching. Murtagh also took up Pius's theme of public opinion. In publishing Catholic news and information the editor's key guiding principle was "whether a given item serves the needs and formation of public opinion, not only within the Church, but also outside". A Catholic newspaper not only had something to say to its Catholic readers but should also speak to the wider world. It had a role of forming public

²⁰² The full analysis of Maritain's framework of the planes of action as it related to the Catholic press – the third section of his paper – does not appear to have been published in *The Advocate*.

opinion beyond the boundaries of the Catholic Church, through its commentary on “social, economic and political affairs”.

The spur to formulate a written policy for the Catholic press in Australia was given some years later by the publishing of the Vatican Council decree on the means of social communications, *Inter Mirifica*. It was quickly picked up by the CPA in Australia and made the authoritative source for a draft policy document. While *Inter Mirifica* was not received with great enthusiasm, its opening words – and the words of its title – indicate a more positive attitude towards the media than had been heard in Church pronouncements heretofore:

Among the wonderful technological discoveries which men of talent, especially in the present era, have made with God's help, the Church welcomes and promotes with special interest those which have a most direct relation to men's minds and which have uncovered new avenues of communicating most readily news, views and teachings of every sort. The most important of these inventions are those media which, such as the press, movies, radio, television and the like, can, of their very nature, reach and influence, not only individuals, but the very masses and the whole of human society, and thus can rightly be called the media of social communication.

(Second Vatican Council, 1963, No. 1)

There is very little in this document directly referring to the Catholic press, except to recommend that such an institution was desirable in terms of furthering Catholic Church teaching. There was a nod to public opinion: “Such a press should be edited with the clear purpose of forming, supporting and advancing public opinion” (Second Vatican Council, 1963, No. 14). *Inter Mirifica* was a product of the first session of the Council, and the Council Fathers, besides having weightier matters to deal with, felt they did not have the expertise to produce a major defining document. They had been presented with a long draft of 114 paragraphs, which they reduced to 24 paragraphs (Eilers, 2011). The Council

decree instead commissioned its communications council to make recommendations about future policy. It would not be until 1971 that the much more substantial document, *Communio et Progressio*, was issued.

Inter Mirifica was, nevertheless, all the Vatican Council had produced in terms of direct commentary on Church communications, and the Australian editors made the most of it. At the 1964 CPA convention, Costigan gave a paper on the new document (Costigan, 2017b) and he and a group of like-minded editors drafted “The Catholic Press in Australia: Views of the Catholic Press Association”. The paper expressed concern over what the members of the organisation saw as the relatively poor reach of the Catholic press and said that the major obstacle to growth was “a lack of understanding within the Church of the press medium”. The document called for a greater resourcing and promotion of the Catholic press and for “more adequate information on the life of the Church”; “greater maturity in the public expression of opinions on the life of the Church”; “a rethinking of ... policies of silence”; “reporting not only what is successful and perfect in the life of the Church but also what may be imperfect or controversial”; and the eschewal of “any policy of automatic exclusion of opinions contrary to the policies or opinions of churchmen or publishers”. In line with the Maritain framework, there needed to be in the Catholic press an area for news and commentary that went beyond the official viewpoint.

Mature and orderly thought among Catholics produces a lawful diversity, from which charity need not be absent. This diversity ought to be reflected by the Catholic Press. A Catholic Press that read only like an official gazette would not be presenting information of the Church as a society. (Catholic Press Association, 1964)

The document was subsequently presented to the Australian Catholic bishops but there was never an official response. Nevertheless the themes in the document lived on, and the text became the subject of discussions at subsequent

CPA meetings, resurfacing in 1966 in the form of the “Manifesto of Australia’s Catholic Press Association”, discussed in Chapter 6. The deliberations of the CPA would feed into the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications which was drafting the Pastoral Instruction on the media. One of the commissioners, Bishop Muldoon, had invited a submission from the CPA (“A Catholic press manifesto”, 1966), which the Association provided in 1966. Doyle, together with other members of the CPA, held great expectations for the pastoral instruction, the publication of which was felt to be imminent. The Association postponed its 1966 conference until June that year because, as Costigan recorded in his secretary’s report, “assurance had been received from Rome that the pastoral instruction would be released in April and it is felt that a few weeks to study it would be useful” (Costigan, 1966). The document, however, did not appear.

Doyle was preoccupied in these years with the problem of defining the role of the Catholic press. He was particularly exercised by the “crisis” that he saw the Catholic press facing, and he blamed this on the absence of clear guidelines from the Church about the limits of freedom of the editors. In March 1967, Doyle wrote to Muldoon and put the problem for Catholic editors succinctly. This was becoming “one of the largest difficulties for Catholic publications”, and the pastoral instruction needed to provide guidance on it, he said. It was the same problem Deedy had described in his 1963 essay. As Doyle described it, there was a serious division about how Catholic editors should approach the publishing of controversial stories – stories which were considered to cause “scandal” or to “shake people’s faith” (Doyle, 1967b). The “defection” of priests from the ministry was one such example. On the one hand were editors who considered themselves justified in publishing these stories – since they were “following norms laid down or indicated in Papal and other authoritative pronouncements” – but, on the other were “pastors at various levels” who did not support that approach, Doyle said. The problem was going to get greater, not smaller, in the light of “certain post-conciliar trends and developments”. Doyle’s document on “Reporting

Imperfections in the Catholic press”, which was part of the CPA’s submission to the Pontifical Council, was an attempt to address this problem.

Doyle was clearly not comfortable with a policy of withholding publication out of fear of scandalising the laity. Earlier in the year, he had received a letter from a priest, John Whiting,²⁰³ criticising the *Leader* as a “Church scandal sheet”. Doyle replied to Whiting, saying that everything to which Whiting had objected was sourced from the NC News Service, “which is subject to episcopal supervision”. He asked Whiting to consider the questions:

Are the laity ... so lacking in common-sense, roots in the faith, judgment, discrimination, fortification and balance that we must “cover up” lest we “scandalise” them and disturb them from their cotton-wool enclosures? And what of those who are scandalised if a Catholic paper is a “cover-up” organ? (Doyle, 1967b)

Another priest, William Ross, wrote to Doyle in 1969 to say he was “filled with disgust and also sadness at the issue of the ‘Catholic Leader’ (of Thursday, January 2, 1969) as sold at our Church doors today. And, as far as I can make out, so are the vast body of the Faithful!” (Ross, 1969). One of the items to which Ross objected was a report which cited the theologian and Dominican priest Edward Schillebeeckx. Schillebeeckx’s writings were controversial and continued to be so in later years, although he was never censured by Rome. Ross said Schillebeeckx’s words, as reported in the *Leader*, were an attack on the pope. But he went further: because the story had been “put in the most prominent position in your newspaper and is lacking of any corrective commentary”, the *Leader* itself was attacking the Pope. Ross continued: “And surely, Brian, you do not subscribe to that childish idea that the “Press” has the obligation to give the people ‘news’. As a journalist, you have no such obligation! You have as much obligation (no more and no less) as the labourer working on the roads.” Doyle replied, again, that the

²⁰³ Whiting was the founder of a conservative order of Catholic priests in 1954, the Confraternity of Christ the Priest.

report was an NC dispatch which had been published “verbatim, without objection or controversy” around the world (Doyle, 1969a). He pointed out to Ross that the inadequacy of the Council’s decree on the media and the absence of a theology on mass media created difficulties for Catholic editors and told him he had been seeking “clear teaching”, which he was yet to receive.

Doyle might have despaired at the way in which his publishing decisions were misinterpreted, but there were readers who gave him encouragement. A B.E. Walker wrote from St Joseph’s College, Nudgee, in 1969:

I dare say the Editor of any paper, but particularly a Catholic paper, puts his head on the chopping block whenever his publication leaves the printing press. It would indeed be a poor and lopsided policy if an Editor chose to print only the things people would like to hear – Catholics and especially those in high places should be mature enough to study their paper in an objective fashion without fear of weakening faith or morals. (Walker, 1969)

Doyle had written to the CPA secretary, Fr Frank Murphy,²⁰⁴ in November 1967, expressing his frustration that Muldoon had not responded about his suggestions and also expressing his concern with the apparent lack of progress on the pastoral instruction (Doyle, 1967c). In 1969, he again addressed the matter to Muldoon, mentioning a report he had recently sent the bishop about a US Catholic Press Association suggestion for a set of guidelines “for the mutual benefit of the editors and the Bishops in particular”. He suggested to Muldoon that two recent controversies in the Catholic press – the banning of the *New Zealand Tablet* by the Bishop of Auckland the previous month and the condemning of the US *National Catholic Reporter* as heretical by the Bishop of Kansas City – had reinforced the need for “some measuring-rod and working

²⁰⁴ Not to be confused with *Advocate* news editor Frank Murphy or *Advocate* editor Fr Denis Murphy, Fr Frank Murphy was manager of the Australian Catholic Truth Society, which published Catholic information pamphlets.

formula” for the Catholic press. “Obviously, the Pastoral Instruction should provide it,” Doyle said. “But will it?” (Doyle, 1968b)

No response came from the bishops, and there was no pastoral instruction. Doyle – and the other Catholic editors – were left to deal alone with the complaints of those readers who believed the Catholic press threatened the faith of the people. While Doyle had told one reader that his bishop never interfered in his editorial decisions, the pressure from those opposing the direction of the *Leader* was ever present, as they were at *The Advocate* – although a hostile Melbourne hierarchy added to Costigan’s particular stresses. Doyle continued at the *Leader* until 1981 but, in the meantime, he had a falling-out with his CPA colleagues and, from 1970, did not attend any further CPA conferences. By the time *Communio et Progressio* was published, in 1971, the battle to implement the liberal project was over for Doyle – and for Costigan, who by now was working for a secular newspaper in Melbourne, the *Nation Review*.

Catholic editors waited a long time for some endorsement of their pleas for a more open Catholic press, or for at least serious engagement with Church leaders about their concerns. They were, however, disappointed. The truth was, in any case, that, while the Catholic Press Association was a useful forum for discussions about editorial policy, individual newspapers and their proprietors remained free to do as they pleased.

Costigan’s liberal project at The Advocate

The editorship of Costigan and *The Advocate* has been taken as a case study of the liberal project in Australia, since a clear policy can be discerned which was based on a firmly held and well considered intellectual standpoint. These editorial principles were enunciated in an ad hoc fashion in the pages of *The Advocate* – in editorials, as situations arose where the policies of the newspaper needed to be clarified, and in articles, such as those reporting Gabel’s views of the Catholic press. It is clear, however, that the reasoning that animated these

expressions of policy was not ad hoc and, moreover, was well aligned with the thinking of the popes, theologians and philosophers whose views have been summarised above. Unambiguous evidence of this is in a one hundred-page notebook which Costigan kept in 1963 and 1964²⁰⁵ and which contains extracts and cross references from the writings of Courtney Murray, Rahner, Gabel, Hoyt, Pius XII, John XXIII and Paul VI, and cites Deedy's essay. The immediate purpose of the notebook appears to have been preparation for the paper on *Inter Mirifica* which Costigan presented to the CPA in April 1964 (Costigan, 2019). The notebook also contains Costigan's own commentary on these documents, in which he debated with himself the merits of the arguments and what might be meant by a "free Catholic press": would not the consequence of more freedom be an increase in "scandals, controversies, disturbed consciences"? he suggested. But he countered that concern with Pius XII's "warning" that a society without a fully functioning public opinion was a sick society. Costigan appears to agree with a comment by Gabel, published in an article in *America*, that "in no society [including the Church] should control of information rest exclusively with the government of that society".²⁰⁶ However, he saw a problem: "If control of information and of expression is not to be the exclusive prerogative of the hierarchy, who shares it? By what rules and principles is the proper division of responsibility to be determined?" (Costigan, 1964, p. 29) These were questions which were "unanswered". But, in 1964, he was still hopeful: "The answers are developing, making the theory a functioning reality."

