OUT OF TIME, OUT OF PLACE

*Henry Gregory and the Benedictine Order
in Colonial Australia*

MARY SHANAHAN

THE CATHOLICS in Australia in the early nineteenth century were mainly Irish, and were served by a handful of Irish priests. In 1835 the English Benedictine, John Bede Polding, became first Bishop, and eight years later founded a Benedictine monastery in Sydney, with Henry Gregory as Prior.

English Benedictine authoritarianism, conservatism, and culture were foreign elements imposed on Churchmen whose problems were largely practical and whose thinking was becoming less conservative, following the liberalising changes in Europe. The monastery was therefore founded out of time and out of place, and this book traces its vicissitudes, and those of its Prior, to 1861, when Rome intervened, restoring peace to the troubled diocese by recalling Gregory.

This recall spelt the failure of Benedictinism in colonial Australia. Those interested in the reasons for that failure will find them here, in the author's objective and well documented argument, told with directness and humanity.

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Dorothy McGuinness R.S.C.J.
for the greatness of her trust
and the depth of her understanding

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Abbreviations

<i>A.C.</i>	<i>Australasian Chronicle</i>
<i>A.C.H.S.R.</i>	Australian Catholic Historical Society Records
<i>A.C.R.</i>	<i>Australasian Catholic Record</i>
<i>B.S.A.</i>	Benedictine Sisters' Archives
<i>C.B.A.</i>	Christian Brothers' Archives
<i>D.A.</i>	Downside Archives
<i>F.J.</i>	<i>Freeman's Journal</i>
<i>H.A.A.</i>	Hobart Archdiocesan Archives
<i>H.R.A.</i>	<i>Historical Records of Australia</i>
<i>J.R.A.H.S.</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society</i>
<i>M.L.</i>	Mitchell Library
<i>N.S.W.V.P.</i>	New South Wales, <i>Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council</i>
<i>S.A.A.</i>	Sydney Archdiocesan Archives
<i>S.C.A.</i>	Sisters of Charity Archives
<i>S.M.H.</i>	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>

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Introduction

TOWARDS the end of 1860, the President-General of the English Benedictine Congregation wrote to Archbishop J. B. Polding of Sydney informing him that he was recalling to England, at the express order of the Holy See, Henry Gregory, Benedictine monk and Vicar-General of the Archdiocese of Sydney. To Polding and to Gregory this came as a shock. Who was responsible? Polding had not been consulted as to the wisdom—and justice—of such a move. Gregory was not offered a chance to defend himself against his unknown accusers. The President claimed to be acting on the authority of Rome and yet when Polding remonstrated to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, Cardinal A. Barnabo, he replied that he would pass on his remarks to the Benedictine Superior because it was he who had recalled the Abbot.¹ Gregory left the colony in 1861. In 1862, from his exile in England, he wrote to Rome:

More than one year has now elapsed since, in accordance with instructions received from Rome, the President General of the English Benedictine Congregation, of which I am a professed member, recalled me to Europe. I have obeyed the summons, and have for some months, ever since my arrival in England, been residing in a conventual house of our Order. Having held in Sydney the office of Vicar-General to the Archbishop and of Abbot to the Cathedral Abbey, and having laboured for more than 25 years in the service of that Archdiocese, it has been impossible for me to regard the order to return to England in any other light than as a grave step which would not have been taken unless charges had been brought against me which would make my recall appear advisable and necessary. That such charges have been brought I am most fully aware and as I am convinced that the want of an opportunity to answer them will inflict injury upon the Archbishop and the Church of Sydney, I have been eager to make a visit to the shrine of the Apostles in order that I might perform the duty which it is impossible to perform except by such a visit. When I was on the point of commencing a journey to the Holy See, I received intimation from the President-General of our Congregation that my

¹ Polding to Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, 19 Jan. 1861, S.A.A.

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presence was considered unacceptable at Rome, and I have waited many months in patience, expecting to receive some communication from the Mistress and Mother of the Churches which would enable me to know how to act with reference to the charges urged against me.

What these charges are I know only in a very vague and indeterminate manner, and as far as I can understand them the facts and circumstances have not been represented with truth and justice. I therefore earnestly crave that what St Paul demanded may be accorded to me, and that I may not be condemned without knowing the accusations which have been brought against me.²

Removed without a reason after twenty-five years of service and then denied the right to come in person to Rome to justify his conduct during those twenty-five years, Gregory must have felt the forces at work against him were certainly powerful at Rome. His recall would always remain a mystery to his friends, for the cause was beyond the merely personal, though Gregory was aware that he had been his own greatest enemy. 'But I do feel', he confided to Polding, 'I am far more gentle than many who wear a smile on their countenance while they are swearing in their hearts.'³ The President-General of his Congregation claimed he was simply obeying the command of Propaganda in recalling him, while the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda professed a respect and liking for him and intimated that he was obliged to consent to his recall. Why, then, was he recalled? 'Scapegoat' may be too strong a word, but the implication, at least, is true—Gregory bore the brunt of the failure of the Benedictine Order to win an established place in the Church and in the colonial society of New South Wales in the middle of the nineteenth century.

The causes of this failure can be attributed both to the Benedictine Congregation and to the structure of the Catholic colonial society. The attitude of the English branch of the Congregation to its offspring in the colony and the disfavour shown to the Congregation in Rome from the very beginning of the century are factors which cannot be disregarded in assessing the Benedictine Congregation in the colony. Nor can we disregard the fact that the majority of Catholics in New South Wales were Irish, mostly either convicts or poor emigrants who sought solace, strength, and guidance in the Church, or more specifically in its Irish priests, most of whom, like

² Gregory to unnamed recipient (Barnabo?), c. 1862, D.A.

³ Gregory to Polding, 23 July 1861, S.A.A.

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themselves, were sons of the soil who lived the life of the people. Impose on this the picture of an English Benedictine monk who never lost his pronounced English accent or his commanding English ways, and it is not so difficult to understand why Rome was so ready to look at the scene from one angle only and to punish a man who had given twenty-five years of devoted service to the Church in New South Wales.

The English Benedictine Congregation and the Australian Mission

UNTIL the arrival of its first bishop in 1835, the Catholic Church in the colony of New South Wales had been first under the jurisdiction of the Vicar-Apostolic of the London District, and from 1819 under that of the Bishop of Mauritius, whose control was as remote as the distance would signify. Efforts to have Catholic chaplains appointed to the colony were unsuccessful. In 1816 Rome, urged on by some Irish priests, one of whom had a brother in the colony, took the curious step of appointing a 'Prefect to Botany Bay' without consulting the Vicar-Apostolic of London, Dr W. Poynter. The British government, however, did not sanction the appointment, and Father Jeremiah O'Flynn, who had paid his own passage out, was ignominiously returned. His efforts aroused new interest in the fate of Catholics in the colonies, and at this time the settlers of the Cape of Good Hope were pressing for the services of a priest. Poynter pressed the matter and the government consented, provided he was properly qualified and a subject of His Majesty. The same restriction was made for the island of Mauritius, which had been ceded to Britain by France in 1810, but which had remained under the spiritual jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Paris. In deference to these wishes, Rome established the Mission of the Cape of Good Hope, which included Mauritius, New Holland, and the islands in the Pacific in its territory, and offered it to the English Benedictine Congregation. Without reference to that Congregation, it appointed Bede Slater, a young Benedictine then in Rome, as its first bishop. Because they did not have sufficient members, the Benedictines refused the offer. The British government would not allow the bishop to reside at the Cape because, in conquered Dutch territory, the Reformed Church retained its special place, but proposed instead that his bishopric be at Mauritius. Rome agreed, and so Bishop Slater, but not the English Benedictine Congregation, was established

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there.¹ His episcopate ended in disaster—he died on his way to England, fleeing from the censures of Rome and the debts he had accumulated. Slater was succeeded by another Benedictine of the English Congregation, Dom Placid Morris, who dreamed of establishing a Benedictine monastery on the island. The best he could do, however, was to recruit as many of his fellow Benedictines as he could to serve as missionaries. One of these, a young man of twenty-seven, he sent as his Vicar-General to New South Wales in response to an appeal from the British government, which had no official of the Church to deal with in the colony and which was finding it very difficult to have any dealings at all with the chaplain, Father J. Therry, who, with Father P. Conolly, had been appointed by the government in 1819.

The fate of Morris was similar to that of Slater. Reports were reaching Rome of his misgovernment. Many of these were exaggerated, but there was a basis of truth, as the representative of the English Benedictine Congregation in Rome, Father Bernard Collier, was forced to admit. Rome acted by removing the bishop from his office, as his justification of his conduct never reached the Roman authorities. All this, of course, reflected seriously on the English Benedictine Congregation, though they had never accepted the responsibility of the mission and had had nothing to do with the naming of either Slater or Morris to the bishopric. The feeling building up against the English Benedictine Congregation in Rome was clearly reflected in the reports sent by Collier to his President-General in England.

I . . . drew up a document addressed to His Eminence shewing that the evil consequences of Dr. Morris' appointment could not in fairness be attributed to our Congregation, the Superiors of which were never consulted about presenting him to Propaganda, and requesting that the President might be allowed to present three names of subjects whom he might know to be capable and worthy of the office. Early this morning I went again to see Monsignor Mai and the Card. Prefect to know if I might write to you for that purpose. His Eminence answered: 'Write if you please, but I intend myself to write to the President about this matter, as you say that you know there are subjects in your Congⁿ fit for the office.' I have however some doubts whether His Eminence will write or not; for I see very plainly that Monsignor Mai wishes to take that mission from the Benedictines & to give it to others . . . I am

¹ See E. M. O'Brien, *The Dawn of Catholicism in Australia*, Vol. I, especially pp. 58-66.

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extremely anxious to preserve the Mauritius for the Congregation. I foresee that it cannot be preserved unless you make a presentation of names to the Card. Prefect; and I have great reason to fear that Mons^{gr} Mai will dissuade His Eminence from asking for a presentation . . . I have convinced the Card. Pref that no blame can be attached to our Congregⁿ for what Dr. Morris may have done and he told me this day that it was not our fault: 'It is a misfortune,' he said, that Mons^{gr} Morris was ever appointed by my predecessor; but had I been in his place I might have made the same mistake. Mons^{gr} Mai told a certain person this week (& that person told it to me) that he had only a poor opinion of the English Benedictines. The only reason can be because he judges of all by poor Dr. Slater, Dr. Morris and Dr. Baines.²

The English Benedictines had brought some of this trouble on themselves. In 1830 two Benedictines from Downside, one of them the future Bishop T. J. Brown, were in Rome to uphold the cause of Downside against the charges of Dr P. A. Baines, Bishop of the Western District of England and a one-time member of the English Benedictine community of Ampleforth. Baines wanted Downside to close its school and to train only candidates for the priesthood—in other words, to become the episcopal seminary. Downside refused. To oust the monks, Baines made out a case against the canonical establishment of the English Benedictine houses. When he was beaten on this score by the efforts of Father Brown and his companion, Baines carried the battle into the monastery itself and withdrew from the monks the faculties they held under him as Bishop. Rome now decided he had gone too far and forced him to retreat. Though Baines made his peace with the monks of Downside—he is now buried in a place of honour in the sanctuary of their Church—Rome did not easily lose its impression of the English Benedictine Congregation. Unfavourable reports of its work kept coming in to Propaganda. Collier could write to Brown two years after the dismissal of Morris:

I have got both good & bad news to give you this time; you shall have the bad first. You know that Propag^{da} is at all times desirous of gaining information about the state of Catholicity & the conduct of the clergy in distant countries & the new measures in contemplation for England has made the Sacred Congregation still more anxious upon that point. It is right & proper that they sh^d be accurately informed, but this very desire, laudable as it is, often leads them into error from their not knowing how to obtain authentic information & from their believing

² Collier to President-General, 12 March 1837, D.A.

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anything that is asserted. From some quarter bad accounts have been lately given them of the clergy in general, but particularly of the Benedictines. It is stated that we are more dissipated and more worldly than any other portion of the clergy; that our congregations are served with less regularity & less care than any others; that there is less frequenting the Sacraments & less piety observable in our missions than anywhere else. Even our principles are suspected & the word *Jansenism* was mentioned to me. Thro' what corrupt channel Propag^{da} has received these calumnies I cannot trace; I do not think they come *ostensibly* (tho' very likely *secretly*) from the secular clergy; for I was told that the information proceeded from men who had nothing whatever to do with any part of the clergy either secular or regular, & that they were individuals who cl^d not belong to any party . . . The object assuredly is to prevent us from obtaining at this important moment when a change is to take place in the ecclesiastical government of England, any favourable concessions or any kind of support from Propag^{da}.³

It is necessary to look closely into the reasons why the English Benedictines should have created this antagonism, not only to individual members, but to the Congregation as a whole. Was it merely, as Collier suggested, that Rome judged the Congregation solely on the merits or demerits of Slater, Morris, and Baines? Or was it something more fundamental which touched the Congregation as a whole?

The Benedictines had been driven from England in the sixteenth century. A number of them belonging to Benedictine houses abroad assembled at Douay and founded there the school and monastery of St Gregory. This soon became the leading English school abroad, at which the sons of the Catholic nobility were educated. Another group of English Benedictines established themselves at Dieulouard in Lorraine, founding there the monastery of St Laurence. At the time of the French Revolution the monks of both communities were driven from France and given shelter in England by an alumnus of St Gregory's, Sir Edward Smythe.⁴ Eventually the groups established themselves independently, St Laurence's at Ampleforth and St Gregory's at Downside, and there conducted schools on the same lines as at Douay and Dieulouard. This meant that in general they were dealing with the upper stratum of society, and that in consequence most of the vocations to the Congregation were being drawn

³ 21 Nov. 1839, D.A.

⁴ H. Van Zeller, *Downside By and Large*, pp. 11-25.

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from this same class.⁵ A consciousness of 'the old school tie' did not prevent them from being good monks and from doing good work in the education of the boys in their schools. But in their work in the hard-pressed missions of England—work in which the Benedictines had been engaged since the penal times—they were judged differently. Here they were in touch with the ordinary person and with the diocesan clergy; neither group really understood their way of life, or, more importantly, their way of thinking. Writing in 1858 to the General Chapter of the English Benedictines, Brown, then Bishop of Newport, referred to this unsympathetic feeling, especially in a prelate in close attendance upon the Pope. He blamed this misunderstanding on the laxity of the mission priests with regard to poverty. 'There is no charge against the E.B.C. [English Benedictine Congregation] so general, and so injurious to them, in which their opponents triumph, . . . as their alleged neglect of their vow of poverty'.⁶ In Mauritius the same complaints were made against Slater and Morris as were made against their brothers in England—a too worldly spirit; too much time spent in the company of the Governor at the expense of their priestly duties and of the rights of their clergy. This feeling persisted in England. In Liverpool after Gregory's recall it was stated that 'nothing can convince the priests but that Dr. Gregory was doing some injustices in Australia, simply because he was a *Benedictine*'.⁷ There were undoubtedly Benedictines who failed to live up to what they professed. There were also, undoubtedly, many who were condemned because they were misunderstood.

The whole organisation of the English Benedictine Congregation was geared to meet the needs of past times. A President-General who had many of the powers of the Generals of more modern Orders ruled the Congregation. He was assisted by four 'Definitors of the Regimen' or Councillors. The missions were confided to the Congregation as a whole and not to particular monasteries. They were controlled by two Provincials, one at York, the other at Canterbury, who virtually had complete control over the monks, no matter to what monastery they belonged, as any monk, on the request of the Provincial, could be ordered to leave his monastery and take up

⁵ William Ullathorne, the first Benedictine to come to New South Wales, was a notable exception.

⁶ Brown to General Chapter, 3 July 1858, quoted in B. Whelan, *History of Belmont Abbey*, p. 43.

⁷ O'Donovan to Walsh, 26 March (undated, but possibly 1866), D.A.

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mission work. All this was in contrast to the Benedictine system of autonomous monasteries with the monk subject to the abbot of his particular monastery. The monasteries were being drained to feed the missions. Up till the sending of Bishop Slater to Mauritius these missions were confined to England—now the colonies were to make their claims.

The English Benedictine Congregation, conscious of the criticism levelled against it, particularly after the failure of Slater and Morris, and eager to play a prominent part in the Catholic life that was re-awakening in England, was against sending its most useful subjects to missions abroad. John Bede Polding⁸ of Downside had been offered the bishopric of Madras, but on the advice of Brown, then Prior of Downside, had refused. In the same year another Benedictine from Downside, William Ullathorne, landed in Van Diemen's Land on his way to take up his appointment as Vicar-General of New South Wales. He was to have gone to Mauritius with Morris, but was sent instead to the distant New South Wales. Ullathorne was not long in the colony before he realised its need for a resident bishop. In Van Diemen's Land there was one priest, Father P. Conolly, who had gone to the colony in 1821 and who had not seen another priest from that time until Ullathorne arrived in 1833. In New South Wales he found three priests already at work—Father Joseph Therry, an Irishman who had laboured in the colony since 1820, Father J. V. Dowling, in the colony from 1831, and Father John McEncroe, also Irish, who had come to Australia from Ireland in 1832. Father Dowling was stationed at Windsor. Ullathorne himself can best describe his meeting with the other two.

I made it a point of policy not to send any previous notice of my coming to Sydney, where I arrived in the month of February, 1833. I walked up straight to the priest's residence, and there I found a grave and experienced priest in Father McEncroe . . . From him I learnt a good deal of how things stood. Father Therry had gone to Parramatta, but quickly hearing of the arrival of another priest, returned that evening . . . I looked so youthful that the first language of Father Therry . . . was naturally patronising; but after dinner I produced the document appointing me Vicar-General, with jurisdiction over the whole of New South Wales, as well as the rest of New Holland, after reading which Father Therry immediately went on his knees. This act

⁸ In the Order he was known as Dom Bede.

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of obedience and submission gave me great relief. I felt that he was a truly religious man, and that half the difficulty was over . . . Father Therry was quite an exceptional character. He was truly religious, never omitting to say Mass daily, even in difficult circumstances . . . He was of a highly sensitive temperament, and readily took offence, but was ready soon after to make reparation. He was full of zeal, but wanting in tact, so that he repeatedly got into trouble with the Government, and sometimes with the successive ecclesiastical authorities.⁹

At the time of Ullathorne's arrival, Therry was under a ban of suspension, which meant he was deprived of his salary and refused his status as official Catholic chaplain. He had fought against increasing Anglican ascendancy in the colony and against the laws which forbade him to instruct the Catholic children in the Orphanage. He fought as an Irishman. His language to the government was straight and fiercely to the point, and the government did not like dealing with such a man. Darling wrote of him to the Colonial Office:

Mr. Therry is a man of strong feelings and not much discretion. He is evidently disposed to be troublesome, and, constituted as this community is, might be dangerous . . . I would beg to point out that, in selecting a Catholic Priest for this Colony, it is most important that an Englishman should have the preference, the Catholics here being, I believe, nearly all Irish.¹⁰

Even the liberal-minded Bourke who replaced Darling as Governor in 1831 was exasperated by his ways. 'He is a goose', he exclaimed to Ullathorne. 'Why will he always be meddling?'¹¹

On the question of education Therry had a right to meddle. He tried to set up a society to make the Catholic schools independent of the monopolising jurisdiction of the Church of England authorities, but his hastily conceived plan was not practicable and only succeeded in provoking greater resentment. Three Catholic schools already received government grants. Therry's successor as official chaplain, Father Daniel Power, tried unsuccessfully to get an extension of government support to all Catholic schools in the form of a fixed salary for teachers, as the three schools receiving grants were not sufficient to meet the needs of all the Catholic children in the colony. In 1833 the Charter which had given security to the Anglican schools was revoked by Governor Bourke and all denominations were in

⁹ W. B. Ullathorne, *Autobiography*, p. 65.

¹⁰ *H.R.A.*, Ser. I, Vol. XII, p. 543.

¹¹ Ullathorne, *From Cabin Boy to Archbishop*, p. 163.

