USE OF THESES

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William Bernard Ullathorne and the Foundation of Australian Catholicism 1815-1840

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This Thesis is entirely my own work.

(Paul Collins)
ABSTRACT

William Bernard Ullathorne was Vicar General of New South Wales from 1832 to 1841. While Catholics had arrived in the First Fleet in 1788, it was not until the 1830s that the church's ministerial structure was put on a permanent footing. In order to place the decade of the 1830s in context, I have outlined the early history of Catholicism in Australia and examined why Fathers Therry and Conolly failed to put down permanent roots. The thesis then goes on to argue that Ullathorne was the key person in establishing permanent ecclesiastical structures.

The Catholic Church had begun in Australia in 1820 as an official convict chaplaincy. Church-state relationships were of fundamental importance. It was Ullathorne who negotiated a working relationship with the colonial government of New South Wales.

The thesis argues that his success in Australia was based on his own clerical professionalism. The professional clergyman was a newly emerging species in the 19th century. After outlining his early life and experience, the emphasis shifts to the reasonably sound priestly formation he received at Downside Abbey. It was there that he imbibed a definite conception of the role of the clergyman in society. The function of the priest was to re-enforce Christian morals through the supervision of the Catholic community, to celebrate the rites of
transition and to support the faith of Catholics through the evolution of a sense of identity. Much of his achievement in Australia is based on this sense of mission and the practicality of his personality.

His writings, both polemical and apologetic, helped Catholics in New South Wales gain a sense of identity. By casting Catholics in the role of the persecuted underdog, he helped the church community define itself over and against the other groups that made up the fabric of Australian society. This was re-enforced by the 'Irishness' of Catholicism. His willingness to enter into controversy with other church leaders also helped in the development of a sense of identity. Tragically inter-church controversy quickly led to the blight of sectarianism.

Despite his professionalism and his willing co-operation with government, he did not always conform to the prevailing attitudes. His close contact with the realities of convict transportation and assignment eventually led him to oppose the whole system. He saw it as a complete failure. The thesis argues that Ullathorne emerged from 1835 onwards as a major social critic in New South Wales. This led to his nickname "the Agitator General"!

I have already mentioned the 'Irishness' of the Australian Catholic Church. After a recruiting drive in Europe and the United Kingdom (1836-1838), he recognised that the church
was not only made up of Irish laity, but that the vast majority of the clergy would also be Irish. He immediately perceived the injustice of the Australian Church being ruled by English monks. Archbishop Polding of Sydney could never face this. Ullathorne's realisation of the 'Irishness' of the Australian church led him to leave New South Wales in 1840.

But his interest in and influence on the Australian church did not cease with his departure. Within five years of leaving he had refused five Australian bishoprics. He became the Roman Curia's major source of information and advice on Australian affairs, especially in the 1859 crisis in Sydney. Despite neglect by historians he is, without a doubt, a pivotal figure in the foundation of Australian Catholicism.
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<td>ACR</td>
<td>Australasian Catholic Record</td>
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<td>ADB</td>
<td>Australian Dictionary of Biography</td>
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<td>ANL</td>
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<td>Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives</td>
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<td>Birt</td>
<td>Benedictine Pioneers in Australia (N. Birt)</td>
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<td>Col. Sec.</td>
<td>Colonial Secretary (New South Wales)</td>
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<td>DA</td>
<td>Downside Monastery Archives</td>
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<td>DAA</td>
<td>Dublin Archdiocesan Archives</td>
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<td>DNB</td>
<td>Dictionary of National Biography</td>
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<td>DR</td>
<td>Downside Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRA</td>
<td>Historical Records of Australia (Series I + III)</td>
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<td>HS</td>
<td>Historical Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JACHS</td>
<td>Journal of the Aust. Catholic Historical Society</td>
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<td>JRH</td>
<td>Journal of Religious History</td>
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<tr>
<td>LTBU</td>
<td>Life and Times of Bishop Ullathorne (C. Butler)</td>
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<td>ML</td>
<td>Mitchell Library (Sydney)</td>
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<td>NSWSA</td>
<td>New South Wales State Archives</td>
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<td>NSW V+P</td>
<td>Votes and Proceeding of the Legislative Council of New South Wales</td>
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<tr>
<td>Push</td>
<td>Push from the Bush</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Public Record Office (Kew)</td>
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<td>Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Australian Historical Society</td>
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<td>RSCG</td>
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INTRODUCTION