Five years later, the reality was different for Costigan. In April 1969, he was on a long journey home to Australia on the Italian ship *Castel Felice*, there to have his resignation from the priesthood made formal and, as a consequence, to

²⁰⁵ It appears to have been begun at or soon after the time of Courtney Murray's address to UCIP (December 1 1963) at the end of the second session of the Vatican Council. Costigan is himself unsure about when he began the notebook, which has a title penned some time later on the front cover: "Notes re Catholic Press and Vatican II's Decree on the Media 1963-64?".

²⁰⁶ The article is cited in the notebook and labelled, without title, "Gabel (Aug 10 'America')". The year of the article was probably 1963.

relinquish his role as *Advocate* assistant editor. By this time, he was aware that the liberal project was unlikely to fare well under Knox – but he now had his eyes on his own future, while he contemplated the past years at *The Advocate*. As the shores of Africa went by, he wrote a 19-page letter to Knox, headed “Off the Angolan Coast”. It was a respectful but heartfelt document in which he confirmed his decision and plans in regard to leaving the priesthood. It was also an apologia for his editorial policy at the newspaper, which he thought necessary to write, to counter the critical reports about *The Advocate* that he expected would have been relayed to Knox by those who had been administering the archdiocese before the Archbishop arrived. In particular, Costigan defended the paper’s stance on Vietnam: it was the expression of “one view that could be taken by Catholics” among the many which might be held, he said. (Costigan noted that Ron Mulkearns, a priest of the diocese of Ballarat and later its Bishop, had subsequently written an article²⁰⁷ which supported the *Advocate*’s position.) It was not a policy which was meant to commit the Archdiocese in any way, although Costigan was well aware of “the common fallacy of attributing opinions quoted by a paper to the paper itself”.

I know that it is not easy to solve the question of how much supervision needs to be exercised by a bishop over his paper. As long as there are people who are going to identify the editor's views with the bishop's, or with the official teaching of the Church, the bishop will naturally be concerned about the contents of his paper.
(Costigan, 1969)

Costigan told Knox how one of the descendants of the Winter family, which had founded *The Advocate*, a Dr Winter, had cancelled his subscription to *The Advocate* because the paper had reported the words of a visiting lecturer to Melbourne who had said the Vietnam War was “a textbook example of an unjust

²⁰⁷ “in a 1968 number of the quarterly *Compass*” (Costigan, 1969).

war". Most disheartening for him, he told Knox, was the Vicar General's endorsement of Winter's protest:

It was sad to be told that "the vicar general fully agreed" ... This was a newsworthy comment by a visiting Catholic with a world-wide reputation. It was reported in quotation marks. It was clearly presented as his opinion. It is, in fact, an opinion shared by many responsible Christians all over the world, but there was nothing in the way the interview was presented to justify the interpretation that it was the *Advocate's* own view. (Costigan, 1969)

Costigan noted that Fox would have had the letters page in *The Advocate* suppressed, if he had had his way, but this would have been to remove a vital way of developing public opinion in the Church. "The right of the people to be informed about matters affecting the life of the Church" was something the Church itself defended. So, too, was the publishing of overseas news. This was another "means of bringing readers to greater maturity as Catholics". It was very hard "to draw the line" on what should or should not be published, since "the same item can edify some and scandalise others." The reaction of Church hierarchy was certainly not the first consideration for the Catholic editor, since the prime purpose of the Catholic paper was a service to its Catholic readers. "The first mistake the editor of a Catholic newspaper can make is to edit it with only his clerical readers in minds. The second mistake is to edit it with only one reader in mind – his bishop." (Costigan, 1969) The bottom line, Costigan told Knox, was that editing a newspaper, Catholic or otherwise, was a job for a professional.

What has to be understood, I think, is that the publishing of a newspaper is an expert job requiring special competence. If a bishop or priest is appearing on television, he does not presume to instruct the technicians on how to do their job. But in the Catholic Press we are frequently given instructions on how to carry out the function in

which we, and not our instructors, are supposed to be expert.

(Costigan, 1969)

Costigan apologised to Knox for the length of his letter but said “there were wrongs to be righted and there is information which I am duty bound to lay before you”. The letter “Off the Angolan Coast” represented a clear-eyed understanding and presentation of the liberal project. However, it was not one that would be embraced by Knox. Knox did not answer the letter, although his response might have been read in his already having appointed an editorial board at *The Advocate*, effectively tightening diocesan control of the newspaper. The liberal project of the Catholic press in Melbourne appeared to be over.

The mission statement

A number of different threads characterise the argument for the liberal project. Rahner argued that the need to create public opinion in the Church was vital if Church leaders were to understand their people and to provide relevant guidance. If public opinion was necessary in the Church, so too was the layman’s right to free speech (Rahner p.21). Courtney Murray argued that any relevant dialogue in the Church was dependent on people having good information about all that concerned them as members. The “societal character” of the Church therefore created a right to information. The role of the Catholic press was not to stand against legitimate Church authority, but it was to create the dialogue that ensured there were no abuses of that authority. The Catholic editors saw their role as professional journalists and their publications as newspapers. Their papers were not house organs for the channelling of a limited diet of official opinion but for giving complete information, which meant reflecting the legitimate diversity of views that were found among Catholics. For Maritain, these diverse standpoints were a necessary feature of a Church in which Catholics applied their faith to the world’s problems. This was the plane of temporal action and its reporting was not only legitimate but essential. These ideas were being discussed in a Church undergoing profound change, in a world which was itself undergoing

profound change. The changes were reflected not merely in a divergence of views on ecclesiastical matters but in a certain democratisation that was in evidence in the Vatican Council's call for more participation and initiative by the laity in liturgical practice, structures of governance and social action.

Advocates of the liberal project considered these arguments from reason were bolstered by the authoritative pronouncements of the popes. Pius XII argued the necessity of a rich public opinion to differentiate the Church from totalitarian regimes; John XXIII announced that information in the Church was a human right; and Paul VI said the Catholic press had to truthfully reflect the reality of events and create a humble and respectful dialogue both inside and outside the Church.

In summary, several distinct but interconnected pillars underpinned the argument for the liberal project, and they were these:

- The cultivation of public opinion in the Church giving a voice to all its members;
- The human right to free expression;
- The human right to information;
- The efficient functioning of the Church as a society;
- The role of Catholic action in the world and the legitimate diversity of Catholic responses;
- The nature of the media itself;
- Papal authority.

In concrete terms, these principles suggested a Catholic newspaper in which readers would expect to see the full range of opinions in the local and wider Church, without an exclusive focus on either views from the extremes of the community or on the official views of the proprietor. Moreover, in such a newspaper there would be an open forum which reflected the uncensored opinions of the readership.

Conclusion

The project of the liberal Catholic editors appeared to be well founded. The principles the editors expounded in Catholic press charters, journal articles and editorials were sourced to the highest Church authorities. A model for the Catholic press had been discovered that was rooted in an understanding of Catholic Action, meticulously elaborated by a Catholic philosopher who had the blessing of the popes. In the minds of these editors, the project was not just a program for Catholic newspapers, it was a project of the Church: a vital contribution to the renewal begun by the Vatican Council. It carried important consequences for the health of the Catholic community, they argued. This did not mean the editors were blind to the institutional obstacles in the way of the editorial freedom they espoused – but they did not think these obstacles were insurmountable. They believed the time had arrived for a change in the culture of the Catholic press.

In reality, the condition for the liberal project's flourishing – the “cultural change” needed – would require nothing less than a revolution in long-established Church authority structures. This was a considerable expectation. Moreover, as a new decade arrived, the tide of change that had swept in with the Vatican Council was on the ebb. The success of the liberal project was by no means assured. How it fared will be examined in the next chapter, and the inherent tensions and historical circumstances which determined its trajectory will be analysed.

Chapter 9: Doors closing

Introduction

The 1960s buoyed the hopes of the advocates of the liberal project in the Catholic press, but traces of the project are hard to find beyond the decade. Institutional pressures and intrinsic flaws within the liberal model worked against the project's implementation. By the end of the decade Costigan had left *The Advocate*. His crusade was abandoned and the report card for the liberal project in the Australian Catholic press showed few boxes ticked. The liberal editors were disillusioned, the proprietors had not warmed to the liberal project and its opponents circled its grave. The Catholic press carried on, but in forms more acceptable to the hierarchy and perhaps to readers who thought the liberal project misconceived. There were alternative models for a Catholic paper and these were the ones which prevailed. These models, nevertheless, would not return the Catholic press to its glory days. In the coming decades, circulation declined in the Catholic press throughout Australia. By the 1990s, *The Advocate* and another major state Catholic weekly, Adelaide's *Southern Cross*, had closed down. The coming decades would see the official Catholic press in Australia for the most part reduced to a series of house journals.

The death knell of the Catholic press in Australia cannot be ascribed, primarily, to the liberal project's failure to gain traction. Catholic newspapers were ultimately overtaken by historical events outside the control of any aspiring liberal Catholic editors. The years following the Vatican Council saw a significant decline in the regular participation of Catholics in their Church, and the Catholic identity on which Catholic newspapers built their readership lost its formerly well-defined contours.

By the century's end, all newspapers were experiencing a decline in circulation and new forms of media publishing provided Catholics, as well as everyone else,

alternative platforms for the news. The arena in which the diverse views in Church public opinion were aired would move online, bypassing the house journals. In 2013, the CPA's top award was won by an online journal, *Eureka Street*,²⁰⁸ which had long ceased print production.

This chapter will trace the demise of the liberal project in Catholic newspapers in Australia and in the United States and will analyse the reasons why it fared poorly.

'If it ain't broke ...'

If the proponents of the liberal project were clear about their goals and principles, so, too, were those who disagreed with their approach. The proprietor of the *Perth Record* through 21 of its final 23 years of publication, was Archbishop Barry Hickey.²⁰⁹ Three editors served under Hickey, the first of whom was Patrick Cunningham,²¹⁰ who had taken up the editorship in the 1970s. Both Cunningham and Hickey said that editors who promoted controversy were catering for an "elite" and would please only those who wanted to fight battles (Cunningham, 2014, and Hickey, 2014). A Catholic paper should "be loyal to the official teaching of the Church," Hickey insisted. "*The Record* couldn't print letters hostile to the archbishop or the bishop or priests of the diocese. We didn't want that sort of disloyalty there." The role of the Catholic paper, Hickey said, was to be a journal of record, a valuable resource to future historians and a service for Catholics who were not concerned about battles needing to be won. Hickey agreed that a Catholic editor needed to be "fairly independent" but he expected to be able to trust the editor to "not upset me". He said that, if the paper "became a forum for

²⁰⁸ The Bishop Philip Kennedy Memorial Prize for Magazines, "in recognition of its continuing excellence in the field of religious communications". (*Province Express*, 2013)

²⁰⁹ Presiding over *The Record*'s closure in 2014 was Hickey's successor, Archbishop Timothy Costelloe.

²¹⁰ Cunningham himself had served for a total of 24 years under three archbishops, until Hickey replaced him in 1995 with a lay editor, David Keogh.

discussion, so that different views could be represented there, it wouldn't reach the person in the pew. I think it would be [read by just] those who were interested in the controversy." Costigan's approach to editing a Catholic paper "could never succeed," Hickey said.