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the same dependent category. Bourke's plan for the schools followed the lines of the Irish national system. Catholics and Protestants were to receive together their ordinary secular instruction plus a general religious instruction of selected Scripture readings. In addition the ministers of religion would give instruction separately to the members of their denomination. When it was proposed in 1836 the Catholics were inclined to support this system as the Irish bishops had approved of it, and it gave them a better deal than they had had under the Anglican ascendancy. The Protestants, under Bishop W. G. Broughton's leadership, were opposed to it on the grounds that control of education would be removed from the Church. Bourke had to concede defeat. By his Church Act of 1836, he was obliged to establish a denominational system of education, leaving control in the hands of the various Churches and giving them a subsidy to carry on their work.¹²

By the same Act he gained equal rights with Anglicans for Catholics and Presbyterians regarding funds for erection of churches and stipends for ministers. Ullathorne's great desire was for more priests to minister to the wants of the growing number of Catholics, now about one-fifth of the population, and a sure means of support made this a possibility. But he also saw another need—that a bishop was required for Australia.

I had written some time before to Bishop Morris in the Mauritius, by one of the very few ships that ever went to that island, [he wrote] and had explained to him the very unsatisfactory state of things in Van Diemen's Land. I had also sent to him certain cases requiring dispensations, to which my special faculties did not extend. In reply I received a letter, stating that he was sending another priest to Van Diemen's Land, and that the faculties would come by another letter. The letter never came or the priest either . . . Under the clear conviction that so large a responsibility required the immediate superintendence of a bishop, I wrote to the Superiors at Downside, explained the case, mentioned the application I had made to the Home Government for additional priests, and urged them to move for the appointment of a Bishop of Sydney.¹³

Accordingly in 1834 the Master of Novices of Downside, Dom Bede Polding, was appointed Vicar-Apostolic of New South Wales and Bishop of Hiero-Caesarea (for the Vicariate of New Holland

¹² R. Fogarty, *Catholic Education in Australia 1806-1950*, Vol. I, pp. 20-31.

¹³ Ullathorne, *Autobiography*, pp. 87-8.

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and Van Diemen's Land). The Father President of the Benedictines wrote to a fellow Benedictine in 1834:

Polding has received his appointment as Vicar-Apostolic of New South Wales . . . We are weakening ourselves at home to serve missions abroad. And this to oblige Dr. Bramston who wants to rid himself of the solicitude which these foreign missions bring to him,—a Bishop, too, who would disdainfully refuse to give one of our subjects an appointment to a chapel in London! Downside is in great trouble about this appointment. Mr. Brown [Prior of Downside] is much hurt and justly, for he never knew of the negotiation until it was brought to a termination. It was no secret here, but I troubled my head very little about it, as I never conceived that Rome would have offered a Bishopric again to such a vacillating mind.¹⁴

The last sentence refers to Polding's appointment to the bishopric of Madras, India, in 1832.

I yielded a most reluctant consent to the appointment of Madras [he had written to Father [later Bishop] Brown, then in Rome]. Alas! that I ever did so! My mind has been ever since in a state of the utmost agitation worked up to phrensy almost by the dread of the dangers to be encountered: above all by a sense of my own weakness and vacillation of which I have given in this business most abundant proof.¹⁵

He entreated to be freed of the responsibility he had accepted, and his entreaties bore fruit. He had settled down to his life at Downside until Father Ullathorne's plea to his Father President, Dr J. Birdsall, led to the offer to Rome to send out Benedictines to New South Wales to help Father Ullathorne, and to the recommendation that one of them be made a bishop. This decision was not without opposition from members of the Congregation, notably the Prior of Downside. The measure to be adopted was pregnant with evils,¹⁶ he maintained; the policy of the antagonistic prelates at Rome was to weaken the Congregation in England by sending its best men abroad. However, Polding had accepted before Brown was fully apprised of the affair. His lifelong interest in the Australian mission

¹⁴ H. N. Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, Vol. I, pp. 232-3. Birt has a definite pro-Benedictine bias which must be noted when assessing his judgments. His account is marred, too, by his ignorance of colonial history in its general aspects.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

¹⁶ Brown to Marsh, 2 May 1834, D.A.

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and his conviction that he would one day go to Sydney helped him to overcome his former indecision.¹⁷

Before his departure for his bishopric, Polding busied himself in England gathering recruits and resources for his mission. He finally sailed on 27 March 1835, taking with him four fellow Benedictines, one a priest, the Reverend Ambrose Cotham, and three students for the priesthood, Brothers Bede Sumner, J. B. Spencer, and Henry Gregory Gregory. Two other priests, two catechists, and a young boy completed the party.

Thus was laid the foundation of the Benedictine Order in Australia, though no official setting up of the Congregation took place until 1843. Polding, like Ullathorne, dreamed of making the Australian mission Benedictine, and in 1834 applied to the President to set up his diocese as a third mission of the Congregation, to be serviced by priests from the two established missions in England. The General Chapter rejected his proposal, but Polding held to his ideal. When Ullathorne went to Europe in 1837 to recruit more priests for Australia, he obtained permission from Rome to make a Benedictine foundation which would be free of control of the English Congregation. As Ullathorne wrote to Brown:

On the proposed connection between our Body in England and Australia, on mature deliberation, it appears to me . . . impossible to have a practical connection of *Government* between the two countries, considering that the space of twelve months must be allowed for any mutual communication . . . It appears to me, then, . . . that a filiation, with its own internal structure of government, the Bishop Provincial, with due checks, is the only feasible and prudential plan.¹⁸

Ullathorne had sent ahead of him to Australia eleven priests, all Irish, and some ecclesiastical students and schoolteachers; one of the teachers was a young Scot, W. A. Duncan, a convert to Catholicism, who was one day to take an active part in the Catholic affairs of the colony. Accompanying Ullathorne himself were three Irish priests, five Irish ecclesiastical students, and five Irish Sisters of Charity. With him came also the rescript for the setting up of the first Benedictine monastery. Ullathorne was not over-optimistic about the success of the new foundation. He had urged the appointment of Thomas Heptonstall, cousin of Polding and his agent in England, to the

¹⁷ Birt, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 233-6.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 347.

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Australian mission, and claimed that this was the '*sine qua non* condition of our being able to establish a regular body in Australia', but Heptonstall was not given permission to depart.

The refusal of Mr. Heptonstall by his Provincial [commented Ullathorne in a letter to Brown over a year later] has destroyed my prospect of Benedictinising the Colony—a plan I thought both feasible and desirable, as did Rome . . . A Scheme is on foot, urged by Rome, for forming a Seminary, or adding largely to Maynooth, for the supply of the colonies: and I see a disposition in one or two to bring the Colonies under the Irish Hierarchy.¹⁹

The same thoughts are expressed in another letter to Dr Brown.

With all this failure in England, the colony will become, of course, an Irish mission, and perhaps ought to be so . . . To do anything Benedictine in the colony is now out of the question. . . .²⁰

Ullathorne had referred to the fact that his own position in the colony would be affected by such a situation. He felt that he would need to lay aside his Benedictine way of life and become one of the secular clergy in order to be really part of the mission, and he felt that this would benefit neither himself nor others. The alternative left to him was to return to England. For two more years he laboured in Australia, resigning his position as Vicar-General and notifying the Bishop of his departure, then taking up again his position on the earnest entreaty of Bishop and priests. However, he never really settled down into his old position, feeling that the Irish clergy, influential with the Bishop, had already begun that 'take-over' of Australian affairs which he envisaged when, in his eyes, the Benedictine project had failed before it began. When the Bishop, then, decided to go to Europe himself to recruit more missionaries, Ullathorne went with him and said farewell to Australia, but not entirely to Australian ecclesiastical affairs. He was succeeded as Vicar-General by an Irish priest, Father Francis Murphy.

¹⁹ 2 Aug. 1838, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 372.

²⁰ 11 July 1838, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 370.

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IN the formation of the Catholic Church in the colony, every year can be marked as important, but the year 1840 stands out as decisive. In that year Polding, Ullathorne, and Gregory sailed for Europe, leaving the diocese in the hands of an Irish priest and open to the Irish influence that Polding was determined to fight. Not that he was against all things Irish—Ullathorne found him too susceptible to the influence of Irish priests at this time—but he wanted to establish the Church on a Catholic, not a national, basis and to make it a centre of culture and learning, for, to Polding, religion and culture went hand in hand. He saw the establishment of the Benedictine Order in the colony as a means not only of safeguarding missionary priests by the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience from the dangers inherent in their lives, but of building up a centre of culture where, in the monastic church, the liturgy would be carried out in all its solemnity and beauty and where, in time, men could devote themselves to learning and a study of the fine arts.

Amongst the indirect means by which the Divine Blessing may render it possible to elevate and refine both the intellectual and religious perceptions of this people [stated a report made to Rome in 1850] may be reckoned as not the least influential, the presence of the Benedictine Community in Sydney. The people of this city and their friends who visit them from the interior, that is to say, nearly the whole population of the Colony, have before them constantly the spectacle of the religious life, the unceasing daily round of Divine Office, and the instructive and striking ceremonials which take place in the progress of a monastic institute.¹

This was surely a noble dream which had its roots in the great monastic traditions of the past, but how far did it fit into the pattern of colonial society? For the furtherance and maintenance of culture and scholarship, Polding was fighting against tremendous odds. An immigration report of 1855 declared that of the 5,218 immi-

¹ Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, Vol. II, p. 173.

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grants from Ireland, 1,830 could not read and 1,328 could not write. Figures in the same report also show that a fairly high percentage of the assisted immigrants from England and Scotland were illiterate. Of the 7,492 immigrants from England, 2,305 could not read and 1,223 could not write.² Few of the convicts who had come out earlier were in a better intellectual position. The majority had struggled for survival at home; they were to continue that struggle once emancipated in their new home. The acquisition of scholarship was the least of their worries. For their children they showed a keenness for education, or more correctly, for the acquisition of skills, but nothing that savoured of the higher forms of learning that the Benedictines were offering at their academy at Lyndhurst. This school was to turn out young men who were among the first to take out higher degrees in the University of Sydney and to become prominent members of the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council;³ men who were accepted and respected for their learning and culture. Lyndhurst, however, had a struggle to survive and was forced to amend its program of studies to make it acceptable to a greater number who wanted an immediate gain for their learning. It was eventually closed by Polding's successor, Roger Vaughan, in 1877, mainly because of the difficulty of supporting it financially as numbers in attendance had dropped. Vaughan, too, differed from Polding in his concept of Benedictinism and of its place in the Church of the late nineteenth century.

Polding's vision belonged to the Middle Ages, and he saw the Order fulfilling the same role in the colony as it had done in Europe centuries before. Polding himself was a man whose love for the poor and afflicted was so real that he would willingly have resigned the archbishopric of Sydney to go to Van Diemen's Land because it was still at the time a convict colony; a man whose zeal for souls was so great that it shone through all he did and, in spite of great opposition, made him respected and even loved.

The Benedictines in the colony were but a handful, too few and in some cases too incompetent to carry out the dream of the Archbishop. The English Benedictine community, as has been seen, refused to supply the colonial monastery with men who could

² *N.S.W.V.P.*, 1856-7, Appendix to Report from Immigration Agent, 1855.

³ W. Edmunds, M.L.A.; John Lane Mullins, M.L.C.; T. Leary, M.L.A.; T. Butler, Professor of Latin at Sydney University, was also an alumnus.

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carry out this dream, and the Archbishop was forced to seek aid from Ireland, the home country of most of his flock. There had been Irish priests in the colony before the Benedictines arrived. A steady stream followed the coming of Polding, most of these early missionaries recruited by Ullathorne. Zealous men who had sacrificed all to come to the infamous Botany Bay, they proved themselves devoted and capable missionaries. Some came as students, and a seminary to further their studies was established under the direction of Father Charles Lovat, who was sent from England for the purpose. The ordained priests were, for the most part, sent to the country—Windsor, Yass, Goulburn, Maitland, Bathurst. They spent days on horseback visiting their parishioners and had really little thought for themselves. The people they cared for in those early days were simple folk whose faith was strong and whose courage helped them to battle against tremendous odds. Their priests were their equal—Fathers John Rigney, John Fitzpatrick, Michael Brennan, John Lynch, Edmund Mahony. They had all come out in 1838 and soon made themselves part of the Australian picture.

But they and the men—clerical and lay—who came after them had been formed by the history of their country, and it is essential to know something of this history if we are to understand them and their attitude to Australia and the Australian Church.

In 1691 at the Battle of Limerick the Irish supporters of James surrendered to William. British rule was firmly established in Ireland, with an Irish Parliament composed of members of the Protestant minority. This Parliament, fearful of the Roman Catholic majority, took until 1697 to ratify the Treaty of Limerick, and then did so in modified form, completely disregarding the first article, which stated that 'the Roman Catholics of this Kingdom shall enjoy such privileges in the exercise of their religion as are consistent with the laws of Ireland'.⁴ Even before this date the Irish Parliament had embarked on a series of penal laws, all aimed to reduce the power and social prestige of Catholics. About one million acres of land were confiscated, leaving only one-seventh of the kingdom in the hands of Catholic landlords. No Catholic child could be sent abroad to be educated. These laws were further extended under Queen Anne, and in 1704, by a Bill to prevent the further growth of popery, Irish Catholics were prevented from acquiring land from a Protestant by

⁴ J. C. Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland, 1603-1923*, p. 148.

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inheritance or by marriage and from bequeathing their land by will. On the death of a Catholic landlord, his estate had to be divided equally among his sons, unless the elder professed the Protestant faith, in which case he acquired the whole. As a result of these laws the monopoly of land power passed into the hands of the Protestants, who already enjoyed the monopoly of political power.

In Ireland, then, there was the struggle of Irish Protestant against Irish Catholic. There was also the struggle of Irish Parliament against English Parliament. The Irish Protestant at first saw the Irish Parliament as a means of defending himself against the Catholic majority and also as the means of obtaining the same rights as his fellow-countrymen in England. In general, they were not interested in establishing a separate national existence. They wanted the rights of Englishmen in Ireland. But when the English Parliament in 1699 passed a law prohibiting the export of Irish woollen goods in order to safeguard the infant woollen industry of England, the Irish naturally feared that anything of theirs which rivalled British interests would meet with similar treatment. Irish Protestant nationalism centred round the crucial point of the right of the English Parliament to dictate to that of the Irish.

Irish trade was greatly restricted by the British move and the country was forced to rely on agriculture. The landlord was virtually the master of most people's existence. The absentee landlord leased his land to a middleman, who subdivided it, charged exorbitant rents, and gave no security of tenure. Money was needed to put into the land, and much of the wealth was now in the hands of Roman Catholic merchants. Parliament repealed many of the penal laws and restored to Catholics the right to acquire, inherit, and bequeath land. An economic necessity had brought to Catholics a greater degree of religious toleration, but it did not give them any political rights.

Religious equality became bound up with the national cause. The merging of nationalist, political, economic, and religious issues became the characteristic of Irish history. The majority, struggling for their rights against the minority, saw everything as one. Fidelity to the Catholic religion had deprived the people of their political and economic rights and the nation of its right to govern itself. Any attempt to regain one or the other could be, and was, given religious significance.

The young Protestant barrister, Wolfe Tone, founded the Society

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of United Irishmen to work for religious equality and the reform of Parliament. The uprisings of 1798, inspired by this Society, became for many of the Catholic participants a crusade against the Protestants, and the leadership of some by Catholic clergy gave to them all a religious significance. The union of the two Parliaments followed this unrest. The Protestants accepted it through fear of the growing power of the Catholic majority. The Catholics accepted it because of the belief that emancipation would speedily follow. The failure of the English to carry this through caused a resentment and bitterness in the Irish and made emancipation, and then repeal, the focal point of their national and religious hopes and aspirations. Daniel O'Connell made emancipation a nationalist movement by forming a Catholic Association with a subscription of a penny a month. 'The Catholic rent', as it was called, became, in the words of William Gregory, Under-Secretary in Ireland, 'the most efficient mode that could be devised for opening direct communication between the Popish Parliament [i.e. the Committee of the Catholic Association] and the whole mass of the popish population'.⁵ Every member felt the movement was of his doing and closely bound with his own well-being. Emancipation was to restore to them not only political rights, but the freedom and equality of opportunity that had been denied them so long. For the Irish Protestants their struggle against the Irish Catholics was of greater import than their struggle for a degree of independence from England. It was the Irish Catholic who took up the nationalist cry.

Emmet Larkin has said that there were in Ireland in the nineteenth century two churches and two states—a Roman and an Irish Catholic Church and a British and an Irish state—all in a highly complex interrelationship.⁶ We have seen something of the two states. The two churches played an equally important part in the formation of the men who served them.

One of the penal laws imposed by the Irish Parliament before 1697 banished the bishops and regular clergy from the country and left the secular clergy to minister to the people. The priest became, with the landlord, the chief authority in the town. All power became centred in him. Under the old régime of non-interference, and with

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

⁶ 'Church and State in Ireland in the Nineteenth Century', *Church History*, Vol. 31, 1962, p. 294.

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priests trained abroad, this presented no great difficulty. But when Irish priests began to be trained from 1795 in their own Maynooth Seminary, their outlook was different. They were more conscious of their rights as British citizens and no longer afraid of political intervention. The needs of their people were their needs and they would help to gain them. Stories are many of clerical interference in elections and of their methods of ensuring that a liberal candidate who favoured emancipation was elected.⁷ And though, as J. H. Whyte claims, it seems to have been on the whole true that 'the Irish clergy led their flock only in the direction that they wanted to go', and that 'the priests appeared all-powerful so long as their views coincided with those of the electors',⁸ the fact remains that the priest did play this role in relation to his people and that it was not questioned as such by the people. The granting of emancipation itself in 1829 was the result of a mass organisation of the tenantry against their landlords, leading to the defeat of hostile candidates. Though the inspiration came from a layman, it was the priests who acted as his agents. After emancipation, the Catholic hierarchy decided that clerics should return to their former policy of non-interference in politics. The agitation for repeal in the 1840s brought them back into the field. The bishops had not revoked their decree. The priests justified themselves on the grounds that the issue was a moral one; that they were bound in the name of justice to assist any attempt to overthrow an oppressive government. Whyte comments that there may well have been another motive—fear of losing popularity with the people. The Archbishop of Armagh wrote to Rome, 'the greatest prudence is necessary lest we offend a faithful people by an unexpected separation from them'.⁹

The power of the clergy was not only exercised against the opponents of religious toleration. It was used within the Church itself. In 1823 an Irish priest was writing to his agent in Rome to ensure the nomination of his candidate for a vacant bishopric. According to custom three names had been submitted by the priests of the diocese. These were commented on by the provincial bishops and then sent to Rome. When it was rumoured that the first choice of the priests

⁷ J. H. Whyte, 'The Influence of the Catholic Clergy on Elections in Nineteenth Century Ireland', *English Historical Review*, Vol. 75, 1960, p. 240.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

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might not be appointed, one, who signed himself 'a member of the priests' committee', wrote three letters completely undermining the position of the other two. None of his statements is based on historical fact. His candidate was elected.

The Catholic Church in Ireland needed to be reformed—not only because of clergy who had assumed prerogatives beyond their power, but also because of clergy who failed to fulfil their priestly duties. Both the bishops who set about this reform and the priests who resisted them constantly appealed to Rome for support. By so doing they brought on themselves the thing they wanted least—an increase of Roman authority in the Irish Church. The climax came with the appointment of Paul Cullen, first as Bishop of Armagh, then as Archbishop and later as Cardinal of Dublin. He had been brought up in the school of Rome, completing his studies at Propaganda College in Rome, becoming Rector of the Irish College there, and finally Rector of Propaganda College itself. He was held in the highest esteem in Rome, and even when he was resident there his advice was taken for the nomination of bishops. Under his influence papal power in Ireland was consolidated.¹⁰

Yet, as Emmet Larkin points out, the greatest problem faced by the Irish Church was not reform, or finance, papal authority, or British rule, but nationalism.¹¹ There were two forces fighting for national freedom—a constitutional force and a revolutionary one. The Church chose to support the constitutional force, and had to meet its demands. Before the famine the impecunious state of the Church caused it to seek support in the one place possible—the British government. Her constitutional allies demanded that the temporal interests of the Church take second place to the national interest of repeal. Nor would they accept Roman meddling in the British interest in Irish affairs.