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ULLATHORNE
The Catholic Church claims to be a universal church. But it was not until the late 19th century that this began to be a geographical reality. The decades after the Congress of Vienna saw the church emerge from the chaos of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars with renewed energy. At the beginning of the century, with the exception of Latin America, the church was almost wholly confined to Europe. By the end of the century Catholicism was established on all continents. The total world Catholic population in 1815 was about 118 million of whom 100 million were in Europe and 15 million in Latin America. By the beginning of the 20th century, the number of Catholics had increased to 382 million of whom 194 million were in Europe.\footnote{Jedin, H. and Dolan, J. (eds): History of the Catholic Church. New York. 1981. Vol VII, pp 85-86 and Vol X, pp 5-8.} The establishment of Australian Catholicism was a tiny part of that geographical and numerical expansion.

A strange paradox emerged, however, in the inner life of the church. During the 19th century the church (and especially the papacy) rejected the prevailing liberal philosophy and became increasingly self-enclosed. The most obvious element in this was the steady advance of ultramontanism. After the First Vatican Council (1870), papal centralism was strengthened and the Vatican continued to claim that the church had a right to a privileged position in society. In one sense this was a return to the
pre-revolutionary status quo - the union of throne and altar. But in another sense it was a new claim: no longer was the church to be subservient to the state, as in the old Gallican and Febronian theories. Rather it was the duty of the state to protect ecclesiastical rights and to exclude any challenge to the doctrinal position of the church. The argument ran: if the Roman Church was the true church, then the state had the obligation to suppress untruth, especially when it took the form of philosophies or sects which threatened Catholicism. With the exception of Leo XIII (1878-1903), the popes of the 19th century rejected the consequences of the Revolution - liberalism, equality and a democratic form of government.

However, in the 19th century Catholics often challenged the papal doctrine of church-state relations, both theoretically and practically. In common with their co-religionists in other developing liberal societies, such as the United States, Canada, Belgium and Ireland, many Australian Catholics based their claim to freedom of religion and government support for the ministry of the church on the liberal principle of equality. The Catholic lay leader, Judge Roger Therry, told the Anglican Archdeacon, William Grant Broughton just before Ullathorne arrived in Australia: "Our respective (religious) claims will probably remain undecided until we all appear before Christ, but until then each must be allowed to act upon his own conviction".2

This was a far cry from the papal view which had been expressed the previous year by Pope Gregory XVI (1831-1846) in the encyclical letter Mirari vos. The letter was directed against a group of French liberal Catholics led by Hughes-Felicite de Lamennais. He was the fountainhead of 19th century French Catholic liberalism. He advocated religious freedom, liberty of association and freedom of the press. As an anti-Gallican he had hoped that the papacy would lead a liberal revolution - a vain hope in the case of Gregory XVI, who excommunicated him! In Mirari vos the Pope attacked ideas of tolerance and religious freedom, condemned democracy as "sheer madness" and castigated freedom of expression as "abominable and detestable". Thus Catholics in New South Wales found themselves in the ironic situation of claiming a right which had been outlawed by the Pope, and which their co-religionists were unwilling to grant to others in predominantly Catholic countries.

For in the United States, Canada and the Australian colonies the Catholic Church faced a new situation. In Europe it was the established church with a long history of influencing both politics and society. In the new world a range of unique challenges emerged. The most important of these was the task of establishing Catholicism in a new political and social environment. The papal ideology of the right relationship between church and state simply did not apply.

In the Australian colonies there was a de facto separation of church and state from the beginning (despite the early attempts of the Church of England to gain an established status). But separation was never pushed to the extent, nor given the theoretical and constitutional underpinning that it had in the United States. Contrary to the ideas of both contemporaries and later historiography, the Colonial Office was not opposed to Catholic clergy going to New South Wales after 1815. In fact, it was in the interest of the British government to bring order to colonial church affairs and to use the clergy as agents of pacification and social order, especially among the convicts.

From the ecclesiastical perspective, the Australian colonies were not strictly mission territories, like Africa or Asia, for many of the people who came to them from Europe were already Catholic. But the whole social situation was radically different from the United Kingdom. In Australia there were opportunities for the emergence of new social, political and economic ideas. The church had to find a new way of relating to society. Lemannais' ideal of a "free church in a free state" was to become a reality in remote Australia.

This thesis focuses primarily on the unique process of the insertion and early development of the Catholic Church in the colonial society of New South Wales. Clearly, there are parallels with other countries such as the United States, but the uniqueness of Australia should never be forgotten: it began as a penal
colony and the Catholic Church originated as nothing more than a convict chaplaincy. There were no exact parallels anywhere else.