Eventually the archbishop would have got lots of angry letters from people out there, saying "it's a disgrace that *The Advocate* is pushing all these left-wing causes. Bring him into line!" ... and the archbishop would bow to that pressure and say these are my loyal followers; I'm not going to disappoint them. If he's looking for sales, he might say yes. But, if he's looking for an easy life, he would say, "avoid the controversy or deal with it yourself. I don't want a string of letters coming this way, thanks." (Hickey, 2014)

Cunningham, the *Record's* longest-serving editor, echoed Hickey's outlook: "We weren't going to let *The Record* simply become a paper for discontent" (Cunningham, 2014).

Melbourne Catholic author and editor of two volumes of the letters of Santamaria, Patrick Morgan, has traced some of the *Advocate's* history in his 2018 work *The Mannix Era: Melbourne Catholic leadership 1920-1970*.²¹¹ The *Advocate's* editorial position before Costigan was "traditionalist", Morgan says. Its reputation, after Mannix took over proprietorship, "remained high, as its tone was low key and reasonable". However, in the aftermath of the Labor split, it had failed its readers significantly by barely reporting the Vatican's ruling on the Movement: "It still backed Santamaria, reporting his many activities as though nothing had changed" (Morgan, 2018, p. 198). Morgan's strongest criticism of the paper, however, is directed at the period under Costigan after the death of Mannix. *Advocate* editorial policy then swung to a "radical" position, beginning a period of "wild gyrations" that only ended when Costigan left, Morgan asserts

²¹¹ The work is a sequel to Morgan's 2012 work, *Melbourne Before Mannix: Catholics in public life 1880-1920*.

(Morgan, 2018, pp. 257-259). “*The Advocate* was out of sympathy with many readers of long standing,” he says, and suggests that many of them would have been disturbed to hear about “the daring experiments of overseas liberal Catholicism ... pacifist opposition to the US involvement in Vietnam, support for dialogue with Communists, criticism of the Pope’s encyclical on birth control.” Morgan may be correct in judging that some readers were disturbed, but the issues he highlights were, nevertheless, new realities in the Catholic Church: the Vatican Council had opened the doors on a diversity of views about traditionally-held Catholic positions. The divisions undoubtedly caused pain for some Catholics, especially those who believed the traditional viewpoints were the only acceptable ones. The question of what position was right and what was wrong, however, was not something for a Catholic newspaper to determine, at least by a newspaper modelled on liberal principles. If the Catholic paper’s role was to be a “mirror of events”, that mirror might reflect things some readers would rather not contemplate. If a Catholic paper did not report these disturbing views, later historians might rightly criticise it for failing its readers. Needless to say, some radical viewpoints would in time be rejected, but others would be accepted; it was not the newspaper’s job to censor them in the meantime.

There appears to be a contradiction in Morgan’s position that it was wrong for *The Advocate* to report views that were “giving comfort” to opponents of traditional viewpoints while, in a decade previously, it was wrong of *The Advocate* to censor the decisions of the Vatican about the activities of Santamaria, which might have given comfort to those who opposed him. Morgan says that “in the authority vacuum” occasioned by Simonds becoming incapacitated “the formulator of church pronouncements partly became *The Advocate* itself”. This does not stand up, considering *The Advocate* had clearly defined itself in this period as not being the official voice of the Church, and that the traditionalist viewpoints of Bishop Fox and Santamaria continued to be reported in the paper. Morgan says that, by reporting “the most daring experiments of overseas liberal Catholicism” Costigan was encouraging them. This is not a logical conclusion and

rejects without analysis the proposition that a Catholic paper might consider that its mandate was to report the news fully, rather than be content with the role of house organ. Morgan claims *The Advocate* “promoted one side on all the main issues”. Again, this misunderstands what newspapers do and how newspaper editors, legitimately, make decisions based on what the average reader will be interested in. That Catholics somewhere in the world were celebrating Mass in an unorthodox manner might be news. That Catholics somewhere else are celebrating Mass in the traditional way is probably not. Morgan’s critique of *The Advocate* under Costigan well illustrates why Deedy and other advocates of the liberal project were concerned about people misunderstanding the project: they knew that publishing a Catholic paper that did not define itself as presenting the official Church view was not going to be universally well received.

What Morgan saw as enrolling readers in a radical agenda some bishops saw as scandalising “the simple faithful”. The editors argued that the bishops’ concern was, on the contrary, counterproductive to the real strengthening of the faith of Catholics, since faith would be better able to grow in a Church which was open, transparent and accountable to its people and to the world. More loyalty could be expected from Catholics, surely, in a Church which was so open and which, thereby, attracted the respect of the wider society, they insisted. There were bishops who agreed with the editors’ viewpoint but they were not normally those who had direct responsibility for Catholic newspapers. John Cullinane in Melbourne had proposed a toast to a “free Catholic press” at a Melbourne CPA meeting in 1968, but he was not in charge. In America, The Archbishop of Atlanta, Paul Hallinan (referred to in Chapter 2), who **was** a bishop-proprietor, appeared to understand the need for a Catholic newspaper that was not restricted to the Church’s official views and which encouraged open discussion. Writing in *The Catholic Journalist* in 1964, he said the bishop should ask “for no utopian uniformity of opinion”. The craft of the Catholic editor must be “forged in truth and applied in charity”. “We have often failed to grasp that truth’s purpose is not to project “a pretty picture”; that truth is not a block of granite, incapable of fresh

insights, that it is not “finished” except in the mind of God” (Hallinan, 1964, p. 4). This was a rarely heard view from the Church hierarchy, in Australia or elsewhere.

In-built tensions

Brian Lucas was the media spokesman for the Archdiocese of Sydney for more than 20 years and the general secretary of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference for 13 years.²¹² He was in a good position to observe the culture of censorship which appeared to be the bishops’ default position when it came to the Catholic press. In a 2012 article, “Social Communication: Vatican II and the Australian Church”, Lucas acknowledged that *Inter Mirifica* had shed little light on the “complex” task of fostering the Catholic press. That complexity was especially seen in the problem of managing the expression of both official and non-official voices in the one newspaper, the dilemma that many others had identified. As Lucas explained:

If the press is seen as merely the mouthpiece of the bishops there is a risk that it will be seen as uninteresting and not taken seriously. If a publication is “courageous”, encouraging wide ranging discussion, it risks conflict with ecclesial authority. Finding the right balance is a major challenge. (Lucas, 2012, p. 164)

The bishop’s role includes that of teacher: one who proclaims and clarifies established Catholic doctrine and who gives guidance on those matters of faith and morals that have not been so determined. Understandably, a bishop-proprietor saw his Catholic weekly newspaper as the perfect vehicle for exercising his teaching authority. The advocates of the liberal project acknowledged this but believed the newspaper could, at the same time, fulfil another function, that of

²¹² Lucas was the official media spokesman for the Archdiocese for Sydney from 1985 to 2002. The Australian Catholic bishops’ ongoing resistance to media engagement is well documented in his 2015 paper in the *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, “The Australian Bishops and National Media: Conflicts and Missed Opportunities”.

reporting news of relevance to Catholics, and could do so with a degree of freedom and openness akin to well-understood expectations of the role of newspaper editors in general. Maritain had come up with a model for the Catholic press which might fit this dual purpose, and these Catholic editors had cheered: here was a proposal absolutely right for the spirit of the times. But how realistic was the model in practice?

Maritain's proposal to clearly signal the difference between the statements and opinions that implicated the Church from those which did not looked good on paper, but it was a model untried. It was a new model, in fact, which stood somewhere between, and distinct from, two other types of publication: the house journal, on the one hand, and the completely independent newspaper (if there really can be such a thing), on the other. The singularity of this model – and its inherent tensions – is evident in the somewhat ambivalent nature of Doyle's insistence that the Catholic press should be free to report the Church's "imperfections" while, at the same time, he waited plaintively for the bishops to give him permission to do so. Doyle's counterparts in the secular media would hardly request permission of their proprietors to do their job. A diocesan newspaper – even if it was not to be a house organ – was manifestly not in the same position as its secular counterparts.

The American Catholic Press Association made an attempt to describe a theoretical foundation for this alternative model in its 1966 discussion paper "The Purposes and Policies of the Catholic Press Association". The paper suggested there was a brief for every diocesan newspaper beyond the immediate purposes of the diocese in which it was published and beyond the immediate teaching role of the local bishop. The Catholic press should be viewed as a whole, the discussion paper suggested, not simply as individual, independent newspapers. As such, the Catholic press provided a service to the Church that no other Church agency could. It was the voice of the community, and the life of the Church as a community would be "shattered" without the existence of the

Catholic press. The theory was that this cumulative value was more important than the welfare of the individual publications (Reedy, 1966, p. 8). This understanding of the Church as a community that transcended diocesan boundaries, underpinned the liberal editors' view that their newspapers were more than house organs. Editorial independence was not to be expected in house organs. The readers of such publications would be surprised to see anything other than a partisan viewpoint in their pages. On the other hand, while a diocesan paper might also be the organ of the local diocese, its readers belonged to a body which transcended that local community. Their community was global. While some readers indeed might want to hear only the voice of the local bishop and the official doctrine of the Church in their newspaper, many readers wanted to know about the Church beyond diocesan boundaries, as well as the controversies within. The accountability of a Catholic editor to readers, therefore, was more complex – and hence more problematic – than that, say, of the editor of a local football club's house journal or a political party's official magazine. This would make Catholic newspapers a unique publishing enterprise. Gabel had wrestled with the dilemma:

We should reconsider a little the entire problem of the Catholic newspaper. Should it, indeed, must it, be the expression of the life, the preoccupations, the needs, the impetus of the Christian people – instead of being conceived primarily as a medium for the transmission of messages from the hierarchy, as a mirror of their activities? In other words, can the Catholic newspaper, in a certain manner, follow the evolution of the press which (since the nineteenth century in the countries of continental Europe) is not generally considered as an organ of power but as the voice of the people? (“The right to information”, 1964)

Notwithstanding such considerations, the bishops, in the main – and not a few readers – were uncomfortable with their newspaper canvassing views that departed from traditional orthodoxy and from the stance of the local hierarchy.

The distinctions Maritain had made did not convince those anxious about the direction in which liberal editors were taking the Catholic press. Even after they had explained these distinctions in their newspaper, many readers saw only the hybrid publication that Maritain said should be strictly avoided – a “denominational” newspaper which was also trying to act as a “Catholic-by-inspiration” newspaper, presenting a partisan slant on Catholic teaching that was not supposed to implicate the Church – but did. The problem was aggravated in Melbourne where the Church hierarchy, in the aftermath of the Labor split, identified the policies of the DLP with Church teaching and characterised any Catholics dallying with the Labor Party as being in bad conscience. That significant section of the laity which was loathe to question its bishops accepted this orthodoxy and expected its Catholic paper to also reflect it, if it wanted to keep the name “Catholic”.

Perhaps the liberal editors were the last to see that, in the Church culture of the day, their dream was unrealistic. While they sought an editorial freedom like that exercised by the editors of independent Catholic journals – such as *The Tablet* and the *National Catholic Reporter* – the editors of those independent newspapers themselves thought the pursuit of such freedom doomed. In their view, diocesan newspapers would always be house organs: the project of an independent diocesan press was never going to work. One Catholic newspaper editor, Robert Johnston,²¹³ writing in the *National Catholic Reporter* in 1992, said there were “basic flaws in the diocesan press milieu”. Diocesan papers could never be “real newspapers”.

They’ve certainly had time and opportunity to rise above the house organ image and bulletin board approach. Vatican II gave them that chance and, for a short while perhaps, some diocesan weeklies

²¹³ Former editor and associate publisher of the *Chicago Catholic New World* and former editor in chief of *The Catholic Review*, Baltimore (“Can your local diocesan newspaper be a real paper?”, 1992).

reached a modicum of success as “real” newspapers, but generally those eras were short lived.