The Irish historical situation was a complex one—religion allied to nationalism and nationalism in conflict with Catholicism. The Irish men, clergy and laity, who came to early nineteenth-century New South Wales had been formed by this very complexity. It was a part of their being. Ireland, it has been said, is a country without

¹⁰ E. R. Norman, *The Catholic Church and Ireland in the Age of Rebellion*, p. 5.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 305.

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history, 'for all the evils of the past were re-lived as though contemporary events'.¹²

The pattern had been similar wherever the Irish had settled in large numbers.¹³ In the United States an Irish priest, William Hogan, led what was to be one of the greatest schisms of the American Church. Hoganism became a by-word in the Church for the laity's drive for greater power in its government. It differed from similar schisms in that it marked a new stage in lay trusteeism. Hogan would have yielded to the Bishop, except that the trustees would not permit him to do so.¹⁴

Closely allied with Hoganism was Haroldism, deriving from another Irish priest, William Vincent Harold, who became disgruntled because he was not created a bishop, and who strongly resented all the 'plums of ecclesiastical preferment' going to the French priests who had come to America at the time of the French Revolution. He wrote to Propaganda in 1820 of the Catholic immigrants to the United States:

From the moment they enter the interior of the State of New York [he stated] they never see a priest nor a Catholic church; in the State of Pennsylvania they are nearly in the same deplorable condition . . . Subjects [for the priesthood] alone are wanted. They are not to be found in the United States, and a French clergy will never look for them in Ireland where they abound.¹⁵

On the whole, the French clergy were learned, able, and pious men, but this did not make it easier for men like Harold when they were passed over in favour of the French. The Irish, too, resented the attitude of some of the French, who talked about 'la canaille irlandaise'. All this mounted to a distrust of any authority, French or Irish, on the part of some of the Irish clergy and laity, and to a resentment of any interference by authority in their affairs.

Harold and Hogan had their counterparts in Australia. Father John Joseph Therry can hardly be said to have been inspired by the spirit of either, yet his dispute with Bishop R. W. Willson, first Bishop of Hobart, is clearly indicative of the prevailing spirit of the times, and of the readiness of the laity to support their pastor against

¹² Norman, op. cit., p. 1.

¹³ J. T. Ellis, *American Catholicism*, pp. 46-9.

¹⁴ T. Maynard, *The Story of American Catholicism*, Vol. I, pp. 208, 224-6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 174, 218.

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a higher authority. In 1842 an English secular priest, Willson, was nominated to the newly established diocese of Van Diemen's Land which, to that time, had come under Polding's jurisdiction as forming part of the large diocese of New South Wales. Therry had been there as Vicar-General for six years, with authority to act in Polding's name. Willson accepted his appointment on condition that the Church on the island was free of debt and that Therry would be recalled. Polding promised to withdraw Therry and guaranteed, on Therry's word, that there was no debt.

Willson did not arrive in Van Diemen's Land until 1844. He found Therry still in control and the Church in debt. Willson expressed himself unwilling to accept responsibility for a debt the extent of which was not exactly known, but invited Therry to give him a statement showing the cost of land and buildings and any deeds or contracts connected with them. Therry made no move to comply. He refused to hand over the deeds until he had a legal guarantee that the debts contracted by him for the cause of religion in Van Diemen's Land would be transferred to Bishop Willson.

Every effort at reconciliation was thwarted, mainly by Therry's erratic behaviour. The Catholic community was divided between its allegiance to its bishop and to a priest who had devoted himself to their needs. McEncroe, an old friend of Therry's and one of the unsuccessful arbitrators in the dispute, claimed that:

If an Irish Bishop had been appointed for Hobart Town I think the dissensions and scandals that have taken place from the dispute between Monseigneur Willson and Father Therry would have been avoided, and that religion would be there in a much better state than it is at present. Unfortunately the Irish and English characters are very different in their nature and when any difference takes place between an English bishop and an Irish priest, then national antipathies and mutual distrusts spring up and prevent a proper understanding and thus perpetuate bad feelings. In my opinion, very few Englishmen know how to govern Irishmen, whether lay or ecclesiastical.¹⁶

Though there is an underlying truth in the assertion, in the case of Therry and his trustees and their attitude to the problem of church property there was more than just the presence of an English bishop to spur them on. Michael Roe agrees with McEncroe in emphasising

¹⁶ J. H. Cullen, 'Bishop Willson', *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. XXIX, Oct. 1952, p. 311.

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the place of Irish-English antipathy in the dispute and quotes Willson, who attributes Polding's support of Therry to his fear of Therry's compatriots in New South Wales.¹⁷ Polding, who knew and understood Therry better than any of his compatriots with the exception of McEncroe, laid the cause of the trouble at Willson's door, in his trying to push Therry into submission, instead of handling him gently. Bishop F. R. Nixon, Anglican Bishop of Tasmania, had trouble with some of his clergy and laity, particularly after the publication of the proceedings of the meeting of Australasian Anglican bishops, which many thought Tractarian in spirit. An anti-authority attitude was common in clergy and laity in the liberal era, and the anti-English cry of many Irish Catholics was but a shield to hide behind. Therry caused many headaches to the Irish Governor Bourke and to Irish priests, J. V. Dowling and D. Power. In this sense he had no respect for nationality!

Archbishop Polding came from Sydney to resolve the differences that had arisen between Willson and Therry, but, before his coming, warned Willson: 'It is of consequence that Therry and his clique should not be apprised of my intentions'.¹⁸ And when he had finally persuaded Therry to hand over the deeds to him, he admonished him 'that the manner you have adopted with the trusteeship is in the highest degree culpable. The trustees selected by you are in fact no trustees. Is there a deed of trust signed by them to constitute them legal trustees?'¹⁹ Therry and his co-trustees, John Regan, William Insley, and Thomas Alcock, had, they asserted, devoted large sums of their own money to the building fund, with the approval of the Catholic community and with the assurance that the property would be held as security. So Regan used his rights and refused to accept payment on the terms offered, thus delaying the settlement of the dispute by years. Therry, too, claimed that he had only handed over the deeds to please the Archbishop, and not through any sense of obligation. For fourteen years the affair dragged on before Therry finally agreed to a solution. The delay is attributable to a number of factors, but the influence of the lay trustee, impregnated with the spirit of his race and time, cannot be underestimated.

In the late 1840s a change took place in the colony of New South

¹⁷ *Quest for Authority in Eastern Australia*, p. 116.

¹⁸ *A.C.R.*, Vol. XXVIII, Oct. 1951, p. 319.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

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Wales. Men were more sure of themselves. They had fought for and been granted a measure of representative government. They were fighting still for full responsible government. The famine of 1848 and the gold rush caused a wave of immigrants from Ireland to come flooding into this country. Some were men who had been caught up in the Young Ireland Movement and in the spirit of the liberal revolutions sweeping through Europe. They had shaken off the leadership of O'Connell and joined with the Protestants in presenting a united front in their fight for freedom. The emphasis was taken from religious differences and placed on nationalism. The clergy were the natural leaders of the people, sharing as they did so intimately their national and religious loyalties.

The Irish were always conscious of themselves as fighters for a cause, though not all were inspired by the spirit of Young Ireland. They must carry with them a desire for freedom; they must never let it be said they forgot their country or their country's needs. Did not the *Freeman's Journal*, founded in 1850, claim it was an Irish journal—'a journal solely devoted to the cause of Ireland in Australia'?²⁰ 'Shall we here in this land of gold and golden hopes, forget in a momentary affluence all the noble struggles of our youth for evergreen Erin?' it asked.²¹ Archbishop, priest—anyone who dared to oppose this crusade, was subject to its sometimes scathing comments. 'It seems that our own articles on "Irish Australians"—our comments on the War . . . our out and out Irish qualities—aroused the delicate English susceptibilities of His GRACE and the VICAR-GENERAL', reflected the editor of the *Freeman's Journal*.²² Irish nationalism challenged the authority of the bishop and appealed to public opinion in the name of liberalism.

Why not lay the knife to the root of the evil? For here it is. We, the inhabitants of Sydney, and the rest of the colony in New South Wales are forced to regard ourselves as living under what we might term an old-fashioned and exclusive Religious Corporation, that jealously guards against the slightest infringement of its old routine. Innovation of every kind must be carefully excluded. No order but the Benedictine will do for us. Our hitherto municipal privileges we will defend and preserve intact and no bodies of the so-called men of progress and enlightenment, such as the Brothers of Charity, Redemp-

²⁰ *F.J.*, 26 April 1856.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 5 Jan. 1856.

²² *Ibid.*, 26 April 1856.

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torist, Oratorians or Jesuits shall have the right or opportunity of invading our domains.²³

The memories of the 'noble struggles of our youth for evergreen Erin', so deliberately evoked to serve their cause, not only kept alive their hatred of English government, but carried over to a distrust of all authority. Their battle was not only 'for Ireland out of Ireland',²⁴ but for the Irish out of Ireland. In Ireland they had been a people ground down with no opportunities for betterment. Clergy and laity came to a new country abounding with opportunities, and they were determined to use them to their advantage. In the name of liberty they cried out against their wrongs. When attacked for this 'patriotism', as the *Sydney Morning Herald* described Irish loyalty,²⁵ for this love of country which 'when transported into other countries . . . and fostered there becomes a real disease, preventing it from amalgamating and identifying itself with the general stock of the country it inhabits',²⁶ they rose to their own defence. When it was claimed that nothing could be done for the Catholic body in the colonies until they became a part of their new country, they shouted back, 'When the Faith fails in Ireland, the Papacy shall fall'.²⁷ As late as 1869, Polding spoke strongly to an assembly of bishops against anyone being anything but Australian. With one exception (Bishop L. B. Shiel of Adelaide) they all dissented, not wishing to forget their Irish national history as being so closely connected with the Faith.²⁸

In his efforts to withstand this attitude, Polding needed encouragement and support; needed to be assured he was doing right; needed, above all, the presence at his side of one who would share and even shoulder the blame for his actions. Such a man he found in Gregory.

When in Rome, Polding put forth a plan for the creation of new bishoprics in his vast diocese. This having been accepted, a properly constituted hierarchy, with territorial titles for the Sees, was established, and Polding was raised to the rank of Archbishop of Sydney. The See of Hobart in Van Diemen's Land was set up in 1842 with

²³ Ibid., 8 June 1859.

²⁴ Ibid., 5 Jan. 1856.

²⁵ *S.M.H.*, 7 Dec. 1837.

²⁶ *F.J.*, 16 May 1857, letter of Icolmkill (Duncan).

²⁷ Ibid., 13 June 1857, letter of O'Duibhidhir.

²⁸ Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, Vol. II, pp. 351-2.

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Robert Willson, former priest of Nottingham, as its first bishop.²⁹ The first new bishopric to be created on the mainland was that of Adelaide in 1844. It claimed for its bishop Francis Murphy, the Vicar-General of the diocese of Sydney, whose consecration in the presence of Catholics and Protestants climaxed the conclusion of the first Synod of Priests to be held in New South Wales. Murphy, an Irishman, had been the idol of the people. Ullathorne, who brought him to Australia in 1838, had once called him a man with a six-priest power. Into the position of Vicar-General, vacated by him, stepped the thirty-one-year-old, inexperienced Gregory, belonging to the Order of Benedictines. Murphy, too, had been high in the Archbishop's favour and confidence—too high, in the view of Ullathorne, who had cause to change his opinion of the man he had once spoken of so highly. When McEncroe and Gregory had gone as chaplains to Norfolk Island in 1838, Ullathorne felt that the Archbishop had fallen under the influence of Murphy and of another priest, Charles Lovat, who had come from England to take charge of the newly-formed seminary. Both priests resided at the Archbishop's house, which came under their 'despotic sway'. Ullathorne objected because he claimed that they left him the burden of the office of Vicar-General and at the same time undermined his authority with Polding.³⁰ 'Monsignor Ego Solus', as Ullathorne was called in England,³¹ felt that these men were ousting him from his position of key-man in the colonial Church. He threatened to leave unless the situation were remedied. So Murphy was given charge of the recently created parish of St Patrick's, and Lovat went to the country, leaving Ullathorne in charge of the seminary.

During Polding's forthcoming visit to Europe in 1840, Ullathorne would be in charge of the archdiocese. Murphy spoke of returning to Europe. To Ullathorne this was the final excuse he was looking for to get himself honourably out of a situation that was far from his liking. He was the one who could return to Europe. Murphy was then appointed Vicar-General.

The period was one of growth. During the absence of Polding in Europe in 1840-2, the population had increased by over twenty thousand, mostly through bounty immigration, and the Catholic

²⁹ W. B. Ullathorne, *From Cabin Boy to Archbishop*, p. 199.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 161-8.

³¹ E. M. O'Brien, *The Life of Archpriest J. J. Therry*, p. 160.

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population had increased in proportion.³² Among these people with Murphy at their head, Irish emotion and criticism were now allowed to run rampant, according to W. A. Duncan, the former school-teacher who was by now editor of the *Australasian Chronicle*. How highly many of the Catholics regarded the paper can be gauged from the efforts they were prepared to make to meet a £200 fine imposed on it for a libel suit. Dr Aaron of Raymond Terrace, a Jew, had questioned the legality of a Catholic's oath in court; the *Chronicle* had dubbed him a bigot. For his suing of the owner, William Davis, an emancipist and wealthy Catholic, Aaron was awarded one shilling damages. But Judge J. Stephen, 'discerning a most mischievous tendency in defendant's actions', added costs of £200. The Vicar-General contented himself with affirming the validity of the oath; the Catholic Institute set out to find the money.

Murphy and Duncan were poles apart in their outlook. Murphy, an Irish secular priest branded by Ullathorne as being wanting in breadth of mind and freedom of temper, had a strong sense of the vocation of the Irish secular priest. Like McEncroe and many another priest in Australia or out of it, he believed the Irish were best governed by the Irish; that it was the influence of the Irish Church that should prevail over the Church in Australia; that the Irish must prevail in the land. This was not Duncan's way of thinking. For him, the Celt's love of country, transported into other countries, becomes a real disease. 'Our religion', he declared, 'is neither English nor Irish, but Catholic; and our patriotism if we would hold our place here, must be neither the one nor the other but Australian.'³³ He refused to espouse the cause of Ireland out of Ireland, which meant in practice that he refused to fight for repeal, and actually expressed opposition to it, on the grounds that it at least gave Catholics a seat in the English Parliament.³⁴

The *Chronicle* was financed by a number of wealthy emancipists,³⁵

³² In 1836 the Catholic population was 21,895. This had risen to 35,690 in 1841, a peak year in immigration, when the increase in Catholics alone was 9,836 (Sources: Census Report, 1836; *N.S.W.V.P.*, 1841, Immigration report and census table, 1847, Immigration returns).

³³ *F.J.*, 16 May 1857.

³⁴ W. A. Duncan, *An Appeal from the unjust decision of the Very Rev. Vicar General Murphy to His Grace the Archbishop of Sydney*, pp. 6-7.

³⁵ William Davis, Roger Murphy, Thomas Smidmore, Thomas Smith, Timothy Maher, Thomas Coveny, John Murray (*Australasian Chronicle*, 2 Jan. 1841).

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and Duncan accepted the editorship on the condition that he have complete control of policy. This was well when Duncan's policy was in line with that of the emancipists. But when the *Chronicle* advocated low property qualification on the City of Sydney Act against the near ruinous £50 advocated by these wealthy emancipists, and a lowering of the franchise for the Legislative Council, Duncan was regarded as an enemy to be silenced. He isolated himself from another branch of the Catholic body, of which the Vicar-General, Francis Murphy, was a member, by frowning on Roger Therry's alliance with the aristocratic James Macarthur in standing for election to the Legislative Council.³⁶ Duncan, too, as a convert to Catholicism, had little care for the attitude of non-Catholics to the ways of the Church, which both Murphy and Therry cared about excessively. His act of conversion was an open denial of what Protestantism stood for, and he was therefore not concerned with the reaction of Protestants to his advocacy of Catholic beliefs.

Duncan's outright stand for what he considered to be in the best interests of the Catholic Church in Australia found no support among the Irish Australians, who put their own interests and those of Ireland before all else. Duncan had, therefore, to be moved from his position as editor of the *Chronicle*, and that before Polding's return. In the opinion of McEncroe and other prominent Irish clerics, Murphy was 'weak and vacillating'³⁷ in the whole situation and, in spite of a protest meeting by a number of shareholders, Duncan was ousted from his position on 22 February 1843.

Polding arrived back in Sydney on 9 March 1843, and received from both Catholics and Protestants a welcome which Governor Gipps thought 'indiscreet'.³⁸ J. H. Plunkett, the Attorney-General,

³⁶ In 1829 Sir Roger Therry, an Irish Catholic barrister, was appointed Commissioner of the Court of Requests in New South Wales. From 1841 to 1843 he acted as Attorney-General. In 1843 he stood for election to the new Legislative Council as the representative for Camden, and had the Anglican, Charles Cowper, as his opponent. James Macarthur refused to make the issue a religious one, and supported Therry.

³⁷ Duncan, *Autobiography*, M.L.

³⁸ In 1840 Murphy had embarrassed Gipps to the Colonial Office over the St James's schoolroom affair. Broughton had wanted to take over the whole building which housed the St James's school, claiming it belonged to the Church of England. The Catholic district school occupied part of the building, and Murphy refused to go. Negotiation led to the intervention of both the Governor and the Secretary of State. Murphy denied the Anglican claim to the building and refused to see why one denomination should have

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read an address of welcome in the name of all, assuring the Archbishop of their love and dutiful submission.³⁹ During Polding's absence Murphy had not kept him informed of events in the colony. 'I received no intelligence thence, except what the public papers give me', Polding had written to Willson during this period.⁴⁰ Murphy had been a poor correspondent with the government also.⁴¹ So Polding could well reply to the address of Plunkett in most emotional terms. 'My utmost earnest thanks are due to the Vicar-General and clergy for the exertions which are sufficiently marked by the success with which they have been attended.'⁴² He was to learn in what direction this success had been aimed.

Duncan presented Polding with an *Appeal* against his removal from the *Chronicle*. The Vicar-General had sided with the wealthy Irish emancipists, he said, because they claimed to have his full approbation for their action.⁴³ Duncan then proceeded to assure Polding that he had, in accordance with Polding's wishes but in opposition to Murphy and the wealthy emancipists, put the *Chronicle* on the side of the 'small man' in the fight for a low franchise. The support Duncan gained from the 'small man' in this matter, he lost through his attitude to Irish repeal. Duncan's argument that repeal would rob colonial Catholics of Catholic Irish Members of Parliament was not acceptable to the majority of Irish in the colony, and because of their opposition to his stand on this matter, Duncan refused to make any further reference in his paper to repeal. This alone was enough to offend the very Irish heart of Murphy.

Murphy had accused Duncan of sowing dissension in the Catholic body. The dissension came rather, in the opinion of Duncan, from the over-enthusiastic reception given to the Reverend J. J. Therry on his return to the colony from Van Diemen's Land.

I certainly felt it my duty to be a little cool in this matter [said Duncan] when I heard people talking of 'roasting an ox on the race-course in his honour' . . . My coolness in this affair made me some private enemies among the 'old hands' as they are called, who only

to move to make room for the children of another (K. J. Cable, 'St. James' Church, King Street, Sydney, 1819-1894', *J.R.A.H.S.*, Vol. 50, Pt 6).

³⁹ Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, Vol. II, p. 53.

⁴⁰ *A.C.R.*, Vol. XXVII, Jan. 1950, p. 37.

⁴¹ *H.R.A.*, Ser. I, Vol. 21, p. 682.

⁴² Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 54.

⁴³ *Appeal*, pp. 6-7.