If the situation was unique, the protagonists were also a new breed. The early 19th century saw the emergence of the clergy as a professional group with the primary ministerial and jurisdictional responsibility within the church community. Catholicism had been a clericalised and hierarchical church since the early Middle Ages. But clergy, in the modern professional sense, only gradually emerged between the 17th and 19th centuries. By the early 19th century, they had assumed wide-ranging social as well as liturgical functions within the Catholic community. In the new world they also became the key institutional organisers, as well as the central ministerial figures in the church.

New South Wales began - like the United States - with an acute shortage of clergy and a far-away bishop (at first in London and then in Mauritius). Most of the first clergy to arrive were sick or unsettled (men like O'Flynn, Therry, Coote and Power). But the situation was rapidly regularised with the recruitment of better trained priests of greater ability (such as John McEncroe and William Ullathorne).

This thesis argues that Ullathorne was the most important of this new breed of professional priests in early New South Wales. He was of middle class origin, with a solid spiritual and intellectual formation and able to comprehend and adapt to the new situat-
ion in which he found himself. He recruited the first large group of clergy and the first order of sisters to come to Australia. The organisational structure that he had provided meant that the newly arrived priests and sisters could begin a ministry throughout the settled areas of the colonies.

Thus Ullathorne stands out as the pivotal figure of the period of foundation (1815-1840). It was he who organised the institutional structure of the church. He negotiated regular financial assistance from the colonial government and established a working relationship with officialdom. Through his pamphlets he became a defender of the church and gave Catholics a sense of identity. He was an outspoken social reformer in his opposition to the worst aspects of convictism. It was he, more than any other, who inserted the Catholic Church into New South Wales society.

Ullathorne's role in the foundation of Australian Catholicism has been neglected by historians. Certainly his contributions have been noted, but no one has emphasised his central role in organising the church between 1830 and 1840. When he arrived in New South Wales at the beginning of 1833 the Catholic Church was in a chaotic state with no organised structure and, at best, an ad hoc ministry. When he left at the end of 1840, the church was an organised body with a ministry reaching to the limits of settlement in all colonies, except Western Australia. Later church leaders, such as Archbishop Polding, were able to build on the foundations laid by Ullathorne. On his return to England he
used the experience he had gained in Australia to become one of
the most significant figures in the formation of English Cathol­
icism in the 19th century. Strangely, he has also been neglected
by English Catholic historians.

The argument of the thesis does not necessarily contradict
contemporary Australian Catholic historiography, but it certainly
complements it. The foundation period of Australian Catholicism
has not been seriously studied since the work of Eris O'Brien,
and the organisational and ministerial aspects of the period have
been neglected. O'Brien's focus is on Therry as the "founder" of
Australian Catholicism. While Therry's importance cannot be
denied, the incoherent nature of his work meant that nothing
permanent was established until the arrival of Ullathorne. Mon-
signor J.J.McGovern and T.L. Suttor were the first historians to
shift attention to the pioneering work of the English Benedic­
tines, and Suttor particularly gave due recognition to the work
of Ullathorne. However, his admiration is more for the priest's
supposed intellectual ability than for his practical achieve­
ment. Also an excellent insight into the community within which
Ullathorne worked is provided by James Waldersee in his work on

er of the Catholic Church in Australiasia. Sydney. 1922. I will
refer to this as O'Brien, Therry with page reference. See also
The Dawn of Catholicism in Australia. Sydney. 1928. Henceforward
O'Brien, Dawn with page reference.

5. McGovern seemed to have a particular distaste for
Ullathorne. His hero was Polding. See his long series of articles
entitled 'John Bede Polding' in the ACR (11(1934) and the follow­
ing issues). For Suttor see Hierarchy and Democracy in Australia
the early Catholic community in New South Wales.6

But no one to this point has tried to see the foundation period up to 1840 as a whole. This is what this thesis attempts to do. I have chosen 1840 as the cut-off point for several reasons. It was the year that Ullathorne finally left New South Wales. It was also the year that transportation to that colony ceased. As convictism declined, free settlement grew and the church no longer acted primarily as a convict chaplaincy. By the end of 1840, Sydney was already a diocese and the church had developed sufficiently for three new dioceses to be mooted: Hobart, Adelaide and Perth. Finally, as a result of the Church Act (1836), Catholicism had become an integral part of the established structure of the colony of New South Wales.