Diocesan weeklies will always be house organs – as long as the bishops are the publishers and the diocesan clerically dominated bureaucracy holds sway over them.

The very idea of a “diocesan newspaper” was an “oxymoron”, Johnston concluded (“Can your local diocesan newspaper be a real paper?”, 1992).

Were the liberal project to have been guaranteed success, Costigan’s fellow editors would surely have followed his lead. But generally they did not. Hilferty at *The Catholic Weekly* looked on with a certain admiration but did not emulate Costigan’s assertive stance. He himself had given up on the project of editorial autonomy at the *Weekly*: “There was always pious lip service paid to press freedom but I always doubted it. I was confronting the reality every Friday board meeting,” he said (Hilferty, 2014). Previously an A-grade reporter at the Sydney *Sun*, Hilferty said he had been “politely conned” into accepting the position of associate editor of the paper and given false assurances by the then editor²¹⁴ that “clerical interference was a thing of the past”. While Costigan had been “courageous”, Hilferty thought the idea of editorial freedom in the Catholic press was “a bit of a joke” (Hilferty, 2014). A newspaperman like Hilferty nevertheless strongly felt the restriction of his editorial freedom. He could see stories that needed to be told but, equally, he knew if he told them his job would be on the line.

Cunningham echoed Hilferty’s sentiment about Costigan’s brave but doomed confrontation with authority, as Cunningham saw it. Costigan had gone “out on a limb and paid for it”, he said (Cunningham, 2014). Doyle at the *Leader* spoke loudly of editorial independence and of freeing the Catholic press from the role of house journal, yet was more timid – or more politically calculating – when it came to addressing controversial topics in his newspaper. After Paul VI published

²¹⁴ James Kelleher, the *Catholic Weekly*’s first editor from 1942 to 1964.

his ban against artificial contraception in *Humanae Vitae*, Doyle would not publish any “dissent” in regard to the encyclical (Doyle, 1968b). According to Costigan:

Brian [Doyle] of course was smart enough to know ... where Muldoon would have stood theologically and on moral theology and on *Humanae Vitae*, and just as he would have naturally have known exactly where Patrick O'Donnell [Archbishop of Brisbane 1965 to 1973] stood on various issues and he would write accordingly. Well, to some extent we all do that. We're not going to antagonise a bishop when we're looking for some kind of help and support ...

So Brian furthered the [liberal] project by what he wrote about the theory. He did not particularly further it by his practice of refraining from publishing information or news ... He did limit his acceptance for publication of stories which clearly he had concluded would have displeased the bishop and might have cut back his circulation.

(Costigan, 2017a)

Editorial freedom did depend very much on the stance of the local bishop. Wilkinson, at the *Southern Cross*, had perhaps the most freedom of Catholic editors at that time to present a “Vatican II” stance, given the hands-off approach of his proprietor, Matthew Beovich.²¹⁵ Wilkinson said Beovich generally kept his political views to himself and left Wilkinson “free to take editorial lines as I thought” (Wilkinson, 2015). Nevertheless, as was seen in his 1967 paper to the CPA (see page 183), Wilkinson was far from willing to paint a rosy picture of editorial freedom in general in the Catholic press in Australia.

Overtaken by history

The history of the Catholic press beyond the 1960s’ liberal experiment suggests that the instincts of Hilferty and Cunningham were well founded. The style of

²¹⁵ Archbishop of Adelaide from 1940 to 1971.

diocesan paper that prevailed well aligned with the Cunningham-Hickey concept of a Catholic paper that promoted the voice of the local bishop and avoided the sowing of any discontent. But the essential challenges for Catholic editors and their proprietors in the following decades did not arise ultimately from the concerns raised by the liberal editors. More profound historical circumstances would threaten the very existence of the Catholic weeklies, irrespective of where their editorial policies lay.

Costigan's fight to implement the liberal project at *The Advocate* was over as the decade drew to a close. When he returned from Europe in 1969 the world was radically changing for the newspaper's former associate editor, as he contemplated life beyond that newspaper and beyond the priesthood. But the world of every Catholic living through the end of this decade was also dramatically changing. The Catholic Church would never be the same again – to the relief of some, the regret of many and the confusion of others. Paul VI's 1968 encyclical on birth control had been a significant turning point for many Catholics, but it was one significant moment in a wider disruption that saw many Catholics distancing themselves from the Church or leaving it altogether. Some Church leaders played down the changes and called on the flock to hold on to their traditional religious practice. Bishop Fox, commenting on the new "ecumenical" movement that the Council had inspired, where Catholics sought common ground with other Christian denominations, conceded that "there must be approaches" to other churches to promote Christian unity, but he offered that

such approaches must always be regulated by the Bishops ... There cannot be compromise where there is a question of Catholic faith ... I appeal to you therefore to cling to your faith ... say your prayers, receive the Sacraments regularly ... be faithful to attendance at Holy Mass. For the Church has not changed ... the Church cannot change with respect to dogmas of faith. ("Happenings which are endangering the faith", 1967)

Priests, similarly, assured their people that the Church's essential doctrines remained the same – the Blessed Trinity and the seven sacraments were still there and the Pope still ruled from Rome – but Catholics found that the views of these same pastors, on sin, morality and traditional Catholic practices, were no longer uniform. For instance, a Catholic who wanted to use the contraceptive pill could find a priest who would endorse their choice, notwithstanding the Pope's ban. The former, one-way track of Church authority was under challenge, too, and there were priests, and even bishops, among those questioning traditional lines of authority. The disruption was on display at Sunday Mass. The old Latin Mass was gone, ending the days when a Catholic might "hear" the Mass in the same language anywhere in the world. But now a Catholic might go to a next-door parish in their own country and find an alien liturgy. The unified Catholic identity of a former time had begun to fragment and the authority of the clergy was diminishing. "By 1970 it was obvious that the massive, monolithic and docile conformity hitherto characteristic of the laity had departed" (O'Farrell, 1977, p. 412). Vatican II had revealed – some critics of the Council would say created – divisions in many areas, which put people on opposite sides of a progressive-traditionalist divide – to characterise a wide range of views somewhat simplistically.²¹⁶ A fragmented community is not good news for the newspaper that serves it. After Vatican II, the mirror that the Catholic press held up to its readers no longer reflected an image with which everyone identified. Even if they loyally continued to buy the Catholic paper, Catholics might no longer read it. This disengagement cannot be explained solely in terms of a disrupted Catholic identity. Beginning in the 1970s, a breakdown in community engagement and social cohesion was observed in society generally. People everywhere were

²¹⁶ This divide continues today and is graphically seen in what appears as a battle between the present Pope Francis, a reformer, and a Vatican Curia which does not want to be reformed.

discarding their allegiance to traditional organisations (Putnam, 2000, p. 27), and Catholics were doing the same.²¹⁷

At stake, therefore, was not only the loyalty of Catholics to their Catholic paper but to the Church itself, and this was where the greatest pressure on the readership of Catholic newspapers would be felt. This had little to do with the liberal project – albeit some readers stopped buying the paper either disgusted with its new “communist” stance or, on the other hand, disappointed that it had failed to support the revolution enough. The greatest readership decline came from the desertion of Catholics in general from the practice of their religion. Certainly, as far as regular Mass attendance was concerned, Catholics had been disengaging from the Church institution. The high point of participation was reached in 1954, at 74 per cent of the total Catholic population attending Sunday Mass, but that percentage began to fall thereafter. In 1961 it was 53 per cent of the total population, 30 per cent in 1978 and 18 per cent in 1996. By 2011 it was just 11 per cent (P. Wilkinson, 2013).²¹⁸ The rapidly falling percentage resulted from a slow but steady decline in total Mass attendance, at the same time as a more rapid growth in the total Catholic population (*see Figure 2, below*). The reach of the Catholic press was largely connected with Mass attendance: the church porch was where many Catholics brought their newspaper, albeit a relatively small percentage of those attending Mass. From the mid 1940s, as Mass attendance approached its peak, there had been a steady growth in Catholic newspaper circulation in every state, a growth that *Southern Cross* editor, Wilkinson, believed actually continued through a large part of the 1960s.²¹⁹ That raises a question: why would circulation even hold up when the numbers attending Mass was declining? This might be explained to some extent by interest in the Vatican Council, but perhaps more simply in terms of the loyalty of those Catholics who

²¹⁷ The drop in Church attendance during this period was reflected in other Churches (Gilbert, 1987, p. 211).

²¹⁸ The source of this data is the Catholic writer Peter Wilkinson, who is not the same person as the editor of the *Southern Cross* “Bob” (P.R.) Wilkinson.

²¹⁹ Wilkinson had done his own research during the 1960s (Wilkinson, 2015).

bought a paper (many of whose commitment was assured by long-term subscriptions). These Catholics would surely have represented the more engaged, less likely to be among those contemplating leaving active participation. A critical point seemed to have been reached, nevertheless, in the decade following the Second Vatican Council, as former readers either found the Catholic newspaper no longer met their needs, or because they themselves stopped going to Mass. By the 1970s the readership of the Catholic press appeared to be in steady decline.

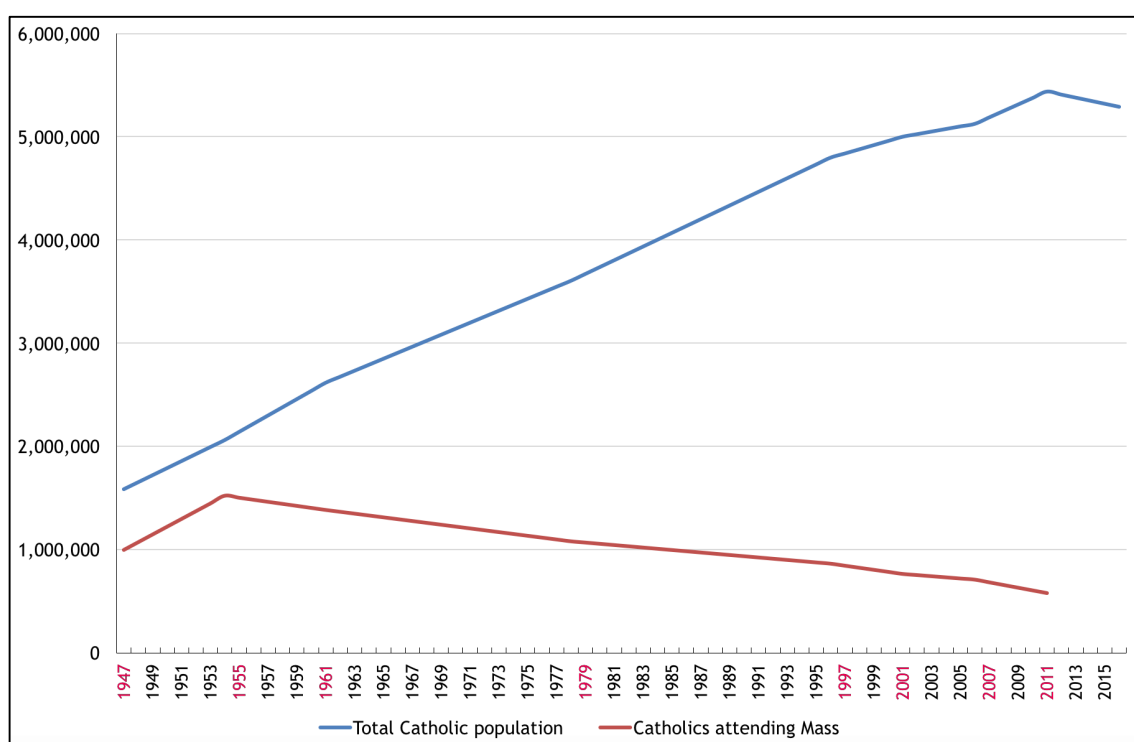


Figure 2: Australian Catholics participation trends.²²⁰

The impact of falling circulation on the viability of their newspaper became of increasing concern for Catholic editors as the new decade approached. In November 1969, in a private letter, Doyle wrote that “There is currently all over

²²⁰ Data for this chart is taken from an article by Melbourne Catholic writer Peter Wilkinson in the online Catholic magazine *Catholica*. Sources for the article include the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Mass attendance data provided by individual Catholic dioceses (P. Wilkinson, 2013). Chart data is only accurate for eight years in this period (1947, 1954, 1961, 1978, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016). The remaining data represent estimates derived from the statistical trend.

the world a financial crisis for the Catholic Press, particularly the weeklies.” He even predicted the closure of “one interstate Catholic weekly ... within a few months” (Doyle, 1969b). Melbourne’s *Tribune* closed in March 1971 and *The Standard* in Tasmania closed in October that year. It was two more decades before *The Advocate* and *The Southern Cross* closed, but their financial viability was no doubt a real consideration in the decisions of their respective archbishops, Frank Little and Leonard Faulkner, to cease their publication.²²¹

The time of the liberal editors was now over and other factors would determine the Catholic press’s future. Interestingly, Wilkinson found that Catholic newspaper circulation figures reflected an almost identical percentage of readers among the Catholic population of each state at any given time (Wilkinson, 2015). The downward trend in circulation which began in the late 1960s was across the board, Wilkinson said. In other words, circulation appeared to be independent of the individual editorial policies at each newspaper: the implementation or otherwise of the liberal project at a given Catholic newspaper was not a major factor in its readership.