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wanted a convenient opportunity of displaying this feeling . . . The only dissension existing [among Catholics, he stated later] was grounded on personal enmity against me and Mr. Murphy, instead of suppressing, fomented that dissension.⁴⁴

Duncan also claimed that it was not only his enterprises that had suffered since Murphy was put in sole charge of the diocese. The orphan school in the colony would, in Duncan's words, 'attest the utter want of zeal and Catholic spirit displayed by the Very Reverend Vicar-General'. In proof of this he quoted statistics which showed that the 35,690 Catholics contributed only £1,577 8s 4d for the building of churches, compared with the £1,709 10s 6d contributed by 3,236 Wesleyans or the £2,363 contributed by 13,153 Presbyterians.⁴⁵

Polding asked Duncan to withdraw his *Appeal*, which he did. Polding, however, veered more than ever to the Benedictine ideal on his return. He was determined to make the seminary Benedictine, and wasted no time in having read a rescript which authorised the official setting up of a monastery and which constituted the cathedral a monastic cathedral.⁴⁶ His choice of the youthful Gregory as successor to Murphy only served to highlight the Benedictine emphasis in diocesan policy. The monastery, which was open to men of all nations, was Polding's hope of cutting across social and cultural divisions. He wanted all to be incorporated in the Order.⁴⁷

The years after 1843 were to be for Polding and Gregory a struggle to impregnate Australian Catholicism with the ideal that it was 'neither English nor Irish but Catholic'.

To them the greatest danger to this ideal lay in the strong nationalist element in Irish Catholicism. But for this they tended to substitute a religion the cultural inheritance of which lay in the glories of medieval Europe.

At the same time the Church in Australia had to face the challenge of a democratic life within itself, adjusting itself to life in a parliamentary democracy. This arose out of the strong Irish influence in the Church, aided by the liberal movement without.

The spirit of this movement was best summed up by W. C. Went-

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 4, 13.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁶ Birt, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 60.

⁴⁷ In 1848, of the nine Benedictine priests in the monastery, four, including Polding and Bishop Davis, were English, three were Irish, one Australian (of Irish descent), and one French. It would still be classed as 'English'.

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worth, fighting for responsible government in the colony. As early as 1835 he asserted the rights of the colonists to freedom of speech. When the sheriff, acting as chairman at a public meeting, had called Sir James Jamison to order for saying that a statement of a British Minister was false and unfounded, Wentworth vehemently objected: 'We are assembled here a meeting of free British subjects to speak our free thoughts, and I will neither be curbed myself nor suffer any friend of mine to be curbed by you'.⁴⁸ In Duncan's *Weekly Register* of 27 July 1844, an ex-policeman, deprived of his position by Wentworth's efforts to cut down government forces, addressed himself to Wentworth and his anarchical friends:

A government official is in your eyes a tool of power, an agent of corruption, the unblessed offspring of tyrannous rule, and you think you do the State good service when you rush upon the body with indiscriminate slaughter.

It was into such a world that Gregory stepped when he was chosen as Vicar-General in preference to men like McEncroe, an older man of wider experience, who had been in the colony longer and who was recognised as a leader among his own people, the Irish. Murphy had a strong belief in the superiority of the Irish clergy. McEncroe, less idealistic, looked upon the ascendancy of Irish bishops and priests as the best practical means of governing a church composed mainly of Irishmen. Polding had no dislike for the Irish. His choice of Murphy as Vicar-General during his absence in Europe in 1840-3 showed that he was ready to give them a fair share in the government of the Church—to govern the Church in collaboration with them. It was not only Polding's new drive to establish the Benedictine Order in the colony that made him turn to one of his fellow Benedictines as his close collaborator in the government of the Church. Murphy had shown him that the Irish were too independent, that their religion was too closely bound to their politics, and that their politics were too rabidly Irish. This in Polding's view was not a fit foundation for a church in a newly developing colony. So, in the hope of broadening the structure of the Church, he chose a young English Benedictine to replace him.

⁴⁸ K. R. Cramp, 'W. C. Wentworth', *J.R.A.H.S.*, Vol. IV, Pt 8, 1918, p. 403.

III

Henry Gregory

HENRY GREGORY GREGORY had come to Australia with Polding in 1835. He had entered the Benedictine Order at Downside and been received as a novice on 1 March 1833. He was professed on 24 June 1834, and ordained sub-deacon on 20 September. Only six months later, on 27 March 1835, he sailed from Liverpool on the ship *Oriental* with Bishop Polding and the other members of the party. Polding had been his novice-master at Downside, so he knew the young man he was bringing with him. Ullathorne claimed that he had received his missionary vocation from Polding,¹ so Gregory was undoubtedly caught up by the same enthusiasm. A fellow-novice of Gregory's, Charles Davis,² wrote of Polding to his brother at the time of Polding's departure for Sydney:

I have always looked up to him as to a tender and affectionate parent, and as such he has ever proved himself to me. I assure you that were it the will of my superiors, I would with pleasure accompany him to New Holland.³

Of the three young Benedictines who were sent, Bede Sumner, John Spencer, and Gregory, the latter was the only one who gave any real satisfaction to his superiors. Spencer was sent away after causing much unpleasantness in the small community—'He was miserably jealous of Mr. Gregory', Polding maintained,⁴ and his turning a young postulant against Gregory would seem to justify this judgment. Polding was relieved at his going, since he had 'not one week of comfort' while he was with them, as there was 'always some discontent or dissension'.⁵ Gregory, it would seem, already enjoyed

¹ Ullathorne to Justina Merewether, 1 Feb. 1886, S.A.A. Polding was novice-master to Ullathorne.

² He later became Coadjutor to Polding, and Bishop of Maitland.

³ 24 July 1834, quoted in Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, Vol. I, pp. 241-2.

⁴ Polding to Heptonstall, 10 Nov. 1837, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 312.

⁵ Polding to Brown, 27 Sept. 1838, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 340.

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Polding's favour, a point which Spencer was quick to resent. In October 1838 Polding was obliged to address a pastoral letter to his flock, condemning the 'scandalous reports and unwarranted surmises entirely false affecting the character of one of our Beloved Clergy . . . and even of ourselves'.⁶ The instigator of these reports was the Reverend John Benedict Spencer, whom Polding threatened to dismiss from the service of the Church and the diocese if he did not make amends. Though there is no evidence to prove it, the clergyman whose character was affected was probably Gregory, who had been ordained a priest more than a year. Spencer, who had been raised to the diaconate with Gregory in 1836, was still in those Orders, another cause for jealousy.

The other member of the party, Bede Sumner, had been ordained to the priesthood in 1836, but continued to reside at the Bishop's house in order to finish his studies. Ullathorne classed him as 'a very weak man of especially small use', and tried to persuade him to return to England,⁷ but to no avail. He remained on in the colony till his death in 1871. Writing after this event, Polding reminisced: 'Poor dear Bede, if he had his faults, he also had his excellencies. Never did he speak ill of others; and a more laborious missionary in the days of his strength we never had amongst us'.⁸ It seems difficult to reconcile this with Ullathorne's direct 'Sumner is a clog',⁹ though both judgments reflect strongly the spirit of the men who made them—the fatherly Polding, so ready to close his eyes to externals and to look to the inner motives of a man; and the businesslike Ullathorne, whose zeal for the mission made him impatient of the faults of his co-workers. If we can believe the evidence of Edmund Moore, a young, discontented monk who returned to England from Sydney, Sumner and Gregory were on bad terms with each other and had been for some years past.¹⁰ There is nothing to show that this bad feeling existed except the fact that, according to Moore, Sumner rarely came to St Mary's, and then did not live as one of the community. On the other hand, when he died, Polding wrote to Gregory to announce the death 'of several who were dear to us'.¹¹ It is possible that Sumner, too, felt

⁶ 4 Oct. 1838, D.A.

⁷ Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 439, 442.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 370.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 442.

¹⁰ Edmund Moore to President of Benedictines, 18 Oct. 1849, D.A.

¹¹ Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 368.

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that Gregory received all the attention and marks of confidence from Polding and Ullathorne.

Polding told his Father President that he wanted missionaries of the 'right sort—zealous, laborious Missioners, no loves for self nor pelf'.¹² How did Gregory measure up to these standards? 'The same simple-hearted, affectionate, laughing soul he ever was, and a most valuable missionary', was Ullathorne's opinion of him.¹³ These same qualities had impressed his companions on the voyage out. One of the priests, Fisher, became ill and Gregory undertook to be his infirmarian. 'I could almost resign myself to be in Mr. Fisher's place to have such a one', the young catechist, Harding, recorded in his diary.¹⁴ Polding told Heptonstall¹⁵ in May 1836 that he was about to ordain Gregory a deacon and intended him to take charge of the seminary he was determined to begin the next month.¹⁶ The nucleus of the seminary was formed that year with the Bishop as its first President and Professor, but there was nothing official until Father C. Lovat arrived in the colony in 1837 to take charge. The delay was due to lack of funds; Polding felt that to begin and not be able to continue would have had a fatal influence for many years. No further mention was made of Gregory in this regard, but Polding continued to value him, telling the President of the Order that 'Mr. Gregory is a deacon and a great comfort to me'.¹⁷ On 17 March 1837, the feast of St Patrick, he had the joy of raising Gregory to the priesthood. He gave no reasons for his choice of the feast of St Patrick rather than that of St Benedict, four days later. He may have hoped that Gregory would be a liaison between what the two saints had come to symbolise—the English Benedictines, Superiors of the mission, and the Irish, clerical and lay, who were subject to them. Soon after his ordination Polding was singing Gregory's praises to T. J. Brown, Prior of Downside, for the work he was doing in the Benevolent Asylum, a home for the helpless and destitute, and other public institutions, and claiming that he 'has made to himself an honoured name amongst the people'.¹⁸

¹² 7 June 1836, quoted in *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 293.

¹³ Ullathorne to Brown, 18 Oct. 1839, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 439.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

¹⁵ Thomas Heptonstall, O.S.B., was a cousin of Polding and acted as his agent in England.

¹⁶ Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 291.

¹⁷ 7 June 1836, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 293.

¹⁸ 14 June 1837, quoted in *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 304.

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Gregory would always be at ease with such people, confident of his position in their regard. He pleaded the cause of an old rascal, Paddy White, who, at Gregory's entreaty, was taken into the Bishop's household. One day Paddy was sent on a message and given a shilling for his pains. He regaled himself with it and on returning to the house when the rest of the household were at night prayers, went upstairs and took from a chest two of the Bishop's mitres. He tried to pawn them but was instead handed over to the police. Gregory had to rescue both the mitres and the old man and enjoyed the whole incident so much that he never allowed Paddy to forget it.¹⁹

Polding took Gregory as his constant companion on his missionary journeys. His health was delicate, but according to Polding he was capable of bearing great fatigue provided he could have 'a good sleeping morning after his day's work'. Yet he was strong and had plenty of courage. On a trip to Wollongong he was leading the gig in which Polding was riding, when two soldiers with muskets appeared and ordered them to stop. Gregory disregarded them and raced the gig to the safety of some cottages. He then returned with a servant to look for the men. They sprang from under a bridge and one grabbed his horse's bridle. A blow from Gregory knocked him to the ground and the other surrendered through fright.²⁰

He showed the same strength and courage at Norfolk Island when sent there as assistant chaplain to McEncroe towards the end of 1838. The soldiers mutinied and refused obedience to their commanding officer. He drew his sword and told them they should march over his dead body if they advanced. The soldiers had aimed their rifles when Gregory stepped forward, seized that of the first man, and was mainly responsible for restoring order.²¹ He was definitely a man's man and excelled in such situations, which called for prompt, decisive action. When Gregory was first appointed to Norfolk Island, McEncroe thought him too inexperienced to go alone and proposed to go with him for some time.²² It was Gregory who returned after a year while McEncroe stayed on for four. No reason was given for his return. It may have been at Ullathorne's request. He felt on his return from Europe that if McEncroe and Gregory had not both been at Norfolk

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 304, 318.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 439.

²² McEncroe to Therry, 22 Aug. 1838, Therry Papers.

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Island the state of things in Sydney might have been better.²³ If one or other were asked for, McEncroe probably decided to stay on for the same reason he went out there—that Gregory had not the experience to deal with the difficult situation.

Ullathorne described Gregory as 'strong and muscular'²⁴ and related the following story about him on their journey to Europe in 1840. They were on board a French whaler. All the crew made their Easter duties except the young surgeon, who rather prided himself on his unbelief! Realising this, the priests were anxious to bring him back to the practice of his religion. One calm day Gregory asked him to go up with him to the maintop to have a talk. After a while he suddenly seized him by the collar and made as if he would throw him into the sea. When the doctor cried for mercy, Gregory feigned surprise that he should be afraid. He then told him the Bishop wanted to see him in his cabin and only let him go when he promised to descend. He finally pushed him into the Bishop's cabin and closed the door. After an interval, the doctor came out with a happy face and returned to his religious duties.²⁵

The action is interesting, not as a possible method of conversion, but for the light it throws on Gregory's character. In the very simplest terms it could be styled the action of a well-meaning man with an unfortunate manner. He believed in a blunt, direct approach. But beneath the almost arrogant self-assurance lay an unsureness of himself when dealing with those who were his equals, particularly his intellectual equals. He enjoyed the situation of the surgeon as much as he enjoyed Paddy White's predicament, but his approach to both was so different. Though both incidents ended happily, one feels the surgeon would have gone the other way when he saw Gregory coming! Affectionate and blindly loyal, he stopped at nothing to achieve what he felt Polding wanted.

He had become by this time almost indispensable to Polding. 'Gregory at Norfolk Island, Ullathorne away—I am alone; not one of my own near me', Polding had grieved to Heptonstall.²⁶ Polding showed his fatherly interest in Gregory's welfare by taking him to Europe as his chaplain in 1840. Father John Brady, an Irish priest of

²³ Ullathorne, *From Cabin Boy to Archbishop*, p. 144.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 185-6.

²⁶ 1 Oct. 1839, quoted in Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 437.

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long experience who had come to the colony in 1838, expected to be taken in this capacity. Polding explained to him that Gregory's very delicate state of health and the Vicar-General's desire to have Brady's support during the period influenced his choice. He admitted, too, that he felt the value of a real friend in such circumstances. He hoped 'that the voyage would be the means of prolonging a valuable life'. On his side, Gregory had expressed often to Polding a desire to see his mother once more.²⁷

Gregory responded to Polding's interest in him. He had courage and the joyful spirit of the missionary, and, as a missionary, he had fulfilled the hopes his superiors had had of him in choosing him as a foundation stone of the Benedictine mission in New South Wales. But how wise was Polding's choice of Gregory for the difficult post of Vicar-General? Determined, as he seemed, to have a Benedictine to fill the position, he had little choice. The question is not how wise was Polding's choice of a Benedictine when there were so few to choose from, but how suited for the task was the one he did choose. Gregory responded to Polding's confidence with an unswerving loyalty. But more was needed. If he had not had experience, he must at least have the ability to learn and the wisdom to expand his views to understand those of others, particularly of those immediately dependent on his authority and of those whose upbringing differed from his. Gregory's early training gave him little preparation for this. He seemed to have lived within his class. He was born at Cheltenham in 1813, and though nothing is known of his immediate family, it would seem that they were a branch of the Gregory family who were well established as members of the landed gentry in England and Ireland.²⁸ It was a family, too, which counted among its ranks many army officers. A W. Gregory died in Cheltenham in 1787 at the age of 80. Whether he was the first of this branch of the family to settle in the area is not certain, but it would seem the family was well established there before the birth of Henry Gregory, as the deaths of an Elizabeth Gregory and a William Gregory are recorded for the year 1823, Elizabeth aged 88 and William aged 75.²⁹ Gregory's edu-

²⁷ Polding to Brady, 7 Dec. 1840, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 497.

²⁸ V. R. T. Gregory, *House of Gregory*; also E. Walford, *County Families of the United Kingdom*, pp. 585-6.

²⁹ S. Y. Griffith, *New Historical Description of Cheltenham*, p. 16.

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cation by the Benedictines at Douay in France and at Downside clearly indicates he came from a well-to-do family. From a letter Polding wrote on the death of one of Gregory's brothers,³⁰ we learn that the whole family, with the exception of this one brother, were received into the Catholic Church. Gregory and two of his sisters, Maria and Jane, were conditionally baptised in the Catholic Church on 19 April 1824, Gregory being eleven at the time.³¹ Even at this age he would have been influenced by the change which would have affected the social status of his family.

The Catholic Church in England at this time was divided roughly into two groups—the families of the nobility and gentry scattered throughout the country and the remnants of groups of a lower class in towns and villages. The latter group was swollen by numbers of poor Irish immigrants. The Catholic gentry were divided politically from their Protestant equals and separated socially from their lower-class co-religionists. Yet they were proud of their heritage and their loyalty, and jealous of their position. The account of the visitation of his diocese by Bishop Challoner, Vicar-Apostolic of the London district, in 1741, is a record of his sojourns in the homes of Catholic gentry which had become centres of worship for the surrounding villages.³² It was difficult for a family of Gregory's class to be completely integrated into this Catholic community, particularly before the great move of converts into the Church in the 1830s. The gentry were too enclosed to admit newcomers, and these had little in common with the lower classes apart from their faith. Socially, they belonged nowhere. It would seem that Gregory's being sent to school at Douay, when Downside was already established in England, was an effort to become part of the tradition of the old Catholic families. These families, too, were very conservative in their approach to their religion and strongly resented any move to shake them from their security.

In the pre-1829 days many priests, particularly those of non-gentry origin, were of inferior status in their relations with the laity, and many of the recusant gentry treated their chaplains as servants of a low

³⁰ Polding to unnamed bishop, S.A.A.

³¹ Baptismal Register, St Gregory's Church, Cheltenham. This gives the date of his birth as 1811, but the Obit book of the Benedictine Order and his death certificate both make 1813 the year of his birth.

³² E. H. Burton, *Life and Times of Bishop Challoner, 1691-1781*, Vol. I, Ch. XI.

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order, an attitude which still survived in the nineteenth century. In 1849 a priest wrote to the Prior of Downside that he would not be surprised at anything some Catholic gentry would say or do to a priest.³³ The response of some English priests was over-assertiveness. G. Talbot's remark that the role of the laity was to hunt, to shoot, and to entertain was typical of the attitude of many of the English clergy.

The characteristics produced by such an environment were embedded in Gregory, making him something of a paradox—a man conscious of his dignity, his position, his class, yet labelled by Willson of Hobart as 'coarse, weak and laboured'.³⁴ Willson had cause for his verdict. Writing as Vicar-General to the Vicar-General of Van Diemen's Land (23 April 1847) on the subject of chaplains to the penal settlement of Norfolk Island, Gregory said that he had told the present chaplain that 'if he requires a Confessarius he must . . . carry his load to Hobarton'.³⁵ This was an official letter, written at a time when relationships between the two dioceses were strained over the spiritual administration of the island. He went to Hobart to act as arbitrator between Willson and Therry over the church debt. The situation required very delicate handling, and yet, according to Father W. P. Bond of Hobart, Gregory presented himself before the Bishop as his Superior and told him that unless he consented to the proposed conditions he had 'better resign his mitre'. Willson himself claimed that Gregory proposed his withdrawal from the colony so that another might be sent to rule the diocese.³⁶ After this, Willson declared to Polding that he positively declined entering into negotiations with Gregory personally. 'That man (pious enough I grant) has by his overbearing manner done mischief for years', Willson claimed.³⁷ He would have agreed with the editor of the *Freeman's Journal*, who ranted (22 June 1859): 'When men of weak understanding happen . . . to acquire spiritual jurisdiction over others, it is too frequently observed they become intoxicated with their position'. This was flung at Gregory when the *Freeman's Journal* was conducting open warfare against the authorities of the archdiocese and Gregory in particular. While regretting these attacks, Willson commented to Bishop

³³ Prest to Barber, undated (but 1849), D.A.

³⁴ Willson to unnamed recipient, undated (probably 1859), S.A.A.

³⁵ J. H. Cullen, 'Bishop Willson', *A.C.R.*, Vol. XXVII, Oct. 1950, p. 324.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIX, Jan. 1952, p. 22.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, April 1952, p. 121.

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Geoghegan of Adelaide that Gregory 'may have laid himself open to the attacks in that mischievous paper'.³⁸ He and Bishop J. A. Goold of Melbourne seemed ready to blame Gregory for any high-handed action on the part of the archdiocese of Sydney.