Thus there are good grounds for a serious study of the role of Ullathorne in Australia. He should not be seen in isolation. He was certainly shaped by the forces that surrounded him, especially the unique penal character of New South Wales. But his own creativity also helped to shape the future of the colony through the church whose foundations he laid. He returned to England to carry on a similar function there, leaving others in Australia to build on the foundations he had laid.

Ullathorne is one of those rare persons who has left us with an assessment of his own career. He wrote an autobiography and the larger part of it focuses on his time in Australia. It was not unusual for Victorian ecclesiastical worthies to write histories of their spiritual opinions or to express intimate thoughts and experiences in print - John Henry Newman is a case in point - but it was unusual for a member of the English hierarchy. Ullathorne was exceptional. There was a blunt openness in his personality; he was honestly convinced that his life and experiences were worth recording.

He began to write the book in the early 1860s. It was not intended for publication, but for a group of Dominican sisters. He ceased work on the original manuscript in 1868. It describes his life up until his appointment as Vicar Apostolic of the Western District in 1846. In the last year of his life, while living in retirement at Oscott College, he tried to revise the manuscript.

The Autobiography is like Ullathorne himself: straight-forward

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7. Ullathorne had been instrumental with Margaret Mary Hallahan in establishing the Dominican Congregation of Saint Catherine of Siena at Stone in Staffordshire. See Drane, R.F.: Life of Mother Margaret Mary Hallahan, London. 1929.

8. This is held in the Stone Convent Archives. I am indebted to the Dominican Sisters and especially to Sister Mary Crispin for generous access to the Stone Archives.
and to the point, colorful and always interesting, with acute observations of people and events. After his death both versions came into the possession of the Dominican Sisters. Mother Frances Raphael Drane edited the text drastically, omitting any material which, to her late Victorian sensibilities, seemed scandalous or indecorous. This meant that all of Ullathorne's most trenchant comments, asides and obiter dicta were deleted. It was Drane's revised version that was published in 1891 under the title The Autobiography of Archbishop Ullathorne.9

It was not until 1941 that a full version of the original revised manuscript was available. This was edited by Shane Leslie.10 Leslie was a professional writer and a convert to Catholicism and in 1936 he wrote to the then Dominican Provincial, Mother Imelda Raymond-Barker, asking her permission "to see the famous Autobiography in Mss". He commented "I think Mother Drane kept it very close in her time".11 His intention was "to write a 40pp memoir based on what has appeared and what I can find".12 By 1939 Leslie had read the original manuscript and had requested permission to publish it as it stood. Raymond-Barker sought the advice of Dom-
inican Father Walter Grumbly. He told her:

Certainly the ms must be printed as it stands, it is not fitting to do anything else. I look upon the Abp (sic) almost as a Father of the Church, and I think it would be an impertinence to tamper with it. The past is not our business and no reason exists for S. Leslie to refer to M. Drane’s pruning, cutting or omitting. We can safely and piously presume that the Abp himself agreed to it. Certainly that is the impression M. Drane herself gives in her preface which clears her memory of any impertinent reference...But all the same I do expect that a certain amount of his rugged Grace has been toned down.  

Raymond-Barker also wrote to Archbishop Thomas Williams of Birmingham. She informed him that the Dominicans had lent Leslie the original manuscript and she quoted Leslie's comments on it:

The Autobiography of Archbishop Ullathorne is safe. I have been going through it page by page with the printed volume which I find very different. A great many incidents are omitted and the language is often changed...I am suggesting to Burns + Oates (the publishers) that it would be an interesting thing to reproduce this manuscript as it stands with a careful introduction...It is a real missionary classic and a wonderful revelation of the old man's character. Certainly, reading the MS., it has come upon me like a fresh book.  

It was published in 1941 as From Cabin Bov to Archbishop. Leslie says that he edited the manuscript during blackouts (he was in the Home Guard) and he assured the Dominican Provincial that "the great old man lives again in his own feathers". Ullathorne would have appreciated that!

As a historical source the *Autobiography* is generally accurate.

14. Leslie in Raymond-Barker to Williams, 3 May 1939. Stone Convent Archives, Ullathorne Papers, Box 1.  
15. Leslie to Raymond-Barker, 15 April 1941. Stone Convent Archives, Ullathorne Papers, Box 1.
However, as I will show, Ullathorne's memory failed him on several major points and on various minor details. 16 I will refer to these in detail in the course of the thesis.

16. A detailed comparison of the text of From Cabin Boy to Archbishop with the original manuscript reveals mainly typographical errors and minor misreadings of the text by Leslie. No doubt his editing work was occasionally distracted by the activities of the Luftwaffe!