The contraction in the reach of the Catholic press occurred at a time when newspapers at large were also feeling the pinch. Media scholar Rodney Tiffen noted that newspaper circulation in Australia went into serious decline around 1990, with the most dramatic falls in circulation in the new century, as a consequence of the internet revolution. But he considered that a “genteel” decline had begun in fact after World War II. This was, however, a decline in the proportion of the population reading newspapers: total circulation continued to rise until the late 1980s, where it started to fall – “most dramatically” when afternoon newspapers closed. Contributing to the decline was the increasing reach of radio and television, Tiffen said. Secular newspaper publishers were able to maintain their circulation, because of growing populations, as well as by

²²¹ “The *Southern Cross* was closed in 1986 by Archbishop Faulkner of Adelaide on the grounds of economic necessity” (Harrison, 1988, p. 53). The closure of *The Advocate* is discussed on page 254 ff.

consolidating titles (Tiffen, 2015). Consolidation of diocesan weeklies was never a realistic option for Catholic newspapers, however, given the strong independence of the proprietors; and there was decline, rather than growth, in their target readership, namely, Catholics who were regular participants in their Church. Catholic newspapers were less able than their secular counterparts to insulate themselves against the consequences of the technological revolutions in media publishing. That decline was, nevertheless, a slow and painful one.

A new pope

Paul VI died in 1978 and was succeeded by John Paul I, the new pope acknowledging his two predecessors in his papal name. John Paul's reign was the shortest in history. He died suddenly after only 33 days on the papal throne. His replacement was John Paul II, whose reign would be one of the longest. John Paul II also acknowledged his predecessors in his papal name, if not in his style of leadership. He affirmed the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, but his interpretation of those teachings was considered to be conservative. This was a good thing for those who saw some of the post-conciliar reforming movements as threatening the integrity of Church doctrine. Certainly, John Paul II was not open to any change in the Church's traditional teaching on contraception, divorce, homosexuality, priestly celibacy and the ordination of women. During his reign, the Church moved towards more centralised control and away from the "synodal" approach to Church governance established by Paul VI following the Council.²²² This pope also ensured the appointment of bishops around the world in his mould (Cf. "Beatifying the Polish Pope", 2011). On the world stage, John Paul II is credited with a leading role in the ending of the Cold War and the defeat of communism,²²³ but he also presided over a culture in the Catholic Church that

²²² In 1965, Paul VI established the "Synod of Bishops for the Universal Church" in an apostolic letter, *Apostolica Sollicitudo*. This was a follow-up to the 1965 Vatican Council Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office, *Christus Dominus*, which proposed a collegial understanding of the way in which the bishops shared in the governance of the Church.

²²³ See, for instance, (Brown, 2009, p. 475).

gave little hope to any Catholic editor who thought the pursuit of a liberal project in their newspaper was a good idea. They certainly could not expect much support from any of their bishop proprietors for whom John Paul II was the model of orthodoxy. According to former *Southern Cross* editor Wilkinson, “vigorous discussion” was generally absent in the Catholic press in Australia from the 1970s. “It’s almost as if there’s been some consensus about a diocesan paper avoiding controversial questions,” he said. The questions and issues that the Vatican Council had raised “ceased to be a matter of discussion”. More dismissive is historian Edmund Campion. Catholic editors were, with a few exceptions, always “trusties”, he said. They were appointed because they would “know what not to say”. Campion included Costigan in the exceptions (Campion, 2011).

As valid as these general impressions might be, each diocesan weekly in Australia retained its individual character, its own strengths and weaknesses. After Doyle’s resignation in 1981, the Brisbane *Leader* continued a tradition of strong editorial direction under a new editor, John Coleman. Coleman had had 30 years of journalistic experience firstly in Queensland, where he won a Walkley Award, and later in Fleet Street and New York. In the 13 years in which he occupied the editor’s chair, *The Leader* once again featured prominently in the annual awards of the CPA and ARPA. During the 1990s, the scope for a more independent editorship narrowed, with the newspaper coming under the control of the public relations and marketing arm of the Brisbane Archdiocese. In Sydney *The Catholic Weekly* would see a continuation of the tight hierarchical control that Hilferty had experienced. Reflecting on the paper’s trajectory forty years after he resigned, Hilferty said: “I think [Kelleher, the previous editor] and Brian Doyle and people like them were convinced that after Vatican II, windows and doors were open, fresh breeze blows through. I always doubted it. And I was proved right” (Hilferty, 2014). Certainly, when there was controversy, the *Weekly* erred on the side of avoiding conflict. In 1994, John Paul II published an apostolic letter which

declared that the Church had no power to ordain women to the priesthood.²²⁴ Shortly after, in the wake of considerable media controversy, the *Weekly* announced it would not publish any letters on the topic, on the grounds that the Pope had settled the issue. Other Catholic publications did not follow this line, and the CPA issued a statement which said that the Catholic press would “lose credibility” if freedom of speech were denied (“You just wouldn't read about it: censorship and the Catholic press”, 1994, pp. 18-19). The caution of editors – all laymen at the *Weekly* – was understandable. In 1993, the *Weekly* editor John Lundy had resigned over an issue of editorial freedom. Lundy had published a report of the conviction of a Marist brother for indecent assault of one of his pupils. The chairman of the *Weekly* board told Lundy that all future articles would have to be reviewed by an editorial board before being printed, telling the *Sydney Morning Herald* that the report had been “distressing to a lot of Catholics”, including the Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal Clancy. Lundy told the *Herald*: “I didn’t believe I had done anything wrong ... It was put to me we had somehow embarrassed the Church or sullied the Church’s good name by printing a story that was 100 per cent accurate and which the Church had run away from in the past” (“Catholic editor quits over free speech”, 1993).

The liberal project fades at The Advocate

At *The Advocate*, two temporary editors replaced Costigan, in quick succession. The first, Don Cunningham, was a former *Advocate* linotype operator, whose appointment broke the mould of the priest-editor. Costigan described Cunningham as a “safe appointment”. It might also have been a holding operation, since another layman, Ted Adams, replaced him after only two years. Adams had been editor of *The Tribune*, a journal that much more closely followed the Santamaria line. When that paper closed in 1971, Adams was suddenly out of a job. He occupied the editor’s chair at *The Advocate* for only a further two years,

²²⁴ *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, May 22 1994.

however. Both these laymen were appointed “editor”, rather than “associate editor”, representing another departure from tradition by Knox. In February 1974 Adams was replaced by Elizabeth Rennick, Australia’s first female editor of a Catholic diocesan newspaper, who would serve for eight years under that title and a further two years as “associate editor” under her successor, Neville Weereratne.²²⁵ While, on her own description, Rennick was conservative, it was a difficult time for any Catholic newspaper editor, in any case. The Vatican Council had concluded almost ten years previously, but Rennick said there remained

the backwash of the Council, in all sorts of ways, and I got very much caught up in that maelstrom and it presented all sorts of difficulty – the people saying the paper was too conservative, the paper was too this, too that; it wasn’t reflecting “the spirit of the Council”. There was a lot of hoo-ha about that. There was ... I suppose you’d call [a] kind of left-right split in a sense ... When I first joined I was all in this sort of oh, we’re all in the “spirit of openness” and, you know, “freedom of the Catholic press ... times have changed”, and so forth. Well, I had a very rude awakening that stayed with me and it nearly threatened my job. (Rennick, 2014)

The “rude awakening” occurred near the beginning of Rennick’s term as editor and was prompted by a story which she had placed in a single column on page three of the paper, a “very matter of fact” news story – except that its subject was a recently appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne, John Kelly, who had been arrested on a drink-driving charge.

And I thought, well, you know, this is a straight-forward story. A bishop is on a drink-driving charge and I thought, right, we’ll publish it. Why not? It’s on record ... So I put this piece in ... and it was literally “stop the presses” and it was withdrawn at the last moment by the then general manager ... and I think they were

²²⁵ Weereratne, the penultimate editor of *The Advocate*, was editor from 1983 to 1989.

probably on the verge of sacking me for it. And I couldn't see why.
 "It's on the record! Just because he's a bishop?" Such was my open
 thinking at the time. (Rennick, 2014)

Rennick had her fingers burnt by the response to the Bishop Kelly story. In future she would take her cue from the ruling authorities. *The Advocate* moved to the right, a stance which was well in evidence to readers by the middle of the 1970s. According to a confidential internal memo by Rennick to *Advocate* staff that reported the results of a parish survey in 1976,²²⁶ the newspaper was now said to have a "Right-wing, doctrinaire slant" (Rennick, c. 1977).

There were few signs of the liberal project at *The Advocate* in its final decades. The newspaper's last general manager and de-facto editor, Peter Philp, was recruited in 1989 to lead a "brave new restructuring process" ("Archbishop announces closure", 1990) to assure the newspaper's future. Philp said he "submitted a list of conditions" before he accepted the position that were "centred on editorial freedom and commitment to the values and teachings of Vatican II". Philp was concerned at what he saw as a regressive editorial policy:

After Vatican II, the progressives had abandoned the once glorious newspaper because of its perceived lack of commitment to these reforms and the middle ground no longer saw its relevance. Now a product of strict conformity to the hierarchy's wishes, its declining circulation confirmed its terminal illness. ("The price of advocacy is always high: the last days of the Catholic Advocate newspaper", 2012, p. 12)

Once appointed, Philp attempted a progressive editorial agenda – a somewhat belated revival of the liberal project – that would provide "a forum for the broadest Church". The project ended in tears. In 1990, shortly after Philp's appointment, the then Archbishop of Melbourne, Frank Little, closed the paper,

²²⁶ The survey, conducted in 25 Melbourne parishes in late 1976, received 4441 responses ("Readers have their say", 1977).

which, he said, had become “a burden on the Archdiocese”. Expressing “profound regret”, the Archbishop said: “*The Advocate*, like so many enterprises in the current economic climate, has been caught up in a cycle of continually declining revenue with no let-up whatsoever in the increasing costs associated with the production of a Catholic paper of such a high standard as *The Advocate*” (“Archbishop announces closure”, 1990).