When Gregory went to Rome in 1851 to present a report on the Church in Australia to the Holy See, he gave an account of the Hobart controversy—a 'monstrous' report, according to Willson (who learned of it later), as it placed in jeopardy his character as a suffragan of the Archbishop.³⁹ Gregory disclaimed any such intention and any wilful interference in an affair which had already caused him so much pain. Rome had asked for his official opinion of the Willson-Therry dispute and had given him Willson's account of the affair to reply to. He regretted that circumstances had placed him in opposition to one as lovable as Willson, but his nature, he said, turned with abhorrence 'from the farce of pretending to think with a man' simply because he loved and respected him. Whatever his faults, his worst enemies, he claimed, could never accuse him of cowardice.⁴⁰ When Sydney interfered in the affairs of his diocese, Goold blamed Gregory, believing that Polding was no party to the unpleasant business. He found later he could blame no one but the Archbishop for a similar piece of interference.

J. D. Lang gave a picture of Gregory in 1846, soon after he was appointed Vicar-General, riding a fine horse with a liveried servant in attendance, calling on the homes of the well-to-do to collect a testimonial for Governor Gipps on his departure.⁴¹ The wife of the Anglican Bishop F. Barker recorded in her diary that her husband had attended a levee at Government House and had there met Polding, 'a goodnatured, simple-looking man', and Gregory, 'a much more imposing personage'.⁴²

The Irish Catholics, or more correctly, a vociferous group of them, looked at him through different eyes. In reply to a letter of Icolmkill (Duncan) in the *Freeman's Journal* (30 May 1857), Erin-Go-Bragh

³⁸ 13 July 1859, S.A.A.

³⁹ Cullen, 'Bishop Willson', *A.C.R.*, Vol. XXIX, July 1952, p. 205.

⁴⁰ Gregory to Geoghegan, 20 Sept. 1859, S.A.A.

⁴¹ *Popery in Australia and the Southern Hemisphere and How to Check it Effectually*, p. 30.

⁴² 24 May 1856, Frederic and Jane Barker, *Journals and Correspondence*, M.L.

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asked, if he were sincere in his desire to improve the position of Australian Catholics, why he did not go to the source of the abuses.

Why [he asked] has he not attacked the aristocratic tendencies of those in high places, what they term in Ireland the '*Cawtholic Soles*'. We in the colony too have our '*Cawtholic Soles*' and it would not be considered fashionable for any clergyman to recognise in public any Catholic outside that favoured circle.

Was this the attitude of the ordinary person towards him? If we can judge from a letter of his sister, who came to Australia as a Benedictine nun in 1848, this need not have been so. When she wrote it she was living at the Archbishop's house, so would not have been as cut off from contact with people as she would have been in the convent at Subiaco where the Benedictine nuns were eventually established, and where the people who came to see them were those who appreciated their life and work. 'It is most gratifying to me to see how much my dear brother is beloved and respected, not alone by the clergy and community, but by the majority of inhabitants, both Protestant and Catholic', she wrote.⁴³ Her view could well have been biased, as she said in the same letter: 'Did you know him as well as I do, you would not wonder that I should dote upon him as I do'. Though it was thirteen years since he had left England, this sister had been in reasonably close contact with him, as Gregory had made himself responsible for her upkeep while she was a novice at Princethorpe. This fact led to a misunderstanding which may have caused Gregory to be misjudged by some of the Benedictines in England. 'Regarding his apparent unkind conduct to me during my happy sojourn at dear St. Mary's [Princethorpe]', his sister explained in the same letter, 'I blame him not. He has sufficiently satisfied me'. The man employed by Polding to transact this business had not acted uprightly, so the money did not reach Princethorpe. But, Gregory's sister assured them all, '[he] is and always has been to me the best of brothers'.

In the same strain a John Wills wrote to Gregory before his departure from the colony in 1861, assuring him that his many acts of kindness would not be forgotten. Though he had known him for eight years, he was almost as a stranger until McEncroe went to Europe at the end of 1858. Then it was that Wills learned, as he said,

⁴³ Dame Scholastica Gregory to Princethorpe, 28 Dec. 1848, Princethorpe Archives (copy in S.A.A.).

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your Christian benevolence and kindness—a kindness and condescension on your part always evinced towards me which is now so strongly engraven on my heart that now on the eve of your departure I feel as one about to be deprived of a dear, dear friend.⁴⁴

His kindness to an Eliza Anne Nagle laid him open to public attack by her father. The girl had come to Gregory for instruction in the Catholic faith and had eventually been received into the Catholic Church. During this time she was, she claimed, 'homeless and penniless',⁴⁵ and Gregory provided for her, giving her a position as assistant teacher in a 'Benedictine School in Parramatta Street'. She wished to become a nun. Her father objected, and wrote pointing out that as she was a minor she could not legally take the step. According to Mr Nagle, who purported to have the information from his daughter, when Gregory was shown the letter he laughed heartily.

What can a pauper like your father do against us who are so powerful and have so much money at our command . . . As regards the duty you owe your father he speaks of in his letter, I will at once absolve you from it . . . I only wish I had your father within the walls of the monastery and I would give him what he deserves.⁴⁶

Though Gregory rarely defended himself in public, he answered Nagle's letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* in the following week and felt confident he could call on the support of the public to deny Nagle's assertions.

The expressions and conduct attributed to me by Mr. Nagle, all who know me will regard as the creation of his own romantic imagination; at all events they will deem me incapable of such un-Christian and impious follies.⁴⁷

It could be, as someone has suggested,⁴⁸ that Gregory suffered from an inability to believe that people took him so seriously, were so frightened of him—from an inability to take himself seriously even while he took his cause very seriously. It is possible that Gregory did speak the words quoted by Nagle, but he would never have expected them to be taken literally. It is possible, too, that he was not even

⁴⁴ Wills to Gregory, 3 Feb. 1861, D.A.

⁴⁵ *S.M.H.*, 4 June 1850.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 31 May 1850.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 4 June 1850.

⁴⁸ T. L. Suttor, letter to the author, 5 March 1964.

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conscious of the words he used. He wanted simply to calm Miss Nagle's fears by treating the incident in a light-hearted way, and to show that he had the situation under control. The same bluff manner was evident when the question of the abolition of state aid was before Parliament. Gregory was alleged to have threatened Members if they did not give him the names of those clerics who had spoken against it, as he wanted to bring them before his tribunal of justice.

Gregory did have friends to rise to his defence. In 1859, when he was brought before the court of public opinion for appointing a Protestant doctor to the Board of the Catholic Orphanage, 'Truth' spoke up for him in the columns of the *Freeman's Journal* (12 March). It had been said he had no care for the orphans and the poor. 'Truth' replied he had been an eye-witness to many of Gregory's charitable acts; one in particular he would never forget. It was to see him on his knees in a wretched hovel, 'administering not only the consolations of religion to a sick person, but also food with his own hand; and he was the support of a large family belonging to this poor person for some time'. Whatever his failings, 'Truth' asserted, he certainly fulfilled the two great commandments of the law—love of God and love of neighbour. It was a hard thing that all his good acts should be forgotten. To which the editor of the *Freeman's Journal* replied (12 March) that no one had ever denied to Gregory the possession of good intentions.

Our sole quarrel with him is that he is so deficient in the wisdom necessary to his high position, and so arbitrary in carrying out his own mere will in matters affecting the highest interests of the Australian church, as effectually to strangle all attempts at bettering the condition of Catholicity in this country. Something more is required of a Vicar-General than the ability to perform a pious office of charity.

Gregory, however, was not so interested in 'carrying out his own mere will'. He owed a double allegiance to Polding—that of Vicar-General to his Bishop, and that of religious to his Superior, which, for Gregory, was the allegiance of a son to his father. A Vicar-General must always subordinate his views to those of his Bishop, yet he must act with an authority that makes the deed seem his own. He went straight to the point with little thought for the feelings of those involved or for the consequences of his action. This had always been his way, but it was naturally accentuated when he came into

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a position of authority. He lacked the diplomacy necessary to the handling of men, particularly in the critical situation in which the Church so often found itself in the Catholic colonial society of his time. This was the wisdom his high position called for and in this he was deficient.

Gregory and the Monastery of the Abbey-Diocese

WHILE Gregory filled the office of Vicar-General he was at the same time Prior of the monastery attached to St Mary's Cathedral. He was appointed to this position by Polding when the monastery was officially set up in the beginning of 1843. The office of Prior entailed the organisation of the monastery and the training of young men according to the Rule of St Benedict. Work was always considered by Benedict to be an essential part of the life of a monk, as 'idleness is the enemy of the soul'.¹ The work can be greatly varied, but is generally such as can be performed within the monastery and within the framework of community life. The Rule aimed at creating a school of the service of God, at establishing places where the full Christian life might be lived. The training received fitted a man for any work the direct end of which was the service of God. Any monk who had attained to a certain maturity in the monastic life should by his very training be better equipped to undertake work away from his monastery. Though the Benedictine tradition has not regarded work external to the monastery as the normal course or development of Benedictine life, there have been periods in the history of the Order when circumstances demanded these exceptions.²

By the end of the sixth century the apostolic urge drew men to the monastery that they might serve their fellow men by carrying to them the light of the gospel, rather than solely by the hidden life of contemplative prayer.³ For this they became priests, and the manual work envisaged by St Benedict was replaced for some by study and apostolic activity. Many monks became renowned missionaries and bishops, and found no difficulty in reconciling their missionary work with their monastic life. In the twelfth century St Bernard founded

¹ *Rule of St. Benedict*, Ch. XLVIII.

² D. Knowles, *The Benedictines*, Ch. 4.

³ H. Van Zeller, *The Benedictine Idea*, pp. 55-72.

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the Order of the Cistercian Monks, based on the primitive Rule of Benedict with its enclosure, silence, and manual work, and the stress on contemplative prayer. The English Benedictine Congregation, preserving its continuity from the Benedictines of Tudor times and following the traditions of the early English monks, was founded in France in 1619. Its members, drawn originally from English monks in Spanish or French houses, bound themselves to work for the conversion of England. The work of the Congregation was twofold—the education of boys unable to receive a Catholic education in England, and the preparation of monks for the mission field. When the monks returned to England at the time of the French Revolution, they continued with these works. With the repeal of the penal laws, many of the monks began to question what the functions of the English monasteries were to be; whether they should continue to devote themselves to the missions of the country or whether they should take up again the observance of the traditional monastic life.⁴ When Brown, former Prior of Downside, was made Bishop and Vicar-Apostolic of the Welsh district, he proposed sending young men who wished to be monks to the Benedictine monasteries to be trained at his expense for service in his district. They would be subject to their Superiors for what concerned their spiritual life, but the Bishop would have the right to send them where he wanted them. The Benedictines objected to this proposal, on the grounds that it was against their Constitutions, as it really removed the monks from any tie with their monastery and from monastic authority. In 1850, when there was question of the foundation of a monastery at Belmont in Bishop Brown's diocese, a difference of opinion arose among the Benedictines as to what form the monastery was to take. Brown felt, in accordance with the wishes of Pius IX, that a common novitiate and house of studies for the English monasteries would ensure a solid spiritual and theological training for the young monks, and be a safeguard for future missionary work. Belmont was set up as such in 1859. The priests at the monastery were to perform missionary work in a district assigned by the Bishop.

Polding had brought with him to New South Wales in 1835 the dream of establishing a monastery as a centre of culture and learning and as a future source of supply of priests for the mission—priests

⁴ B. Whelan, *History of Belmont Abbey*, p. 14.

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who, by their vows, would be withdrawn from the dangers inherent in missionary life. 'Past experience convinces me', he wrote in 1842, 'that in young missionary countries the vow of poverty alone can prevent the accumulation of wealth, the bane of the Church and the destruction of the individual.'⁵ Remembering the criticisms levelled against Bishops Slater and Morris and their fellow Benedictines in Mauritius, Polding saw the necessity for men vowed to poverty and residing in a monastery, subject to the discipline of monastic living. For this reason, more than the establishment of his own Order, he wanted all young men in the colony training for the priesthood to become Benedictines. Those who entered the seminary at All Hallows with a view to joining the mission he wished to come out before they were ordained. 'In order to fix them permanently in the place of their vocation', he explained to Archbishop Murray of Dublin, 'I think it will be desirable that they should come to me to receive their orders and to take the religious habit.'⁶ For this reason, too, he sought to persuade those already ordained and coming into the colony to join the Benedictines.

My residence has become a Monastery [he wrote again to Murray in October 1843]. I gave the habit of the Benedictine Order to five on the 24th August, and we have at present eight postulants, the latter chiefly for the lay state. My desire is to establish two priests and a lay brother in each mission. After much consideration, it is the best plan, I feel assured, to guard against the dangers of our calling. Of course the Archbishop will always be the principal Superior. Thus the grievous inconveniences which have sometimes occurred from the meeting of two orders of clergy will be avoided.⁷

His idealism was unbounded.

We shall in our Institute come as near to the form of the Benedictine Institute as it existed in England before the Reformation as we can [he wrote in 1845], blending as it did in perfect harmony Episcopal Authority with the Abbatial and producing missionaries who more zealously fulfilled their duties from the habitual renunciation of all things, the consequence of their monastic profession.⁸

What to Brown and a number of English Benedictines had become a danger, was to Polding the ideal. Brown saw missionary work as a

⁵ J. H. Cullen, 'Bishop Willson', *A.C.R.*, Vol. XXVII, Jan. 1950, p. 35.

⁶ Quoted in O. Thorpe, *The First Mission to Australian Aborigines*, p. 192.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Polding to William Leigh, 7 Jan. 1845, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 193.

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weakening of monasticism. Polding saw it as a logical fulfilment. And he was no less a Benedictine for that. His trouble lay in looking too much to the past for his inspiration and in being unable to relate it in practice to his own times.

To fulfil Polding's ideals, the monastery would have to depend on a sure supply of capable Benedictines from another monastery before its own monks were sufficiently trained to take over the work of the mission and of the monastery. But the English Benedictine Congregation, the parent branch of the Australian, did not share Polding's vision of the place of the monastery, either in England or in the colonial Church. When Ullathorne in 1838 had requested the English Provincial, on Polding's direction, for men for the mission, the Provincial had replied that the 'brethren in general . . . and . . . the chaptermen in particular "were against" sending our useful subjects abroad'.⁹ Ullathorne commented that the colony would become an Irish mission, and perhaps ought to become so, as he doubted whether the mission would work well with all the Superiors English and nearly all the subjects Irish. 'Let Polding recommend Irishmen for Bishops and more good shall be done', said Brown.¹⁰ He was aware of the experiences the English Benedictines had had with Irish subjects, and which the Father President had summed up in a letter to him in 1838:

I should rather remark one circumstance that bothers me, which is that more Irish of late are proposed to be received into our Body, than heretofore. In general their dispositions do not sympathise altogether with the English. Of the few that have entered among us heretofore, some have not turned out well . . . Though very good for a while it often happens that their natural impetuosity of character at last breaks out in some very rash conduct. Their own countrymen have a better task in governing them than Englishmen.¹¹

From the attitude of the English Benedictine Congregation it seemed that in Australia the Benedictines would be dealing mainly with Irish subjects. In declaring that 'to do anything Benedictine in the Colony is now out of the question',¹² Ullathorne showed greater perception than Polding, who, in spite of the lack of support of the English Benedictine Congregation and the difficulties inherent

⁹ Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, Vol. I, p. 370.

¹⁰ Brown to Prior of Downside, 11 June 1842, D.A.

¹¹ 6 June 1838, D.A.

¹² Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 371.

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in the situation, clung to his original idea and set up his monastery.

Polding's dream of the monastery as a centre of culture and learning was expressed in the idealistic words of Gregory in his report to Rome. The monks fulfilled the duty of canons in the metropolitan Church and recited the entire office publicly each day, displaying 'in some not unworthy manner the eloquent beauty of the Church's ritual'.¹³ But what was of even greater benefit to the colony was the course of educational training pursued under the immediate superintendence of the Archbishop and of the Bishop-Coadjutor in the seminaries for ecclesiastical and lay students attached to the Cathedral Church of St Mary.

It is scarcely possible to exaggerate either the necessity or the blessings of such institutions [Gregory recorded] . . . Amongst the indirect means by which the Divine Blessing may render it possible to elevate and refine both the intellectual and religious perceptions of this people, may be reckoned as not the least influential, the presence of the Benedictine Community in Sydney.¹⁴

The monastery, however, carried out varied functions. The monastic cathedral was the centre of liturgical life for the monks and the people, and gave witness of full Christian living. The monastery proper housed the monks, novices, and postulants, some of whom were very young boys, and clerical students. Here the novices and postulants received their formal training for the religious life, and the students for the priesthood carried on their theological studies under the general supervision of Polding and Gregory and the immediate direction of priest-lecturers, not all Benedictines. Priests of the archdiocese resided at the monastery for the time of their retreat, and some, serving nearby parishes, stayed there permanently. The work of education which Polding held most dear was carried on in another part of the monastic centre. The seminary, which had begun in Polding's residence at Woolloomooloo soon after his arrival in the colony, was transferred to a temporary building in the grounds of the cathedral in January 1838, and became known as St Mary's. In his report made to Rome in March 1842, Polding recorded that the seminary numbered six ecclesiastics, twenty boarders, and twenty external students. After the foundation of the

¹³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 171.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

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monastery, it and the seminary existed side by side. The teaching in the seminary was done by some of the monks. The postulants were obliged to follow most of the exercises of the monastery until Bishop Davis was given charge of their studies. He relieved them of many, and devoted more of their time to school work. Evidence is not clear as to whether the postulants were taught in the seminary or in the monastery, but they certainly did their oral examinations on different days from the boys in the school. In 1851, a school for boys of well-to-do families was established at Lyndhurst, under the presidency of Davis, which aimed at providing lay leaders for the Church in New South Wales. It was like an extension of the monastery. Two priests and two deacons were in residence, and two more unnamed religious were non-resident. These, with Mr T. C. Makinson and Bishop Davis, who visited the school two or three times a week and gave some lessons, formed the teaching staff. In 1853 there were thirty-five students in residence—lack of space prevented more from enrolling.¹⁵ The education given was of a high standard. From 1852 to 1872 alumni of Lyndhurst represented 15 per cent of the total number of graduates of Sydney University. Of the thirty-two students of the College who enrolled at the University during these years, twenty-four completed their degree at Sydney. It is possible that some of the others went to Oxford or Cambridge after spending a year at the colonial university.¹⁶ Numbers in the school had dwindled by 1857, and this fact, together with the conditions at the monastery and the lack of good teachers, caused Polding to move the novitiate to Lyndhurst in that year, and combine the two schools.

Despite Lyndhurst's record, it was not popular with most of the colonists. In 1860 when Polding circularised the clergy and asked them to state the causes of dissatisfaction, the survey pointed to the high cost of Lyndhurst education and the classical nature of its studies. However, fees were no higher than several of the good private schools in the colony. A modification of the curriculum to include such practical subjects as surveying and book-keeping gave but a

¹⁵ M. Forster, 'Lyndhurst and Benedictine Education', *A.C.R.*, Vol. XXIII, Oct. 1946, p. 266.

¹⁶ Matriculation Register, University of Sydney. M. Forster in her article (*A.C.R.*, Vol. XXIV, April 1947, p. 119) gives these figures as much higher, and has been followed in this by R. Fogarty, *Catholic Education in Australia 1806-1950*, and T. Suttor, *Hierarchy and Democracy in Australia, 1788-1870*.

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temporary respite to the life of Lyndhurst, and Vaughan closed it soon after Polding's death. It was a symbol of the end of an era in Australian Benedictinism. Polding had pictured Lyndhurst as part of the elevating influence exercised by the monastery, and the monks devoted much of their time to it. To enable the monks to lead their monastic life in peace and to ensure for the students the individual attention characteristic of Benedictine training, Davis wanted ten teachers for his thirty-five students. He had eight. It was a drain on the monastery and the other work of the mission, which was the work best understood by the Irish colonial Catholics. They criticised the school because they saw no point in the type of education it imparted. They criticised it, too, because it raised the Union Jack, and prayed for the Queen. Not even the presence of Father John Dwyer, grandson of Michael Dwyer, the great Wicklow chieftain, could remove from the school the taint of being run by Englishmen. Polding and Gregory had viewed Lyndhurst from the vantage point of European tradition and culture and counted it as a blessing to the community. Many colonial Catholics saw it in the narrow framework of an imposed English-Benedictine system and suspected it of being the breeding ground of ideas foreign to their way of thinking. Protestants, too, disliked the idea of monasticism, and a school run by monks was to them a monastery. The distrust and dislike of Lyndhurst on the part of Catholics could have been a reflection of the feeling of their Protestant brethren as well. The failure of Lyndhurst was part of the failure of the Benedictine Order in Australia.