Philp had his own take on the closure, which reflected his personal disappointment. It had not been for financial reasons, he said, but was because of the types of stories *The Advocate* had published. In a 2012 article, “The price of advocacy is always high: the last days of the Catholic *Advocate*”, Philp referred to a number of these stories²²⁷ but said he had “crossed the line” in a series of articles about the alleged “failure of the Catholic schools system to instruct youth about their faith” (“The price of advocacy is always high: the last days of the Catholic *Advocate* newspaper”, 2012, p. 12). A colleague in the Australasian Religious Press Association (ARPA),²²⁸ John Harrison, said that, when the closure of *The Advocate* was mooted, ARPA tried to intervene, petitioning Little to reconsider. A former executive officer of ARPA, David Busch, said the organisation at the time had drafted a “statement of press freedoms” which they had sent to Little. The statement said the Catholic press needed the freedom to explore issues and “not be captured by the institution”. Little replied to the letter, but was not persuaded by ARPA’s petition (Busch, 2017). The last edition of *The Advocate* was September 6, 1990, the front page carrying the simple headline, “GOOD-BYE!”.²²⁹ It was the end of 122 years of publishing.

²²⁷ The stories, according to Philp’s article, included criticisms by Catholic theologians of Vatican proclamations, and a call for the Australian bishops to invite the Apostolic Administrator of Dili, Timor-Leste, Bishop Carolos Belo, to Australia during the Indonesian occupation of that territory – an invitation which would have been a considerable embarrassment to the Australian Government.

²²⁸ ARPA held its inaugural convention in 1974.

²²⁹ Declining readership was a reality, too, for the Catholic press in America. One survey of 22 American Catholic papers conducted in the 1990s “found that 18 had lost an average of 8.4% of readership between 1991 and 1993” (Gadoua and Murphy, 1994).

There was no longer a diocesan newspaper in Melbourne, but it was not the end of the Catholic press there. In three months of the *Advocate's* closure, a new publication appeared, *Kairos*, a glossy, fortnightly, A4 magazine which carried some news, both local and international. It had no pretensions about being anything other than a house organ and always featured a message from the Archbishop at the front of the magazine. It carried no readers' letters. *Kairos* continued until December 2015 and was replaced by a monthly, *Melbourne Catholic*, an even more finely produced publication, with longer, well written features, little news and no readers' letters. It lasted three and a half years. A new Melbourne Archbishop, Peter Comensoli,²³⁰ announced in his September 2019 column that the publication was "no longer financially sustainable in its current format and needs to grow and evolve". The September issue would be the last "at this point in time".

Twilight of the Catholic weeklies

The only surviving Catholic diocesan weeklies in Australia's capital cities today are *The Catholic Leader* and *The Catholic Weekly*. Just four years before the *Advocate's* closure, in December 1986, Adelaide's *Southern Cross* ceased publication, after 97 years. More recently, in 2014, Australia's longest running Catholic paper, *The Record*, closed after 140 years. The immediate causes of the closures, according to Church authorities, were financial, and certainly falling readership had put these newspapers under financial pressure. According to the *Advocate's* sales manager from 1972, Brian Castanelly, the *Advocate's* circulation was in decline after a couple of sales peaks in the 1970s, until its closure (Castanelly, 2015).²³¹

²³⁰ Installed as Archbishop August 1 2018.

²³¹ The first peak – 16,000, according to Castanelly – was in 1973, in the year of the International Eucharistic Congress in Melbourne; another occurred during the visit of John Paul II to Melbourne in 1986 "when three editions were put out". Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, the future Pope John Paul II, attended the Melbourne Congress. Costigan was

Adelaide's *Southern Cross* was revived in 1997 as a monthly but in a more house-journal style, in which the questioning of official policy was not to be expected (Wilkinson, 2015). The line of progressive archbishops in Adelaide ended in 2001 with the retirement of Leonard Faulkner. The new Archbishop, Philip Wilson, featured prominently thereafter²³² in most editions of this otherwise well-produced magazine.

Did these closures signal the last gasp of the liberal project in the Catholic press? In every archdiocese in Australia, and in many regional dioceses, dedicated laypeople and professional journalists can be found who understand the importance of good communication within the Church, the need for Catholics to be able to hear news about their Church and for Church publications to create a useful conversation about Catholic affairs. Many, nevertheless, work within the constraints of what the proponents of the liberal project would undoubtedly typify as "house organs". Consulting editor to the Jesuit publication *Eureka Street* Andrew Hamilton said in 2013 that lack of resources might be partly to blame for the way in which contemporary diocesan publications were like "in-house newsletters", subject to tight control on writers and content. "If Catholic media discuss issues that are controversial among Catholics they will generally present only the position taken by church authorities," he asserted ("Credibility at stake for restrained religious media", 2013). Yet Costigan was not willing to see the liberal project as a complete failure: "Read the *Catholic Weekly*, 2017 vintage, and you'd have to say it was a dismal failure. But be fairer and look over the wider spectrum of Catholic publications and you can see that it would be unjust to say that it sank without trace" (Costigan, 2017a). Notwithstanding this sanguine view, the movement towards opening Australia's diocesan Catholic press to free discussion on everything affecting Catholics came to an end after the experiment was tried in the 1960s.

employed by Knox as a media officer for the event ("Vatican II – How the Council has dominated my life", 2012).

²³² Until Wilson's resignation in 2018.

It was not just Australia's experience: the downturn was mirrored in America. As early as 1969, Deedy had become disillusioned, and wrote in *The Tablet*:

The Catholic press has become such a tender sore with so many bishops that it would be surprising if the bishops worked out with the editors any greater freedom than they have at present ... The difficulty of cautious bishops and pliable editors is as old as the American Catholic press itself, and as much as anything else this combination of qualities accounts for the weakness of the press and the persistence of problems like the freedom issue. ("USA: A Crumbling Catholic Press", 1969, p. 6)

The revolution had "fizzled out by 1967", one American writer, Jeffrey Burns, said in a 2007 article in the *U.S. Catholic Historian*. "Fewer and fewer bishops seemed comfortable with open newspapers that encouraged debate," he concluded. According to an article published by the United States Catholic Press Association, the circulations of American Catholic newspapers reached their peak in 1956, where "it could be argued that the Catholic Press was at its zenith" (Lockwood, 1998, p. 109). By the mid 1970s, some were announcing the death of the liberal project: "Religious, political and economic forces that had contributed to liberalization of the Catholic newspaper press in the early 1960s had reversed by the end of the decade" (Real, 1975, p.270).

An overview of the historical development of the Catholic press in America was constructed in 1975 by communications academic Michael Real (*see Figure 3, below*). Real distinguished six periods that loosely fit the historical reality in Australia. In particular, the "liberalised" period in the 1960s matches the period of the liberal project in Australia. The labels "re-institutionalised" and "stabilised" for the period which followed are also readily applicable to Australia's Catholic press in the decades following the 1960s.

Structure and Policy of the Catholic Press in Six Time Periods		
<i>Structure</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Policy</i>
Independent	1822-1889	Immigrant Defensive
Cooperative	1890-1918	Increasingly Church Oriented
Consolidated	1919-1945	Sectarian
Expanded	1946-1961	Professionalized
Liberalized	1962-1968	Controversial
Re-institutionalized	1968-Present	Stabilized

Figure 3: Real, M., "Trends in Structure and Policy in the American Catholic Press", in *Journalism Quarterly*, Vol. 52 Issue 2 (June 1975), p.271.

Conclusion

It would be equally futile today to mourn the emptying of the stable of Australia's weekly Catholic newspapers as it would to lament the diminishment of the once all-dominating secular dailies. The communications revolution has decreed their time in the sun over.

The liberal project is another matter. The campaign of the liberal editors was something that touched not only on the Catholic press but on the mission – and reputation – of the Church itself. Would the liberal project have had a better chance to take hold in Australia if there had not been a crisis in circulation in the Catholic press? It is impossible to speculate. However, the signs were, given the way in which Church leaders in the 1970s, locally and in Rome, appeared to hurry to shut the doors John XXIII had flung open, that the success of the liberal project would have been made even more difficult. Certainly, at the end of the 1960s the project had stalled, and those who had been promoting it had left the scene. A battle had been fought and lost. But questions about what it all meant and whether the cause was justified remain. Was something lost when Catholic newspapers appeared to withdraw into a bunker? In the light of where the Church found itself in the new century, the question still hangs: what redeeming light might have been shone in dark places, were the liberal project to have prospered. What better understanding of itself would the Church have had if the Catholic press had been able to hold up to the Church the "truthful mirror" Paul VI proposed?

It might be said that there were consequences for the demise of the liberal project, and some of these will be considered in the final chapter.

Chapter 10: Reflection

The lessons of history

American historian Raymond Grew has suggested that weighing the significance of any historical movement is made the more difficult when that movement is not a success:

Lost causes have a particular poignancy, and for historians they raise special problems. Where does historical significance lie? – in the reasons for failure, the possibilities of success, a movement's historical origins (always multiple and unclear), or its subsequent influence (necessarily indirect and hard to establish)? Failures carry few clues as to what matters. (Grew, 2003, p. 568)

The liberal project of Catholic editors did not fare well, and so its impact on the Catholic Church is difficult to quantify. It appears, however, that its trajectory mirrored, in certain respects, the arc traced by the Second Vatican Council. The liberal project in the Catholic press briefly flowered in the 1960s but its momentum stalled amidst fears of disunity and concern about doctrinal orthodoxy. The Council, in the same moment, generated a wave of optimism and excitement that continued awhile after the final session, until a reaction against progressive ideas and a centralising of authority hosed the excitement down.

Jacques Maritain, whose influence on the liberal editors has been described in the preceding chapters, was also influential in what has been described as the “Catholic left” movement, another apparently failed project which appeared in the 1940s and 1950s (Grew, 2003, p. 568). Commentators have argued over whether this was indeed a universal movement or, rather, “divergent Catholic currents” appearing in different countries at the same time, in ventures such as

the worker-priest movement in France.²³³ Nevertheless, common traits of antipathy to capitalism and attraction to socialist thinking could be seen. While most commentators believed the prominence of the Catholic left faded after the 1950s, because of continuing Cold War tensions and the Church's increasing hostility to communism, others considered, on the other hand, that the movement did not disappear completely. Rather, it left its mark on Western European Catholicism and "found a partial prolongation in the Second Vatican Council"²³⁴ persisting until the 1970s (Löwy, 2001).

Catholic editors pursuing the liberal project never publicly described themselves as representatives of the Catholic Left, but they might well be located within that tradition. During the 1960s, their project blossomed briefly and sporadically but, by the 1970s, it was out of favour. Their mantle was mostly discarded by the editors who took their place. But threads of the liberal editors' thinking persisted, if pushed aside by the mainstream, and were evident in some post-conciliar movements.²³⁵ Such "left" tendencies came under the scrutiny of a new Pope, John Paul II, who saw it as his role to reunify a fracturing organisation. His method was to exercise strong central governance and reaffirm traditional doctrine. It was an approach generally continued by his successor, Benedict XVI – until the latter's sensational abdication in 2013. In the view of some, the John Paul and Benedict years were a time of rolling back the reform movements of Vatican II. The goal of their policies might have been to create a stronger, more unified Church, but the reign of Benedict's successor and the present Pope, Francis, has

²³³ The question was debated, for instance, in a 2001 collection of essays, "Left Catholicism 1943-1955: Catholics and Society in Western Europe at the Point of Liberation" (Horn & Gerard, 2001). The worker-priest movement was a movement of priests who discarded their clerical uniform to better reach those who had become alienated from the Church, especially among the working classes.

²³⁴ Author's translation.

²³⁵ Some of these threads might be seen in a number of contemporary lay movements in the Australian Church, such as Catalyst for Renewal (founded 1994; <http://catalystforrenewal.org.au>) and Catholics for Renewal (founded 2011; www.catholicsforrenewal.org), and also in online publications such as *Catholica* (<http://www.catholica.com.au/links.php>) and *Pearls and Irritations* (<https://johnmenadue.com>).

revealed that the polarised positions in the Church that Patrick Morgan identified in the years following the Vatican Council are not a thing of the past. If anything, the divisions are more profound, and appear even at the Church's centre, in the hostile and public opposition of certain prominent bishops to Francis's reforming agenda.²³⁶ In 2016, four semi-retired cardinals publicly challenged Francis over apparent discrepancies between his moral teaching and that of John Paul II ("At the heart of the resistance to Pope Francis on ethics", 2017). Another prominent cardinal and critic of Francis, the former Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) Gerhard Muller,²³⁷ said the Pope was not the problem but rather the "sycophants" around him who understood "little about theology and the Church's social teaching" ("Pope surrounded by sycophants and Church run according to Jesuit order's rules, says Müller", 2019). Muller has been careful to avoid accusing the Pope of being a heretic but said that the group of clergy and lay people, who, in an "open letter" in April 2019, accused Francis of a number of counts of heresy, deserved a hearing. The worries of Francis's accusers were understandable, Muller was reported to have said in a *Tablet* article ("Accusing Pope of heresy is 'worst thing' says Müller", 2019).

To see the liberal editors' push for more freedom of expression in the Catholic press simply in terms of a left-wing lobby group would be, however, to miss an essential point. The liberal editors' first priority was good journalism. In civil society the primary concern about the press is not whether it is conservative or liberal but whether it is free, as opposed to being censored and controlled by state authorities. And just as a society functions more effectively when its members are kept informed by a free press, so too might the Church community be healthier if its media were free to report the diverse views of its members. There is another side to the argument for a free press: the need to ensure the

²³⁶ Francis appears to operate out of a more consultative style of governance.

²³⁷ Francis subsequently removed Muller from office.

powerful are held to account. This was not a headlined priority of the liberal editors – but it might have been.

Failure of accountability

Most Catholics, on whatever side of the conservative-progressive divide they stood, have surely looked for a stronger, more united Church in the years since the Vatican Council: a Church with authority and credibility. Unhappily, the world has interrupted the internal debates about orthodoxy with a harsh condemnation of the Church's response – or, more precisely, its lack of response – to sexual abuse by clergy, and condemnation of the cover-up of that abuse by Church leaders. The crisis and scandal has left few Catholic dioceses in any country untouched. The extent of the abuse and cover-up in the Australian Catholic Church Australia has been documented in the 2017 report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.²³⁸ It has been a defining moment for the Catholic Church, which no one in the 1960s could see coming. Nevertheless, the failure of accountability now exposed surely has its roots in an attitude already on display in the 1960s, when the liberal editors were arguing their case. Their proprietors' resistance to a more open Catholic newspaper would be to render the Church community less healthy, the editors had argued then. The bishops, however, did not appear to share their concern: they saw no danger in the policies of censorship. Were there even to be in the 1960s a valid argument for policies of denying problems and hiding the truth, surely no defence of such policies can be sustained today. The harm done to the victims of sexual abuse and the loss of the Church's credibility and reputation are proof enough that such policies are destructive. Many have named "clericalism" as the root cause of the cover-up of sexual abuse. Francis himself, in 2018, highlighted clericalism "as one of the major factors that has allowed priests to abuse young people and permitted bishops to keep such crimes a secret for so

²³⁸ The Commission's final report was published in November 2017.

long” (“How serious is Pope Francis about eradicating clericalism?”, 2018). In his 2013 apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*,²³⁹ Francis said the role of lay people in the “transformation of society” was threatened where there was “an excessive clericalism” which left little room for their participation in decision-making (Francis, 2013, No. 102). It might well be argued, too, that the authoritarian and censorship policies of bishop-proprietors in regard to the Catholic press had their roots in the same culture of “clericalism”. Rahner identified the problem sixty years ago, when writing about free speech in the Church:

But we – both those of us who are in authority and those who are under authority – are perhaps still accustomed here and there to certain patriarchal forms of leadership and obedience which have no essential or lasting connection with the real stuff of Church authority and obedience. When this is so, Church authorities may see even a justifiable expression of frank opinion about Church matters as camouflaged rebellion, or resentment against the Church Hierarchy. Even those not in authority may dislike such free expression, because they are accustomed to the old traditional ways. (Rahner, 1959, pp. 38-39)

The desertion of Catholics from active participation in the Church had a huge impact on readership and circulation but, in any case, a Catholic press that could not be relied on to tell the truth – or at least the whole truth – was a disincentive for a loyal Catholic readership. Secular outlets and authorities became the default source for Catholics about what was going on in their Church and, as *Eureka Street*’s Andrew Hamilton, suggested in 2013, in such recourse, the Church lost out:

More recently the restrictions on Catholic media, and particularly their limited coverage of Church abuse, with comment usually

²³⁹ “The joy of the Gospel”.

restricted to Catholics in leadership positions, have affected their credibility. Many Catholics instinctively see what is written in Church media as spin rather than as engagement with truth. They then look to the secular media for a more accurate and honest presentation of the state of affairs than they hope to find in the Catholic media.

There is a loss in this. The account of the Catholic Church they receive from the secular media often lacks depth and a feel for context. It could helpfully be complemented by an honest insider's perspective.

This suggests reconsideration of the assumption that it is in the interests of the Catholic Church to control reporting in its media of bad things done by Catholics and of differences between Catholics. The role of Catholic media needs to be reimagined. ("Credibility at stake for restrained religious media", 2013)

Some have postulated that a more open Catholic press in past years might have at least mitigated the damage done by sexual abuse and the fallout from the denial; it might have lifted the lid earlier on the scandal. US Catholic historian Jeffrey Burns suggested in a 2007 article: "One wonders if an open, honest, investigative Catholic press might have short-circuited the pedophilia crisis" (Burns, 2007, p. 126). Patrick Morgan, in *The Mannix Years*, in discussing the failure of the Melbourne Catholic press to fully disclose to its readers the 1957 Vatican judgements against the Movement, hints at the more disastrous implications of such policies:

The Melbourne Church was still in denial [in 1957]; it had not learnt the lesson from the Movement episode that cover-up and secrecy eventually make any problems much worse. (Clerical paedophilia was beginning at this time and was swept under the table in the same way, only to explode decades later in another dispiriting catastrophe.) (Morgan, 2018, p. 198)

One witness to the Royal Commission, Jesuit Frank Brennan, said the harm done by the Church to victims of sexual abuse was aggravated by the lack of accountability of Church leaders. “Even Rome needs to accept that a more transparent, accountable and inclusive hierarchy would have spared many children the horrors of abuse,” he said in a 2017 article in *Eureka Street* (“The Catholic wrap-up at the Royal Commission”, 2017).

Whether a victory for the liberal project in the Catholic press – for more open and uncensored Catholic papers – would have shone a light in dark places earlier or significantly mitigated the damage to victims of sexual abuse and to the Church’s reputation is a matter of speculation. It can surely be affirmed, however, that the failure of the liberal project in the Australian Catholic press, at the very least, left a culture wherein the Church was less accountable to its people and less able to respond transparently to institutional problems.

If there is a lesson to be learnt in regard to the Catholic press – or Church communications in general – it is the one Karl Rahner was trying to teach when he urged Church authorities to allow people to speak their minds. If Church leaders did not “encourage or even tolerate, with courage and forbearance and even a certain optimism free from anxiety, the growth of a public opinion within the Church, they run the risk of directing her from a soundproof ivory tower.” Rahner proposed a dialogue, an engagement. Australia’s Catholic editors in the 1960s proposed a discussion with their bishops on this critical issue. There is little evidence, however, of the bishops seriously engaging with them. It is hard to have a useful debate on an important matter when one party does not show up for the conversation.

A project incomplete

This thesis has examined the way in which the editor of the *Melbourne Advocate* in the 1960s negotiated his editorial freedom with the newspaper’s proprietor. A similar negotiation took place, with greater or lesser intensity, between editors

and proprietors of Catholic newspapers throughout the 120-year history of the Catholic press in Australia prior to Costigan's time. Indeed, the inherent tensions in this negotiation had been present at Australia's first Catholic newspaper, *The Australasian Chronicle*. It might also be said that the liberal project in the Catholic press began with that newspaper's first editor, William Duncan, who has been described as "the most prominent liberal Catholic" in Australia at that time (Abbey, 2013, p. 274). He was also a layman and a convert from Presbyterianism, a religion with a less clerical structure, who believed the role of a Catholic editor demanded a certain independence from clerical direction. After three and a half years as editor, Duncan was told by the Irish Vicar General, Francis Murphy, that he had not satisfactorily supported the political causes of the *Chronicle's* board²⁴⁰ and that he was a "sower of dissension" (W. A. Duncan, 1843). Duncan was replaced and Murphy warned the new editor, Archdeacon John McEncroe, that no paper could consider itself "the accredited organ of Catholic opinions ... that has lost the sanction and countenance of the Catholic clergy" ("The Chronicle", 1843). Duncan's liberal project had failed. In a speech some years after he left the *Chronicle*, he disparaged those who would wish to protect Catholics from views that might challenge their own thinking.²⁴¹

Have they no faith in the prevailing power of truth? Is Christianity so unamiable a thing that they must imprison it in order that it may not escape? Must it be sealed like a bottle of Champagne, lest its vital powers should evaporate. Will they trust nothing to its native

²⁴⁰ Duncan had fallen foul of the *Chronicle's* board, "a group of wealthy Catholic emancipists" (Payten, 1965, p. 36). In the first years of his editorship, he had espoused the cause of the emancipists – former convicts who had been granted pardons – against the wealthy establishment, the "exclusives". But more lately, the nouveau-riche emancipists had sided with the old money, and Duncan found himself outside this political lobby group. A detailed account of the political and editorial struggle is in Payten, 1965, especially chapter 5.

²⁴¹ This speech was in support of a state education system, against the predominant Catholic view that children's faith and morals would be better protected in their own denominational schools.

beauty and holiness? ... Will they trust nothing to the grace of God?²⁴²

Murphy's view that a Catholic newspaper should not create dissent presaged the default position of many of those in charge of the Catholic press in subsequent years, as has been seen. It seems that Duncan, too, long before Maritain had counselled against such a model, had made the *Chronicle* that "hybrid" Catholic newspaper which tried to be at the same time both "Catholic by denomination" and "Catholic by inspiration". Duncan's biographer Margaret Payten saw this tension:

In the whole affair one cannot escape the conclusion that Duncan had been a poor tactician. He had undertaken a difficult task when he decided to make the *Chronicle* a forthright radical journal, as well as the organ of the Catholic community. He was presumably aware that the two functions did not necessarily coincide. (Payten, 1965, p. 222)

Payten believed that Duncan was partly to blame for the eventual coup against him. He lacked diplomacy and was naïve about politics, she said. Nevertheless, she recognised that the liberal cause Duncan was fighting, even if it had been sidelined, had not been annulled. Writing at the end of the Vatican Council in 1965, as the Church attempted a renewal of its structures and governance, she concluded that "Catholics of the era of the Second Vatican Council will be inclined to think that Duncan asked the right question, even if this insight was not matched by prudence or theological depth" (Payten, 1965, p. 365).