Though Polding saw his monks as better missionaries as a consequence of their monastic profession, the circumstances in which the monastery developed did not allow for the depth of training needed to make their missionary activity but the overflow of their inward dedication. For Polding himself this was so, and in his ten years as novice-master at Downside he had trained men who were noted for the same spirit of dedicated service; Ullathorne, Gregory, and Davis, the future coadjutor of Sydney, among them. Yet as Bishop of a wide expanse of territory and of a large convict population and as founder of a monastery, he had not the time to devote himself exclusively to the training of the young monks, and he was obliged to appoint to the task Gregory, who was suited neither by temperament nor training for the position. Though Polding was nominally the sup-

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reme authority in the monastery, the practical details of training were left to Gregory as Prior.

It was not until 1856, when Polding, on his return from Europe, solemnly promulgated the Constitutions of the monastery, that Gregory was to be known as 'Father Abbot'. It was an honorary title, as Polding, by papal authority, would remain Abbot during his lifetime. In reality, Gregory was the authority in the monastery, *de facto* if not *de jure*. To him, then, was entrusted the enforcement of the Rule. The Abbot had constantly to remember that he had to bring souls to God and that for these souls he held the place of God. St Benedict reminded him that 'to the fault of the shepherd will be imputed whatever lack of profit the father of the household may find in his sheep'.¹⁷ The two qualities the Rule held as necessary to the Abbot were discretion and kindness. Through discretion he had to accommodate himself to the diversity of characters; to combine strength with gentleness; to adapt every means, according to its nature and circumstances, to bring souls to God and 'to bring them in such a manner that the monks may fulfil their task willingly'.¹⁸ He had to temper his authority with love. The Rule asked him 'to study to be loved rather than feared'.¹⁹ Even when dealing with those who had been frequently corrected for some fault and failed to amend, he must act like a wise physician and try every means of healing before adopting the severe one of the 'sword of separation'.²⁰ St Benedict by no means counselled softness towards those who transgressed the spirit and law of the monastery. On the contrary—but he wished the Abbot to mete out punishment according to the gravity of the offence and the nature of the offender. 'Let him so temper all things', Benedict concluded, 'that the strong may have something to strive after, and the weak nothing at which to take alarm'.²¹

It can easily be seen how much the monastery depended on the discretion of the Abbot.

It is incontestable [said a great Benedictine Abbot, C. Marmion] that the Abbot leaves his own impression on the monastery, and casts upon it his own reflection. It is exact to say: as the Abbot, so is the monastery.

¹⁷ *Rule of St. Benedict*, Ch. II, p. 17.

¹⁸ C. Marmion, *Christ the Ideal of the Monk*, p. 50.

¹⁹ *Rule of St. Benedict*, Ch. LXIV, p. 165.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Ch. XXVIII, p. 87.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Ch. LXIV, p. 167.

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The Abbot is truly the living Rule, fashioning to his own image the monastery that he governs.

It seemed almost unnecessary for Benedict to ask the Abbot to 'always bear in mind what a burden he hath received'. He was to be elected by 'all the brethren with one consent in the fear of God' or 'by a small part of the Community with more wholesome counsel'.²² He was to be chosen

for the merit of his life and the wisdom of his doctrine [because he] ought to govern his disciples by a two-fold teaching: that is, he should shew forth all goodness and holiness by his deeds rather than his words; declaring to the intelligent among his disciples the commandments of the Lord by words: but to the hard-hearted and the simple-minded setting forth the divine precepts by the example of his deeds.²³

To such a position was Gregory appointed by Polding, though he was not his first choice. He had offered the office of Abbot of St Mary's in turn to Dom Serra and Dom Salvado, the founders of New Norcia, the Benedictine Mission to the Aborigines of Western Australia, but they were both made bishops, which precluded them from accepting. Though possessed of Polding's confidence, Gregory had never before held a position of authority. In Rome in 1842, Ullathorne had described him as a young man who 'hitherto had not exercised any influence upon the business of the Diocese'.²⁴ Now, at the age of thirty, he found himself Prior and, in reality, chief authority in the monastery. Two years as a novice and junior religious was the only experience he had had of monastic life before coming to Australia. He had to continue his studies for the priesthood, while leading the life of a missionary. Even after his ordination, when he was stationed at Norfolk Island, he was still trying to complete them.

Only four years later he was given the position of Prior, not of a well-run monastery, but of one yet to be established in almost impossible conditions. With his own limited experience of monastic life, with a theological preparation for the priesthood that could only have been superficial, with no tried qualities for leading or training men, he had little hope of fulfilling the ideals laid down by St Benedict for one in his office. He lacked the security and experience necessary for the exercise of discretion and kindness, the virtues re-

²² *Ibid.*, p. 163.

²³ *Ibid.*, Ch. II, p. 17.

²⁴ *From Cabin Boy to Archbishop*, p. 200.

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quired of a monastic authority. St Benedict stressed that there are different methods of approach to people. What was good for one was not necessarily good for another; what was harmful for one was not necessarily harmful for another. Benedict said that the Abbot must 'accommodate and suit himself to the character and intelligence of each, winning some by kindness, others by reproof, others by persuasion'.²⁵ Gregory did not have the gift of dealing with people this way; and when one who has no confidence in his handling of men comes up against them, still more when he is placed in authority over them, he adopts a rigid attitude towards them. He creates around him an atmosphere of fear rather than of love, and duties are performed according to the letter and not the spirit of the law. One of the Benedictine nuns writing to Princethorpe in 1851, after Gregory's departure for Europe, gives just this impression of him: 'He is a great lover of strict discipline and of Religious order: nor has he let us fall off in our observance at all. But now that he is gone, I tell you candidly, I fear my own weakness and tepidity'.²⁶ His monks were to find the same. After his departure for Europe on 15 March 1851, the Journal of the monastery, written by one of the monks, which noted events of interest, recorded for 27 March:

When the second bell was rung for Vespers today, only two Religious and one Novice were ready to enter the choir. This may be partly accounted for by the sickness of some of the Brethren; though it is to be feared there is also a little negligence.

And in July of the same year when the Feast of St Benedict was solemnly commemorated, the writer noted 'that there was a very sensible falling off from the joyful festivity, manifested on former occasions... The Choir was rather thinly attended'.²⁷

Given that he had few natural qualities and no training to prepare him for the office of Prior, what chance did Gregory have of succeeding, once in that position? The situation that presented itself to him was of a monastery being founded to train priests to serve the mission. There were no monks of any experience to lay the foundations on solidly Benedictine lines, to impregnate the work with the Benedictine spirit. The wants of the mission were so great that they cried out to be fulfilled, and the apostolic heart of Polding could not resist them.

²⁵ *Rule of St. Benedict*, Ch. II, p. 21.

²⁶ Sister Benedict to Prioress of Princethorpe, 14 March 1851, S.A.A.

²⁷ 11 July 1851, S.A.A.

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The spiritual training of the monks took a second place to the pastoral needs of the people. Yet what Polding and Gregory failed to see was that in sending out priests who were supposedly monks and who had little but the O.S.B. after their name to prove it, they were not fulfilling those needs. The source of vocations to the Order was the uneducated (for the most part) Irish colonials or the second-rate of the English monasteries, or young men from Ireland who had done most of their preparation for the priesthood at home before coming to join the monastery of St Mary's. With all this Gregory was Vicar-General and the constant companion of Polding on his missionary journeys. The Benedictine Journal records eight absences from the monastery from May to December 1848, most of these for a period of two weeks or over. The year 1849 follows this pattern, so we can presume the years before and after were much the same.

These absences of Polding and Gregory meant that the young monks were under the influence of non-Benedictine clergy, who were not possessed of the Benedictine spirit. One of these, Peter Magganotto, was a Passionist who reached Sydney at the beginning of 1848. He came, against the better judgment of his Father-General, to join the one Passionist left at Stradbroke Island, and eventually to open a novitiate, but by the time he arrived, the other had left for South America. He was not happy, particularly since he felt that Polding had shown him little consideration on the trip out, and one of the monks had informed him that Gregory remonstrated with the Archbishop for bringing him, as 'his presence will be a source of trouble'.²⁸ Against his will, he stayed at St Mary's and continued to teach theology, which he had already begun to do to the students on the voyage out. He was intelligent, 'the most learned [of the group] at Sydney', according to his fellow-Passionist, Dominic Barberi. Despite, or perhaps because of, his superior qualities, he was not contented. He did not get on with Gregory, who did not give him much reason to do so, if Magganotto speaks of him without bias. On the other hand, Barberi wrote of Magganotto: 'He is a very difficult man and will always be so, no matter where he is'.²⁹ On arrival, he asked Gregory about his brother-Passionists, and related to Barberi that the Vicar-General coldly replied by demanding:

²⁸ Magganotto to Barberi, 15 Nov. 1848, quoted in Thorpe, *The First Mission to Australian Aborigines*, p. 235.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

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'Have you been authorised by your Superiors in Rome to make such an enquiry?' I answered that I was not, but that being my brothers in religion I was interested in them. 'Well, well,' he then said, 'Vaccari has gone to Valparaiso, and the others have gone to Dr. Brady'. I am convinced that he has forbidden the other religious here who are in the know to tell me anything about the matter. For the rest, I am always treated as a man who is in the way.³⁰

He claimed that Polding and Gregory wanted him to grow tired of the place and ask to leave.

Some months after his arrival, Gregory came to him at one o'clock one day, told him the Archbishop had appointed him priest-in-charge at Windsor, with a government salary, and that he had to be ready to leave at four o'clock that same afternoon. When he objected that the time was too short, that he needed advice on his duties, Gregory, he said, replied with his accustomed despotic air: 'When we have decided upon a matter it has to be done, and you will have to go. Therefore you will set out at four o'clock'. The upshot of it all was that the matter was discussed with the Archbishop, and Magganotto remained at St Mary's to teach theology in the monastery. Barberi, the recipient of the letter giving all this information, sent it on to the Father-General at Magganotto's request, and advised that it had to be taken '*cum grano salis*', as Magganotto had a particular talent for 'giving things the colour of his own mood'.³¹ Magganotto taught theology to the young men under Gregory's jurisdiction until 1853. It was alleged that the immediate cause of departure was his opposition to the idea of a Benedictine diocese, an idea which he openly expressed to the clergy in a retreat. Whatever is the truth of this, it was evident he was not in agreement with the ecclesiastical authorities, and whatever good he may have done for the people outside the monastery, he would have done nothing to foster in the young monks a love of their vocation and an understanding of their life as missionary-monks.

The monks also came into contact with Irish secular clergy, who often stayed in the monastery on their arrival in the colony or who came back for retreats. They were men independent, to a large extent, as to means and movement.

One of the young men, Ryan Sheehy, who left the monastery to

³⁰ Ibid., p. 235.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 236, 238.

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return to Tasmania, gave expression to the feeling that had seeped through to the monks who had vowed themselves to poverty and obedience—'Ogh! a monk', he wrote, referring to one he had known, 'a good job if he were away from there and over here with us as a good secular priest'.³² Obligations came to be looked on as restrictions which kept them from doing the good they felt capable of. To live in an exciting colonial society, particularly at the time of the gold rush, and not to be in the midst of it, was more than some restless men could bear—a feeling that was only aggravated by living in close contact with priests who did not share their restrictions.

This problem cannot be laid at the door of the secular clergy. The fault lies rather with the type of person admitted to the monastery. St Benedict lays down that an easy entrance be not granted to one that comes 'to change his life'. Polding's plan of an abbey-diocese did not allow of too much discretion in the admitting of postulants, if there were to be priests to carry on the work of the mission. Priests coming into the diocese were encouraged to enter the monastery, and there were some who did, to the detriment of the Benedictine peace. Had the monastery been well established with monks impregnated with the Benedictine spirit, Polding and Gregory could have been more cautious in their choice of subjects. But they were faced with the needs of the mission, and the choice fell on supplying these needs rather than on building a solid Benedictine community. Polding admitted to Propaganda 'all the things that were done in error from the beginning in the Sydney monastery'.³³ Young men, novices or postulants, brought out from Downside or Ampleforth, were often an unsettling influence. For this Davis partly blamed Polding, who, he said, 'has confided much in Providence and from this circumstance I apprehend that he does not fully acquaint parties before engaging them in Europe with all the hardships they may have to encounter in this remote country'.³⁴

In October 1847 Polding left England with a contingent which included Peter Magganotto and five young Benedictines. One, Brother Edmund Moore, wrote enthusiastically 'that St. Mary's is more of a monastery than St. Gregory's at Downside'.³⁵ One year later

³² Ryan Sheehy to J. Sheridan Moore, 3 Dec. 1850, M.L.

³³ 18 Dec. 1863, S.A.A.

³⁴ Davis to Prior of Downside, 12 Dec. 1849, D.A.

³⁵ To Brother Alphonsus Morrall, 8 Feb. 1848, D.A.

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he had changed his tone. He had left England under the impression that the Constitutions of the English Benedictines would be observed almost to the letter. Instead of the Constitutions he found 'not so much as one Rule of any kind by which the House was governed'.³⁶ When he went to the Archbishop he learned that there was a set of Rules which the Archbishop himself had drawn up before he left England, but this was the first he knew of it. He then told the Archbishop that he regretted ever leaving England. Five months before, one of the young men, Brother Edmund Caldwell, who had come out at the same time, left the monastery and went to Adelaide to work in that diocese. Shortly afterwards Edmund's brother, Bernard, and Brother Edmund Moore returned to Downside. The fact that their departure is not noted in the Benedictine Journal for 1849 would seem to indicate the spirit of loyalty that prevailed in the community at this time. When Moore wrote to the Father President a vindication of his and Brother Bernard's action, he blamed Gregory for the discontent he claimed was evident in half the community. He told the President that when Brother Bernard had asked Gregory what he would do if one of the monks came to him to say he was not satisfied, Gregory had replied, 'I would immediately send him home to his father'. And this, Moore commented, was said of a professed religious.³⁷ He could have added with equal right that it showed that Gregory had no time for those who, having put their hand to the plough, turned back.

The Benedictine Journal gives no impression of this discontent in the years 1848-9. On the contrary, there is an atmosphere of joy and fervour coming through the pages. Gregory's Benedictine sister, who came out in 1848, was very impressed with the religious discipline of the monastery, as was her companion. If we can judge by the letters of these unsettled young monks, the life was hard. The food was sparse, and, according to Gregory's reasoning, should be worse on feast days.³⁸ Yet this was balanced by a seemingly happy community life with plenty of days of complete relaxation, spent mainly on the water, in the holidays. The tone of the Journal changed, and 23 October 1851 was noted as a very important day, for on that day expression was given to the doubts that had existed in the minds of

³⁶ Ibid., 25 Feb. 1849, D.A.

³⁷ 18 Oct. 1849, D.A.

³⁸ Edmund Moore to A. Morrall, 18 Feb. 1848, D.A.

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some of the religious as to the validity of their vows and as to the state of the Benedictine Order in the colony. Though the reclaimants stated that a meeting with Polding and his Coadjutor 'fully satisfied their difficulties and removed their doubts, thus restoring their unanimity and good feeling',³⁹ future events proved that this restoration was but a passing phase, if one at all, and showed that their difficulties lay within themselves—in their inability to live by their obligations. They laid the blame for their discontent, however, at Gregory's door, at the system of government followed in St Mary's. The monks, they claimed, had to be 'abject, groveling and slavish' to fit into the required pattern.⁴⁰ An Irish secular priest, Patrick Farrelly, who came to the colony in 1838 and who had been made President of the seminary in 1841, was received into the monastery at the end of 1843 or the beginning of 1844. An older man, who had been accustomed to a position of authority, he did not find it easy to submit to the authoritarian manner of the Prior, and soon found himself the centre of a discontented group. That they kept their discontent in check until after Gregory's departure for Rome in 1850 is obvious, as Polding asked Farrelly why he had not spoken when Gregory was in the colony.⁴¹ A visit to the Bathurst goldfields and the gift of a large nugget of gold which his monastic profession obliged him to give to the monastery did not help him to settle down under the obligations he had freely chosen. Frequent contact with his brother, a layman, and his friends among the secular clergy only accentuated his isolation and his feelings of frustration. These friends, too, were ready to help him in his efforts to free himself from his obligations—one allowing him to use his presbytery as a depot for his mail, which would thus not pass through the hands of his Superiors. He wrote to one, asking him to pass this information on to others, assuring them there was 'nothing to fear on that score'.

His chief accomplice in the monastery was Brother Laurence (Sheridan Moore), who had come out with Bishop Charles Davis in December 1848. Moore was a brilliant young man who was probably irked by his less gifted Superior, who had become a rigid disciplinarian to protect himself against such men, since he could not

³⁹ 18 Nov. 1851, Benedictine Journal, S.A.A.

⁴⁰ 'Your fault has been that you are not sufficiently abject, groveling and slavish', one of the monks told the two returning to Downside (Moore to Father President, 18 Oct. 1849, D.A.).

⁴¹ Farrelly to J. S. Moore, 12 Dec. 1851, M.L.

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cope with them. Farrelly knew where to find a sympathetic ear when ranting against the ways of Gregory: 'Will not his Holiness say, that it is absolutely unsafe for such absolute powers to be in the hands of a Prelate who could write such letters.'⁴² 'I would like to have him cited before the authorities at Rome.'⁴³ For his underhand actions against Gregory, Farrelly was suspended by the Archbishop for six months, which only served to humiliate him and make him more determined to be released from his vows. To do this he had to find a cause which was more fitting than the denial of lawfully constituted authority.

Besides, my dear Moore [he wrote] I contended for a great principle, that of parochial residence. Had I obtained it a great matter would have been gained. And I, living close to my church would be quite happy. The principle of concentrating the whole of the ecclesiastical staff at St. Mary's is contrary to the express decrees of the Council of Trent.⁴⁴

He then proceeded to quote the decrees, stating that a parish priest must reside near his church in a presbytery, and if there is not a presbytery, one must be built. He is here hitting at the whole principle of an abbey-diocese, which, having been approved by the Church, did not come under the laws he was quoting. He had then to question the authenticity of the document setting up the monastery. He had entered the monastery after spending six years in the diocese as a secular priest. He had had time to observe Polding's plan for the establishment of the Church in the colony, and his entry into the monastery implied his acceptance of it. The principle he contended for was his own independence. To gain this, he appealed to Rome. Gregory had refused him his fare and the right to apply to friends for it. However, in 1851 he went of his own accord and was dispensed from his vows, not because they were invalid, but because he could no longer live by them. He was in Rome at the same time as Gregory, who wrote to Polding that he longed to be at sea as it was the only place where he had peace. 'In Europe I am suspected,' he complained, 'in Sydney, despised or hated.'⁴⁵ The stories of Farrelly and of the young monks who had returned to England had paved the way for the calumnies that would lead to Gregory's recall.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 2 Dec. 1851, M.L.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 12 Dec. 1851, M.L.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Undated letter, S.A.A.

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Farrelly's going did not bring peace to the monastery. Though Gregory was the excuse for their discontent, it was obviously more than that. Bishop Davis had come to the colony as titular Bishop of Maitland and Coadjutor to Polding. As Maitland was but a titular See, its extent was limited to the town of East Maitland. When Polding was in Rome in 1854, it was proposed to erect Maitland into a separate diocese, but on the death of Davis, Polding put an end to the negotiations. Davis's duties in Sydney were so onerous that he never set foot in Maitland. Utterly different in temperament from Gregory, he was better suited to work with others and better qualified to train them to religious life. It is significant that Polding did not put such a man completely in charge of the monastery. It has, of course, to be considered that when Davis arrived all seemed well at the monastery and a change unnecessary. In any case, Polding would not have wished to remove Gregory from his position of authority. Davis, as Bishop, occupied a place of honour—Gregory, if no longer Prior, would hold none, and, as Polding wanted to make him Bishop of one of the new dioceses he contemplated, he may well have thought that the office of Prior was a good stepping-stone to such a position. Polding seemed unwilling to delegate authority. It is probable that he feared that Davis's competent management of the monastery might rob him of his control of it. Since the monastery was the pivotal point of the abbey-diocese, he wanted to feel his ways were being followed, which was the case when Gregory was in charge. However, in the absence of Polding and Gregory, Davis was Prior of the monastery and the monks responded to his interest in them.

I have been from time to time tormented with thoughts of dissatisfaction even up to the present [wrote Edmund Moore], but now I am happy to say that things begin to wear a brighter aspect and I hope and expect that the Monastery, which has been given up to Dr. Davis' management will under his fostering care thrive apace.

After commenting that he was not the only discontented monk in the house, that three had recently left and others had come to the same decision, he concluded that 'it is the hope and warmest wish of everyone that, even when the Archbishop and Dr. Gregory return after their three months' absence, His Lordship will be continued in this same office'.⁴⁶ Though Davis was not made Prior, he was in

⁴⁶ Edmund Moore to Morrall, 25 Feb. 1849, D.A.

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the monastery and available to the monks. His main work became that of education. He was responsible for the training of the young boys in the monastery and for the establishment and administration of Lyndhurst Academy. Sheridan Moore, as one of the prefects, came directly under his authority. Moore soon complained about the Principal of the College, Maurus O'Connell, an Australian Benedictine, who had always had the confidence of his Superiors. Davis's reply to his letter shows that he knew his man and that he was well capable of handling him. Gregory was away, so 'the improper conduct' of O'Connell towards him was blamed for his 'present unhappy state', though, as Davis reminded him, his sentiments towards O'Connell had once been very different. He then put his finger on the point of Sheridan Moore's troubles. 'If the fitness of any Superior to govern, were to be decided by the individual opinion of one subject to him', he wrote, 'there would, I apprehend, be an end of all authority.'⁴⁷ He was prepared to counsel him as a Superior and as a friend, but would not listen to complaints unless O'Connell were present or unless they were written down for investigation. There is no evidence that Moore pursued this point further. It serves to underline the fact that he could not be happy under any authority.

When Gregory returned from Europe in 1853, Moore was still in the monastery, to become chief protagonist in the struggle of some monks for release from their obligations. He had come across one of Gregory's letters to Polding, read it, and made extracts from it to use in his cause. In his own words, one glance at the letter was enough to astonish, to electrify him.⁴⁸ He considered the letter a public document, as the monks had been trying in vain to get from Polding a copy of the rescript setting up the monastery of St Mary's. According to Moore, they were refused; in consequence, they considered it their right to read anything from any authority in the monastery, as they became public documents of the monastery if they fell into their hands! The account of a public meeting published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 28 March 1854 speaks of 'papers and private letters', and copies distributed among the community and elsewhere. Moore, in his self-justification to the *Herald* (which was never published), said 'that one of his [Gregory's] letters fell by mere chance

⁴⁷ Davis to J. Sheridan Moore, 15 Oct. 1852, S.A.A.

⁴⁸ Letter to the Editor, *S.M.H.*, undated but 1854, S.A.A. This letter, though signed 'Lector', was found among Moore's papers.

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into my hands'. In this, in his usual style, Gregory had written, 'to your Lordship I send my love—to McEncroe and Peter my toe'.⁴⁹ The petition the monks sent to Rome in 1854 quoted other extracts. 'Let the heads of the slimy serpents [alluding to two priests, one of whom had written an account of the mission to Rome, assisted by the other] that are crawling about the Archbishop, be crushed.' He exhorted the Archbishop 'to expel', 'to kick out' those who opposed him.⁵⁰ Farrelly rejoiced to have those letters to make a good case against Gregory at Rome.

It was slanderous circulation of these letters, and Polding's feeling that he had not the confidence of his people, that prompted him and Gregory to leave suddenly for Europe early in March 1854. At a public meeting held in the cathedral, Roger Therry informed the people that the Archbishop had resigned his See. Complaints had come to him, Therry said, that there were not sufficient priests in the archdiocese because he wanted no Irish or secular clergy, only Benedictines; and that he gave his favour to institutions ill-designed to serve the interests of religion. Therry pointed out the injustice of these statements, yet they could well have been begun by the discontented monks themselves. It was discovered later that John Gourbillon, a Benedictine priest, was one of the principal suppliers to the *Freeman's Journal* of the calumnies against Gregory.⁵¹

After the departure of Polding and Gregory the archdiocese and the monastery were in charge of Davis, the only man in the colony who could do anything to restore peace. His death in May 1854 put an end to any hope of success. The monastery was left without any real Superior, and in September of the same year the monks sent two of their number, Mellitus Corish and Anselm Curtis, to Rome to seek from Propaganda the validity of their position as monks, and to present a petition setting out their difficulties. Curtis and Corish wrote a letter of farewell, and published it in the *Freeman's Journal* of 23 September. They did not proclaim the object of their journey, but assured their friends that they were acting 'sincerely and conscientiously'. Corish had spent the years after his ordination working in close collaboration with Farrelly in the giving of missions to the

⁴⁹ Undated, S.A.A.

⁵⁰ As quoted in Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 220.

⁵¹ Polding to Geoghegan, 9 July 1859, S.A.A.

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districts around Sydney,⁵² so it is not surprising that he was in the forefront of the move for secularisation. On behalf of the monks of St Mary's, the two petitioned for a reclamation against their solemn religious profession, and for secularisation if their vows proved valid. They asked, finally, that Gregory might be removed from all authority over them. The petition they carried listed their difficulties under three headings.

Their arguments for secularisation were specious. The mission would never succeed, they claimed, unless it was in the hands of the secular clergy, for only then would there be a flow of native vocations. They argued that the Irish had no knowledge of regular clergy and particularly of the Benedictines; they distrusted them, and thus they were prevented from doing good. Their conviction that living in the monastery away from their parishes with no means to help people financially was a stumbling block to the progress of religion,⁵³ showed the strength of Farrelly's influence. What he and they virtually said was that to be a Benedictine, subject to monastic discipline, meant that it was impossible to be a true missionary, a true witness to Christ in the times and circumstances in which they lived.

If the first or second request had been granted there was no need to add the third, because they would, by the very fact, have been removed from Gregory's authority as Prior. There was entailed a request for the removal of Gregory from the position of Vicar-General and from all authority in the colony. 'We are convinced', they stated, 'that matters will never go well in this mission, as long as Dr. Gregory is in authority.'⁵⁴ They gave their reasons for such a statement. As far as they personally were concerned, they feared him, knowing that anyone who opposed him would suffer. His influence over the Archbishop had meant the continuance of their unhappy state. They misquoted a sentence from one of his letters to prove that he had no loyalty to Rome. 'I fear the Italian character', he had written, which they translated, 'I fear the Italian Church'. And though Gregory had pointed this out to them when they accosted him with these words, they still based one of their reasons for suspect-

⁵² Benedictine Journal, 21, 29 Jan., 9 Feb. 1849, S.A.A.

⁵³ From the copy of the petition to the Cardinal of the Sacred Congregation De Propaganda Fide which was forwarded to Dr Polding, as quoted in Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 217.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

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ing him on this false evidence. He was so unpopular in Europe that he turned prospective missionaries away from the country, they went on, and if they had known him better, they would never have submitted themselves to his authority. They did not tell how, a few years previously, before his departure for Europe he had sent for each grade of the community, and bade them a loving farewell—'very few words passed on either side, all were so deeply affected at the thoughts of the separation', the *Journal* recorded.⁵⁵ There were but a few who were more vociferous than the many and who were heard.

The petition, though it did not succeed in secularising the monks, as their vows were proclaimed valid, did bring forth from Propaganda decrees which put an end to Polding's plans for a Benedictine diocese, and caused him to resign his See. Rome, however, refused to accept his resignation, and expressed its confidence in his administration. Curtis and Corish returned on the same ship as Polding and Gregory, their doubts apparently dispelled. In the name of both, Corish read a statement which acknowledged they had been in the wrong, and gave expression to their determination to be of 'one mind and one heart' with their Superiors.⁵⁶ Rome took no action with regard to Gregory, but it stored in its memory the picture the monks had painted of him as an imprudent and rigid Superior.

Nearly a month after his return, Polding assembled the community to promulgate formally the Constitutions of the monastery. Gregory had told Edmund Moore and his group in 1849 that the Rule followed in the monastery was that of St Benedict 'as far as missionary duties and circumstances will permit'.⁵⁷ The publication of Constitutions for St Mary's Monastery, Sydney, meant that what formerly had been an experiment was now strictly formulated. As these Constitutions had to be formulated in Australia, approved by Rome, then printed in England, it is certain that work on them began well before 1855, for in that year they were printed in England. Their surprisingly optimistic tone, in view of the events of 1854, did not, then, necessarily reflect the attitude of Polding and Gregory to the future of St Mary's. The Constitutions underlined the importance of the monastic life and the monastery in themselves and

⁵⁵ *Benedictine Journal*, 14 March 1851, S.A.A.

⁵⁶ *Empire*, 28 Jan. 1856.

⁵⁷ Moore to Morrall, 8 Feb. 1848, D.A.

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placed strong emphasis on traditional abbatial government.⁵⁸ Whatever the feelings of Polding and Gregory, the promulgation of the decrees meant they were making another bid to establish Benedictinism in Australia, even though the plan of an abbey-diocese was no longer recognised by Rome. This time, in theory at least, the immediate needs of the mission were subject to the training of the monk. But within the monastery were men who had reclaimed against their religious profession because they believed that the mission's needs would be better fulfilled without this bond. Three, including Sheridan Moore, left in 1856, and others later, for reasons which proved that it was not the good of the mission that was really uppermost in their minds. The monastery struggled on, making no real contribution to the Christian life in the colony. On 2 October 1866 Polding was writing to Gregory, then in England: 'Let us make one more trial: begin again with a small number far from Sydney and its wickedness and bring them up as true monks ought to be'. Again in 1871 he told Gregory he had no hopes for the Benedictine Institute, 'which I now fear will wither away'.⁵⁹ Austin Sheehy, a Benedictine and Vicar-General to Polding, had written to him in 1869 that he believed it would be better to break up the Institute and get the professed secularised—a step he believed would be acceptable to all.⁶⁰

In 1875 Vaughan, Coadjutor to Polding, saw that the Archbishop's heart was set on the Benedictines, but he saw, too, there was no possibility of building on the present elements, since these lacked real training. 'It is a thousand pities—for the Order is held in great disrepute.'⁶¹ But, it can be argued, the Benedictine Order was never really established in Australia and Benedictinism was never really tried. The men who became to the people representatives of the Benedictine way of life were oddly assorted, inadequately trained, and sent to the mission prematurely. For this, Gregory must take his share of the blame. The monastery had been founded out of time, out of place; and the men who founded it must be held responsible for a lack of perception, for seeing an ideal but no practical means

⁵⁸ It is interesting to note that the man who restored this form of government to the English Congregation was a monk of Downside—Edmund Ford—who lived in Sydney for some time while St Mary's monastery still existed.

⁵⁹ 2, 6 Oct. 1866, quoted in Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 320, 366.

⁶⁰ 15 Sept. 1869, S.A.A.

⁶¹ Vaughan to Father President, 13 May 1875, D.A.

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of carrying it out. Though there was a need for men who by their vows could withdraw from their work in order to dedicate themselves to it more completely, it was vain to hope that all men could fit into a monastic pattern. As Van Zeller said, if you stretch out monasticism to cover mankind, 'you get it so thin that it does not even cover monks'.⁶² Gregory's own lack of training, his inability to handle difficult people, his 'coarseness of manner' (as Willson of Hobart labelled it), certainly played their part in accentuating an already difficult situation, but the failure of the monastery cannot be laid just there. Davis, with all the gifts that Gregory lacked, could do little in the battle against the Catholic colonial set-up and the refusal of the English Benedictine Congregation to accept the monastery as their responsibility. They are not to be blamed for this. It was a fact that had to be faced realistically by Polding, first and foremost, and it was this lack of realism in the face of unfavourable circumstances that can be called the basic cause of failure for the experiment in Benedictinisation in the colony.

⁶² *The Benedictine Idea*, p. 96.

Relations with Polding

WHEN Gregory first came to the colony, he came as a simple monk subject to his Superior, Polding. Though he eventually held positions of authority, he had always to maintain this basic relationship to Polding, and it is on this, ultimately, that he must be judged. The criterion of this judgment for a Benedictine must always be filial obedience. Obedience is not something peculiar to the monastic life. What distinguishes it from obedience given to a civil authority is the motive for which it is done. St Benedict says of those who obey that they

Choose the narrow way, of which the Lord saith: 'Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life'; so that living not by their own will, nor obeying their own desires and pleasures, but walking according to the judgment and command of another, and dwelling in community, they desire to have an Abbot over them. Such as these without doubt fulfil that saying of the Lord: 'I came not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him who sent me'.¹

Such a way of life is the way of self sacrifice. Gregory showed he understood this when he inscribed a set of breviaries given to Subiaco with the words: 'The spirit of our Holy Rule is the spirit of self-sacrifice—to act, and suffer for God's sake whatever he may allow to happen to us'.² A man can be submissive to authority for various reasons. Fear, an inability to think and act for himself, or an ingratiating spirit can form all or part of his motives. The test comes from a willingness to suffer. For a man with a strong, decisive character, the test comes in his being ready to submerge his own views to the extent necessary to carry out the policy of the Superior, to become identified with that policy, and to accept the criticisms that follow as though he alone were responsible for them. The only motive that

¹ *Rule of St. Benedict*, Ch. V, p. 37.

² Breviaries at Benedictine Priory, Pennant Hills, moved from the original Subiaco.

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will successfully stand this test is that of seeing in the Superior one 'who holds the place of Christ'.

Gregory was a strong character who exercised a considerable influence over Polding, who in turn, in the opinion of Vaughan and others, 'ever has been and will be to the last in the hands of tools'.³ In Rome in 1840, Nicholson, a Carmelite priest (later Archbishop of Corfu), who had been asked by Polding to come to Australia as his Vicar-General, confided to Ullathorne his fears of what would happen if he adopted a different point of view from that of Gregory. Ullathorne assured him that no trouble would arise from that quarter, although Gregory was an intimate friend of the Archbishop's.⁴ Willson of Hobart, in despair of settling the dispute with Therry, claimed in 1849 that Polding was surrounded by men who 'allowed him not to have a will of his own',⁵ referring mainly to Gregory, who had so angered him the year before by his haughty attitude to the affair. One of the complaints made to Rome against Gregory was that he had too great an influence over the Archbishop, and used it to the detriment of religion. In 1859 the *Freeman's Journal* reported of a public meeting held in 1854 that all parties present then felt how much His Grace had allowed himself to be influenced by his counsel.⁶ They claimed that Polding would take no steps against Gregory's advice and that Gregory in the first place owed his position to 'His Grace's favour and affection'.⁷ They blamed Polding for not vetoing Gregory's appointment of a Protestant doctor to the board of the Catholic Orphanage. 'If His Grace chose to abdicate his governing functions on behalf of the Rt. Rev. Abbot and content himself with a "titular position"', that act did not relieve Polding of his responsibility.⁸ An 'over-indulgent affection to one individual' was how the *Freeman's Journal* again put the point.⁹ All these remarks were aired in the year 1859, when opposition to Gregory had reached its peak. They were, at the same time, an indirect means of criticising Polding. Both men were under attack from a section of the laity

³ Vaughan to Guy, 15 Jan. 1875, D.A.

⁴ Ullathorne, *From Cabin Boy to Archbishop*, p. 200.

⁵ Willson to Heptonstall, 18 May 1849, quoted in Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, Vol. II, p. 149.

⁶ *F.J.*, 12 March 1859, letter of Veritas.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 2 March 1859.

⁸ *Ibid.*, speech of Denichy.

⁹ 2 April 1859.

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who wanted a greater share in Church government. From their arrival in the colony they had faced many trials together, from the struggles of the infant Benedictine community to the criticisms of the 1850s which made both men leave the colony and Polding offer to resign his archbishopric, and which culminated in these outbursts of 1859. Their friendship, established over long years and on a firm basis, was strengthened by these difficulties. Those who wrote in Gregory's defence admitted that he did have considerable influence with Polding, but it was of a modifying nature.¹⁰ In any case, Polding would not allow himself to be led where he did not want to go.¹¹

The enemies of the 'powers' claimed that Gregory was the policy-maker of the archdiocese; their friends agreed to his influence but maintained that the Archbishop made the final decision. What proof have we that Gregory was not all the time doing his own bidding, even though in a subordinate position? Everyone who had dealings with Polding in an official capacity complained of his lack of organisation, of his want of decision. Ullathorne, his first Vicar-General, found his position very trying, as Polding was more attracted to missionary work than business affairs. These were left to Ullathorne. Polding 'had not that valuable faculty of saying out in a few words all that was essential for putting one at the very centre of a subject under consideration'. He could not 'detail a case well', Ullathorne complained, and often failed to give all the essential points. Polding told Ullathorne that in drawing the burden of the affairs of the Church both were in the shafts. Yet, Ullathorne commented, though he sheltered Polding before the public and never acted except by Polding's direction, he was left to bear 'the exclusive responsibility before the world'.¹² However, men could not fail to respond to the warm humanity of Polding. He had been novice-master to Ullathorne. 'His heart was of that character', Ullathorne related, 'which claims from those under its influence an affection and a loyalty of that kind which sons give to their mothers.'¹³ He was a wonderful missionary, he admitted, doing remarkable work among the people. It was doubly hard, then, to go against him when it was necessary.

¹⁰ Kenny to Barnabo, 17 May 1862, D.A.

¹¹ Walsh to Barnabo, 16 May 1862, D.A.

¹² Ullathorne, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

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'No one but who has experienced it knows the pain of the evil effect on self, of being obliged to govern and almost command your own superior and he a Bishop', Ullathorne groaned.¹⁴ When he felt a change was necessary, he left nothing undone until the change was made. On returning from Europe in 1838, he was dissatisfied with the state of affairs in the diocese. Though Vicar-General, he was sent to Parramatta, but was still expected to run the diocese, as he complained, to bear the brunt of the attacks, and to keep the episcopal office in 'the odour of sanctity'.¹⁵ He found this almost impossible, especially as often real prudence lay in promptitude when Polding was reluctant to act. Ullathorne could not suffer such a state of affairs, so spoke plainly to Polding, stating he was prepared to resign his office as Vicar-General and keep his mission—that he had, in fact, sent in his resignation to the Governor. Polding acted quickly. He brought Ullathorne to his house and sent away the two priests who had resided there since Ullathorne's absence in Europe, of whom one was antagonistic to Ullathorne. Ullathorne was optimistic. 'Our new arrangements have worked admirably', he exulted. 'The Bishop has got rid of that terrible indecision of mind which made himself and his mission miserable.'¹⁶ By the end of the next year the situation was again impossible from Ullathorne's point of view, and he left the mission.

His fellow bishops continued to complain about Polding's want of decision until his death. At the time of the Hobart dispute, Willson despaired of ever knowing where he stood in relation to Polding, claiming that he had reversed (as much as black is opposed to white) his decisions and opinions given in Rome.¹⁷ When Goold was in Rome in 1859, acting for Polding, he found great difficulty in doing so because the Archbishop's acts were so contradictory.¹⁸ One of the purposes of his being in Rome at that particular time was to counteract the influence of McEncroe, who was in Rome, and whom Polding suspected of furthering the interests of some troublesome Irish priests in the archdiocese. Yet McEncroe came to Rome, Goold complained,

¹⁴ Ullathorne to Brown, 18 Oct. 1839, quoted in Birt, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 439-40.

¹⁵ Ullathorne, *From Cabin Boy to Archbishop*, p. 156.

¹⁶ Ullathorne to Brown, 4 Dec. 1839, quoted in Birt, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 440-1.