The liberal Catholic editors of the 1960s believed they were asking the right questions, too. And, like Duncan's, these questions were about truth and openness. The health of the Catholic Church would be seen in its engagement with the world and the impact on the social order that its lay members brought

²⁴² Duncan, "Lecture on National Education" delivered to the School of Arts in Brisbane in 1850, p 14-15, cited in Payten, 1965, p. 321.

about, they argued; and that relevance and engagement would be enabled and enhanced by a Catholic press in which free and open discussion was encouraged by the hierarchy and not choked by paternalism. It cannot be too outrageous to suggest that John XXIII and even Paul VI would have cheered them on. Certainly, 50 years later, Michael Costigan had no regrets about the liberal project: “It was the right thing,” he said (Costigan, 2017a).

Postscript

Leaving the priesthood, along with his position at Melbourne's main Catholic weekly newspaper, was a consequential if not agonising decision for the 38-year-old Michael Costigan. It brought to a close a significant role in the Archdiocese of Melbourne at a watershed moment in the Church's history. But it also marked the beginning of a long and fruitful career. Many things changed – and some things stayed the same: writing remained a dominant thread throughout his ongoing career, and Costigan's engagement with Church affairs never ceased.

In September 1969, not much more than three months after his retirement from *The Advocate*, Costigan was back in employment as a journalist at Melbourne's first Sunday newspaper, the about-to-be-launched *Sunday Observer*. In the next year he moved to another new and more literary publication in the same stable, the *Sunday Review*.²⁴³ In this period, he was also engaged by Father Edmund Campion to write a regular column of comment for Campion's Sydney-based fortnightly journal, *Report*, which had the aim, according to Campion, "to carry the news that the Catholic press, for whatever reason, did not print" (*Pearls and Irritations*, 2018).

Nor were Costigan's confrontations with Santamaria over: his short stint at the *Observer* was the occasion of an unpleasant exchange with Santamaria, who was much displeased with a news story Costigan wrote (at the request of his editor) about Santamaria's 1970 book *The Defence of Australia*.²⁴⁴ Not long before the outbreak of the Second World War on May 28 1939, the 23-year-old Santamaria had delivered the keynote speech at a peace rally in Melbourne's Exhibition Building in the presence of the then prime minister, Robert Menzies, and Archbishop Mannix. In his address, Santamaria made a plea for peace discussions

²⁴³ Later renamed *Nation Review*, following amalgamation with *Nation*.

²⁴⁴ Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1970.

“without reservations” between the European nations who were on the brink of war (Morgan, 2008, p. 26). Costigan’s *Observer* story suggested that the new book – in its more bellicose approach to resolving conflict between nations and in its advocacy of Australia’s development of nuclear weapons – represented a backflip. Santamaria wrote a private letter to Costigan (Santamaria, 1970) arguing that the criticism was grossly unfair, since it took no account of the fact that new circumstances operating after war had broken out called for new solutions. For “one who was formerly a Catholic priest to attack a Catholic layman” in such a public way was not only an unfair thing, there was a double standard in it, Santamaria wrote. Were Santamaria to respond in a similar personal way, he might “point out – in equally insulting terms – that no change in my viewpoint could possibly compare in terms of consistency with that of a man who had entered the priesthood under the most solemn vows, but later abandoned it”. Santamaria rightly went on to say that such a public accusation would have been “hitting below the belt”. But he had said it, and in that wounding statement was the imputation borne by many former priests who, often with great personal anguish and struggle of conscience, had come to a similar decision to Costigan’s.²⁴⁵

In 1973, the Melbourne Archdiocese was to host the 40th International Eucharistic Congress, a devotional event which had been held in different countries, about every other year, for the previous hundred years. In mid-1972, Archbishop Knox invited Costigan to be the press officer for the Melbourne congress. Costigan took leave from *Nation Review* to take up the position, which lasted for the best part of a year. In the lead-up to the Congress in February 1973, two notable events occurred that were to shape Costigan’s private and public life. On September 16 1972, Costigan married Margaret Collis in Knox’s private chapel at Raheen, Kew, with Knox as celebrant. Knox had introduced Costigan to his future wife shortly

²⁴⁵ Indeed, such an attitude was institutionalised in Church practice, whereby even those priests who were granted official dispensations from their priestly obligations were barred from exercising the liturgical ministries that lay people could exercise.

after Collis had returned from a year working in India with Mother Teresa – now Saint Teresa of Calcutta. Knox, a supporter of Mother Teresa in his previous role as Papal Nuncio to India, believed her work should be known more widely and sent Collis to *The Advocate* to be interviewed by Costigan (Costigan, 2015). The resultant *Advocate* story, “Calcutta’s Pied Pipers”, won Costigan the 1968 CPA’s “Father James Murtagh Award” for best feature. It was also the beginning of a significant friendship. Mother Teresa would be one of the “star guests” at the Eucharistic Congress, alongside the future Pope John Paul II, Cardinal Karol Wojtyla.

A second significant event occurred in December 1972, when 23 years of consecutive Liberal-National Party governments ended upon Gough Whitlam leading the Labor Party to victory at the federal election. Costigan’s career apparently prospered from Whitlam’s championing of the arts. The new Prime Minister “moved promptly” to revitalise the Australian Council for the Arts, which was to be administered by seven boards, including a Literature Board (Throsby, 2001). One pioneering Literature Board member, the writer and publisher Geoffrey Dutton, said in his 1995 autobiography *Out in the Open*: “We desperately needed an executive officer, and [board member and communist-Jewish writer] Judah Waten (with typical lack of prejudice) recommended a Catholic ex-priest, Michael Costigan, for the job.” Costigan was offered the job of administrator (later “director”) and resigned from *Nation Review* to take it. According to Dutton, he would become “the mainstay of the Literature Board for ten years” (Dutton, 1995, p. 400). At the end of 1975, the Board’s office was relocated to Sydney and Costigan moved there with his family.

In 1983, Costigan was appointed Director of the WA Arts Council, a position which took him to Perth. In 1985 he returned to Sydney to take up an appointment as Secretary of the Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW. In the same year he began writing a regular column in *The Advocate*, at the invitation of the then editor, Neville Weeraratne, which he would continue for two years.

Costigan's passage out of the priesthood had been smooth, in marked contrast to the experience of many priests who left the ministry in later years. Knox, under the more sympathetic regime of Pope Paul VI, with whom he had worked closely, had facilitated a quick turnaround of Costigan's formal dispensation from the obligations of celibacy, allowing him to be married with the full rites of the Church only three years after his resignation. Later, under John Paul II, a hardening of heart was seen in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome, the body responsible for approving applications for the laicisation of priests and their dispensation from the obligations of celibacy.²⁴⁶ The ex-priest Costigan was, nevertheless, in good odour among Australia's hierarchy and he had the advantage of knowing many of them personally. In 1986 he accepted an invitation from the bishops to write a short pamphlet on the life of Pope John Paul II,²⁴⁷ in preparation for the Pope's visit to Australia in late November that year. He accompanied the media entourage on the Pope's travels across the continent and subsequently authored a commemorative booklet on the Pontiff's visit.²⁴⁸

In 1987, the bishops were looking for an executive officer for a new body they had established, the Bishops Committee for Justice, Development and Peace (BCJDP), and Costigan applied for the position – successfully, to his surprise. His appointment not only attested to the moderate line Costigan was known to take politically and theologically – notwithstanding the criticisms he had been subject to as editor of *The Advocate* – but it also revealed internal Church tensions. The new committee had the task of setting up a body – the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council – to replace the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP). The CCJP was established as a lay-led organisation in 1972 and had been responsible for spearheading the Church's social policies, including the writing of

²⁴⁶ Ten years later, one former priest of the Archdiocese of Adelaide, known to the author, waited 10 years for an affirmative response to his application for a dispensation.

²⁴⁷ "Man of Many Talents", ACTS Publications, 1986.

²⁴⁸ *John Paul II: The journey through Australia*, (Clarke & Costigan, 1986).

the bishops' annual social justice statements. It had, however, fallen foul of its patrons, who alleged it had become too left-leaning. Not only was there loud criticism from a number of conservative bishops, the organisation was also under fire from the Australian Government. Among other things, the CCJP had opposed Indonesia's forced annexation of East Timor and had criticised the Australian government's appeasement of Jakarta over the issue. According to one commentator ...

The Liberal-Country coalition government of Malcolm Fraser did not take kindly to the social analysis and critique presented in CCJP's annual Social Justice Statements, and Bob Santamaria and his NCC supporters were hypersensitive to the malevolent influence of Marxism that they perceived within the Commission's political commentary and policy recommendations (Smythe, 2004, p. 109).

The decision not to renew the CCJP's mandate – greeted with “anger and dismay” by many supporters, including a “substantial minority” of the bishops (Costigan, 2009) – appeared to mollify the critics in the Government. Not so mollified, however, were some among the Church hierarchy who thought there was something unfitting, if not scandalous, in the appointment of an ex-priest to an official body of the bishops. In particular, the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio to Australia, Archbishop Franco Brambilla, a determined protector of orthodoxy, complained to Rome. His objection reached the ears of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger – the future Pope Benedict XVI – who, in 1987, was Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and a John Paul II appointee. Nevertheless, the Australian bishops had ratified Costigan's appointment and, in October 1987, he took up the position of Executive Secretary. However, when a group of Australian bishops came later to Rome for their scheduled *ad limina* visit, Costigan said they were “apparently given a real dressing down in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith” over his appointment. For a while, it looked as if the appointment might be terminated. Then came an intervention, apparently rare in the light of the more recent history of the Australian bishops' dealing with Roman

authorities. Two bishops, Cardinal Edward Clancy, Archbishop of Sydney, and Archbishop Len Faulkner, Archbishop of Adelaide, in Rome on other business, made an appointment to see Ratzinger. They put it to the Prefect that, notwithstanding the concerns of the Nuncio, the Australian bishops considered Costigan a fitting incumbent in the position of bishops' executive officer. In a 2016 memoir, Faulkner recalled that ...

The Congregation was really angry with us for appointing a former priest. Ted was brilliant with Cardinal Ratzinger who I felt really listened to us. And he did what every leader would do; it was never mentioned again. The Congregation remained silent. I am sure this came from Cardinal Ratzinger. We felt that he understood us.
(Faulkner, 2016, p. 128)

Brambilla did not let the matter drop, however, and, five years later, had his revenge. In 1993, according to Costigan, Brambilla complained to the bishops about a photo which had appeared in the *Catholic Weekly*. The photo showed Costigan and his daughter, Siobhan, meeting Pope John Paul II in Rome the same year. "I heard Brambilla was aghast: here's the Pope meeting an ex-priest and his daughter!" Costigan said. The next year, Costigan was due to go to South Africa with an official Catholic delegation of bishops and lay people, to witness the country's first democratic elections. However, the antipathy of the Nuncio provoked a nervous reaction among the bishops. The chairman of the Catholic Social Justice Council, Bishop Bill Brennan, told Costigan it would be better to "lay low" and not go to South Africa. Costigan, disappointed, stayed behind (Costigan, 2011).

Antagonism from the Nuncio's office dealt Costigan no lasting injury, as attested by his near-18-year term at the BBCJDP. His responsibilities included work for the subsidiary organisations Caritas Australia, the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council and, in 2002, a new environmental agency Catholic Earthcare Australia. After completing his term in 2005, Costigan, at age 74, was made an Adjunct

Professor at the Australian Catholic University. While nominally “retired”, he has never put down his pen. Book reviews, obituaries and historical notes under Costigan’s name have continued to appear in the Catholic and secular press, and the name Dr Michael Costigan has regularly appeared in the list of speakers at conferences and other events where an informed commentary on Catholic affairs has been sought.

In 2009, Michael Costigan was made a life member of the Australasian Catholic Press Association.

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