¹⁷ Willson to Heptonstall, 18 May 1849, quoted in *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 149.

¹⁸ Goold to Geoghegan, undated but probably beginning of 1859, S.A.A.

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with a kindly letter of introduction from Polding and a highly commendatory one from Gregory. When writing to Goold, Polding denounced McEncroe; when speaking to McEncroe himself he was kind, even affectionate.¹⁹ 'Ah! Dr. Polding', Goold sighed at another instance. 'How is it that he reversed the decision of the Bishops in the case of Shannon? This is the second time that he has pronounced on my acts.'²⁰

Gregory could not have been blind to these faults of the Archbishop. On the contrary, he could not have worked so closely and so long with Polding without being very aware of them. There are no letters of his to record the difficulties that he encountered because of them; there is nothing written by him to indicate that he suffered on account of them. If Polding's character called forth a filial response from Ullathorne, Gregory's affectionate nature would have responded more fully—he had 'ever had but one heart with him as his most devoted child and disciple'.²¹ He would never have admitted even to himself that Polding's indecision was a cause of suffering for him. Where Ullathorne suffered but convinced himself that the general good of all demanded that he suffer in this way no more, Gregory suffered but felt that this was something which affected him alone and the common good lay in his accepting it as part of his special calling as a Benedictine. This was the light in which he saw his vocation. It was not only his love for Polding which made him act thus. He looked at all this in the framework of his life as a Benedictine monk.

Courage he claimed he had. He was not frightened to speak out when the occasion demanded, or to hold to a line of action already decided upon. T. C. Makinson, private secretary to Polding, knew him well and remained always a true friend. When there was a question of Gregory's going to Rome to plead his cause, Makinson feared he would ruin his chances by his blunt Saxon speech. 'Go cannily like a Scotchman and don't make any damaging speeches', he wrote to him.²² Yet it took some time to persuade him to go to Rome—the better thing, he felt, was to accept what had happened

¹⁹ Goold to Geoghegan, 9 Jan. 1859, S.A.A.

²⁰ Goold to Geoghegan, 10 June 1859, S.A.A.

²¹ Gregory to Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, undated but about 1862, D.A.

²² 20 June 1861, D.A.

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in a spirit of self-sacrifice. He had to be convinced that the clearing of his name was important for the welfare of the Church and his Order, and not a personal gratification, before he would act.

The same principle motivated him during his twenty-five years in the colony. He rarely answered a public attack on his name: this could have come from an attitude of contempt towards his attackers. Yet where he felt the good of the Church demanded it, he came forth in its defence. He did defend himself against the assertions of Nagle,²³ but as a public figure in the Church this needed to be rectified. At the time of the outcry against removing a Protestant Bible from the ward at St Vincent's Hospital, when his name was involved, he publicly disclaimed having anything to do with the affair, as this would have put it on an official basis, whereas it could be regarded as the mistaken action of one priest with no further implications.

How this attitude affected his relationship with Polding we can only deduce from Polding's feelings for Gregory. He told Gregory that no one had understood him as he did. Knowing his wants and the weak parts of his character, he knew just where and when support was needed. His own weaknesses he himself admitted—procrastination, indecision.²⁴ And it was here that Gregory filled in for him. It had been the same with Ullathorne, so that Polding said they had made a bishop between them. Polding leaned on both, and both responded differently. Ullathorne's relationship with Polding, at least in his capacity of Vicar-General, was on a business-like basis. It was easier for him to judge the situation objectively and to look at things as if he, personally, were not involved. The relationship between Polding and Gregory was that of friends. Even when Polding had Davis as his Coadjutor and acknowledged him to be a great consolation and a most efficient support, he still longed for Gregory's return from Europe, feeling the trials he had to face were greater because of his absence.²⁵ He could so forget all that happened while Gregory was in the colony as to write to Goold in 1869 that it was generally remarked that 'with the departure of Dr Gregory our misfortunes began'.²⁶ Polding admired Gregory. When the latter was

²³ See Chapter 3.

²⁴ Polding to Gregory, 6 Oct. 1871, quoted in Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 365, 349.

²⁵ Polding to Princethorpe, 6 March 1852, S.A.A.

²⁶ 22 Sept. 1869, quoted in Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 356.

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living in England, Polding wrote to him of the missionary work he could do in that country, referring to him as an excellent preacher.²⁷ But the greatest good he could do, he said, was simply being what he was—a good priest and monk.²⁸ To the Prioress of Princethorpe he spoke in glowing terms of his singleness of heart and purpose; his love of his vocation; his firm uncompromisingness of principle; his piety and his zeal. It was impossible to know all this, he claimed, and not have for him an esteem that mounted to veneration.²⁹

He liked to think of himself in his relation to Gregory as 'a sincere friend and loving father'. When he was settled in England, Polding cautioned him to be more discreet in his doings. Photography had become one of Gregory's hobbies and Polding felt he was laying himself open to the 'censure of the over-righteous' by photographing the Benedictine nuns at Stanbrook. 'Do not treat this as one of my fancies', he pleaded, as he imagined Gregory smiling at his fears. 'Depend upon it Sam Slick's "sayin's and doin's" will not have a more extensive publication than your own.'³⁰

The older Polding grew, the lonelier he became and the more he leaned on Gregory, though they were separated by thousands of miles. In 1870 he was writing to tell Gregory how comforted he had been by the affection so evident in his letters. 'Comforted, yet not altogether so, for I feel, more than ever, my great loss in being deprived of your aid and counsel.' He realised for the first time the vacuity caused by the absence of a friend.³¹

At Sydney he found 'a cold unsympathising atmosphere', but was ready to admit that he may have been attributing to others a change that had in reality taken place in himself. Makinson was the only one left to whom he could speak without reserve. Everything that happened in the colony he shared with Gregory, as he knew that his doings were of interest to him. Gregory's letters he relished for the 'good sensible advice' they contained. No one gave him that now,

²⁷ 21 April 1863, D.A. Andrew Byrne, a schoolteacher in the colony, observed in his diary in 1846 that Gregory 'could not preach at all'. He remarked at the same time that he was a holy man, was very penetrating and observant, and that he and the Archbishop loved each other as father and son (manuscript copy, S.A.A.).

²⁸ Polding to Gregory, 21 April 1863, D.A.

²⁹ Polding to Princethorpe, 14 March 1857.

³⁰ Polding to Gregory, 19 Oct. 1861, D.A.

³¹ 25 March 1870, and 6 Oct. 1871, quoted in Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 361, 366.

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he remarked, for no one understood him as well as Gregory. A refrain comes constantly through his letters: 'Dear Gregory, I wish you were with me'. He wanted him to come back and found at Wollongong or Twofold Bay another Benedictine monastery.³² But Gregory was not to return to Australia. After many requests on Polding's part, Roger Bede Vaughan was appointed his Coadjutor. Polding still wanted Gregory to come out, but Vaughan was not keen, feeling that 'his being there will without doubt affect me and my relations with the Archbishop and the diocese'. After his arrival in the colony he confirmed this judgment by stating that it 'would have been ruinous' had he come.³³ It is probable that Vaughan felt Polding's friendship for Gregory was so strong that had he been in the colony Polding would have listened to no one else. His opinion of Gregory was not high. Speaking of the Benedictines in New South Wales, he wrote to the President of the Congregation that 'nothing can be done with the present elements. When you remember that Dr. Gregory was the trainer and abbot, you may imagine that the teaching could not be very profound.'³⁴ Vaughan's concept of Benedictinism differed greatly from that of Polding and Gregory. It is not surprising, then, that he did not appreciate the type of monk formed by them.

'The Archbishop I respect and venerate. Dr. Gregory as an energetic man I honour', wrote the young Benedictine, Edmund Moore.³⁵ Someone had said that the characters of both blended together would form the model of a perfect man. But he felt that the good points of the one were tarnished by the failings of the other. Polding's dependence on Gregory was too great, and Gregory would have served his cause better by not always subordinating his views to those of Polding. The difficulty lay in his being unable to relate this with true monastic obedience. His was an immature attitude, but his training as a monk had been limited to his time of noviceship and Polding, even from the year of their arrival, leaned on him too heavily as a friend to develop it at a more mature level. If his concept of a Benedictine monk was limited, Gregory was faithful to the ideal as he saw it.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 365, 370, 320.

³³ Vaughan to President, 29 April 1873, 12 Feb. 1874, D.A.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 13 May 1875.

³⁵ Edmund Moore to President, 18 Oct. 1849, D.A.

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THERE had been many claims made against the administration of Polding and the rule of the Benedictines in the colony, a recurring one being that religious of other Orders were not welcome, that the Church suffered, and that not only was no effort made to bring them to its aid, but they were even shown they were not wanted. This charge would have carried more truth had it been said that Polding did not know how to handle other religious Orders once he got them out here and that his vision was not clear enough for him to see how they could fit effectively into the pattern of his mission. But for those who looked no further than the surface, it seemed that Polding and the Benedictines wanted none but Benedictines in the colony. For all that, where he saw a need that the Benedictines were not able to supply, Polding was pressing in his demands for outside help. He brought the Sisters of Charity into the archdiocese to care for the women convicts before he invited the Benedictine nuns to set up a school for young ladies. He brought out the Passionists to work among the Aborigines, and he succeeded in forcing the Superior General of the Christian Brothers to send out men to run his parochial schools. So the charge cannot be justified by the facts.

With the exception of the Marist Fathers, each group of religious who came into the colony in these early days left New South Wales because it felt its autonomy as an Order was threatened, and, as Gregory received a large share of the blame for this treatment, it would be as well to look at the motives underlying such action on the part of Polding and Gregory. When there was a question of establishing a Benedictine monastery in the colony, Ullathorne was the first to realise the necessity of making it independent of the English Congregation. He gave his reasons in a lengthy letter to Brown:

On the proposed connection between our Body in England and Australia, on mature deliberation, it appears to me, as also to Mr. Barber [President of the English Benedictine Congregation],

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impossible to have a practical connection of *Government* between the two countries, considering that the space of twelve months must be allowed for any mutual communication. Reverse the case: put yourself in our position; suppose the source of authority to be Australia, and England a province, you will at once, without my expanding the circumstances of the case, see the difficulty of anything like a practical exercise of authority, even in cases of appeal, and how much it must enfeeble and weaken the confidence of local authority. How difficult, again, for you in England, in Chapter or elsewhere, to reach the real merits of any of our circumstances. It appears to me, then . . . that a filiation, with its own internal structure of government, the Bishop Provincial, with due checks, is the only feasible and prudential plan. Its value to Australia would be unquestionable.¹

There was, then, in Polding's mind this very practical side to the question of being governed from afar. It was one thing, however, for the colonial Benedictines to be autonomous under their Benedictine 'Bishop Provincial'. It was vastly different for other Orders to be subject to a Benedictine bishop. There was, too, another reason, deeper, less tangible, but no less real. Polding's main purpose in setting up a monastery was to safeguard the monks and to ensure a more efficient running of the mission. His dream was to establish two monks and a lay brother at each station. But to carry out this dream he needed to have control of all human resources at the mission. If others were to come out to share his labours, then they must form a part of the whole. There was to be one body, the Church, with the Archbishop at its head.

This was a worthwhile dream, but Polding made one great mistake. He waited until the unsuspecting missionaries were in the country before he disclosed to them his plan. They were not even then introduced to its idealism; they simply experienced the brunt of its working. And as a plan it was far too idealistic. It did not take into consideration the difficulties to be encountered in trying to reduce secular clergy, non-Benedictine religious, and Benedictines, to a uniform working force. Though all shared a common vocation, each group was animated by its own spirit and worked within its pattern. The vitality generated by this diversity was outweighed in Polding's mind by the strength of a highly centralised government. Or it may be that Polding did not see quite far enough or clearly enough all the implications of his dream to carry it out effectively. He caught

¹ Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, Vol. I, p. 347.

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glimpses of a great ideal and set about attaining it without knowing exactly where he was going and why. It would have been well if the Benedictines alone worked the land, or if Polding had founded other Orders subject to his jurisdiction for his different works. This he did in the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, and the Superior General of the Christian Brothers suggested that he do the same to replace his men, offering to train the young men who volunteered for such work, and to send them to Polding before making their vows, as foundation stones of a new institute. There is no evidence of this being any more than a suggestion in the General's letter to I. Franzoni, Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda.

Colonial bishops were imbued with an overpowering sense of their authority. The Irishman, James Quinn, Bishop of Brisbane, for all his achievements, caused much suffering to those under him by his highly authoritarian attitude. He believed that 'there must be one head for success in all undertakings'.² Mother Vincent Whitty, Superior of the band of Sisters of Mercy whom Quinn brought with him to his diocese, was deposed by him because she would not submit to his demands to make changes in the Constitution. He replaced her with one of his own choice, and those who supported Mother Vincent were refused a voice in the Chapter of their Congregation. Quinn claimed it was for the Bishop to interpret the Rule. The Sisters of St Joseph left his diocese because they felt their work was hampered by Quinn's constant interference in their internal affairs. The Sisters of Mercy, too, suffered under Bishop Brady of Perth. Polding—and Gregory—were not alone, then, in viewing the personnel of the diocese as subordinates rather than co-workers and in expecting them to 'cut their cloth' to fit the pattern of the highest authority, the Bishop.

THE MARIST FATHERS

The first non-Benedictine religious to set foot in Australia after Polding's arrival were the Marists. Bishop Pompallier brought a group with him to take care of the missions in the Pacific. On 9 December 1837 he landed in Sydney *en route* to his New Zealand mission with two of the group, in search for the best place to establish a Procure as a source of supplies and a type of home-base for the mission-

² Letter to Newman, quoted in E. M. O'Donoghue, 'Mother Vincent Whitty', p. 151.

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aries. They were warmly welcomed by Polding and befriended by McEncroe. Pompallier wrote to Father Jean Claude Colin, the Superior General of the Marists, that Sydney seemed to be 'the place offering the best means of communication',³ but seven years were to pass before Colin saw his way clear to establish the Procure in Sydney. He named two priests, Father Antoine Dubreul and Jean-Louis Rocher, for the mission. Father Dubreul went first to Rome and obtained from Cardinal Franzoni of the Propaganda Congregation a letter asking Polding to welcome the Marist Fathers and to help them in their great work for the missions by setting up a Sydney Procure House.⁴

The two priests and Brother Auguste Leblanc arrived in Sydney on 12 April 1845. Though Polding gave them ready hospitality in the monastery, they found that Pompallier had been in Sydney and had gained Polding's support in the dispute that had arisen earlier between the Marists and the Bishop of New Zealand. Pompallier was no financier, and Colin discovered that his men in the missions were starving. Pompallier claimed that he had received only 25,000 francs for a period of over two years, whereas Colin's estimate was 413,000 francs. Pompallier wrote to the President of the Lyon Council of the Propagation of the Faith, a society which had helped the missions, accusing Colin of having mishandled the money. Colin was able to prove that everything he had been given had been dispatched. The misunderstanding of the amount arose from the fact that Pompallier only counted material goods in terms of hard cash and so could honestly claim he had never received the amount sent by Colin, whereas Colin's assessment was based on the total amount of money and goods such as books, agricultural implements, and clothing. The issue dragged on for several years and, as part of a solution, Rome restricted Pompallier's jurisdiction to New Zealand and created new bishoprics in the Pacific.

Polding would hardly have approved of this move by Rome to restrict the authority of a brother bishop, and he would have been wary of the priests who were, in his eyes, responsible for this action.

³ 23 Dec. 1837, quoted in John Hosie, 'The Marist Fathers in Australia, 1837-47', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, 1968, Vol. 2, Pt 3, p. 2. (As I was unable to gain direct access to the documents of the Marist Fathers, I have drawn on Father John Hosie's article for my references.)

⁴ Hosie, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

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Dubreul commented to Colin that they had been received by Polding 'with friendship, but with an air of astonishment to see priests of another institute in the chief place of his diocese where they arrived without having waited for his reply'.⁵ Polding wanted to keep them at the monastery, but the point of their being in Sydney was to establish a house where missionaries could come and go as needed. Therry offered them land. It was not known whether the ownership was his or the Church's. The Fathers claimed they accepted the offer with Polding's approval, but before they could establish themselves there, Gregory, acting under Polding's direction, assured them that Therry had no personal right to the land, and took it from them. A house was then rented at Woolloomooloo, in time to offer hospitality to Bishop F. Epalle and thirteen priests and brothers, all destined for the missions of the Pacific. Epalle, having had experience under Pompallier in New Zealand, was asked to act as negotiator in Pompallier's dispute with the Marists, a dispute which had developed from the lack of care for priests in the mission to the deeper issue of the position of religious priests in a diocese and their relation to the bishop. He was unsuccessful because Pompallier, like Polding, felt that priests in his diocese should be directly under his jurisdiction. During the discussions Pompallier stated that he quoted the opinion of Polding when he claimed that any recognition of the authority of the Marists would be 'a measure establishing "imperium in imperio"'.⁶

Polding's own attitude to the Marist Fathers at this time seemed to stem from this fear that in admitting them to an independent position within his diocese he was imposing a threat to his ideal of a Benedictine kingdom. After the departure of Bishop Epalle for the Pacific, Polding, through Gregory, imposed a series of restraints on them. They were told that they were living in a private dwelling and that diocesan Synod statutes forbade both the saying of Mass there and reserving the Blessed Sacrament. Gregory, too, dissuaded them from buying a property and urged them not to waste their money. Dubreul wrote to Colin in 1845 that 'Monseigneur Polding is afraid of our influence in Sydney, he does not want two communities'.⁷ The difference between the Marists and the other Orders was that

⁵ 12 July 1845, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 7.

⁶ 'A kingdom within a kingdom', Dubreul to Colin, 28 Oct. 1845, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 10.

⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 11.

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Polding had invited the other Orders to fulfil a specific work in the diocese, and expected them to fit into his plan. The Marists had, as it were, been imposed on him by Rome, and were independent of his support. They, however, were called on to support the collections of the diocese for the upkeep of the monastery with a donation of at least £1, and according to Rocher these collections were continual. Both Dubreul and Rocher began to feel that in Sydney the difficulties outweighed the advantages, and they approached the Vicar-General of Hobart in the hope of moving there. Colin urged them to stay, and both men realised that the geographical position of Sydney best suited the work of the Procure for the missions, so they stayed. However, Colin proclaimed to his community that he would not tolerate undue interference from Polding in the affairs of the Order, and that Polding had no right to dispose of the Marists in Sydney 'for this or for that duty'.

Polding left for Europe in 1846, and Gregory was in charge. Both men seem to have accepted the fact that the Marists were in Sydney simply to supply the needs of their fellow religious working in the Pacific islands. Rocher bought a property, with Gregory's full approval, in May 1847. It was on the outskirts of the city at Hunter's Hill. In June, before leaving on a visit to the missions at Tahiti, Rocher visited Gregory.

He received me [he wrote to Colin] with the greatest friendship, asking me, if I can express it thus, to forget all the past: there had been misunderstandings; he was certainly full of affection for our Society. He fully approved of my voyage and gave me permission to reserve the Blessed Sacrament.⁸

The first privilege that had been taken away from them had been restored. The Order had an established place in Sydney, and though Rocher wrote in 1854 that McEncroe was their only protector,⁹ Polding no longer threatened their independence by trying to make them fit into his highly centralised plan of an abbey-diocese, and in 1856 he offered Rocher the Ryde parish, an offer which he accepted.

Gregory had been blamed for Polding's high-handed dealings with the Marists, yet it is interesting to note that it was in the years of Polding's absence in Europe, 1846-7, when Gregory was in charge of the archdiocese, that the Marists were given permission to purchase

⁸ Tahiti, 22 June 1847, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 17.

⁹ Rocher to Father General (Colin), 25 Jan. 1854, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 1.

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land and Gregory made his peace with them. It was a very different story for two other Orders working in the archdiocese at that time—the Christian Brothers and the Sisters of Charity.

THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS

The need for teachers was early felt. McEncroe had written to the Archbishop of Dublin in 1832 setting forth the needs of the Catholics in New South Wales and offering to pay the passage money of two or three Brothers.¹⁰ A year later Polding, then Master of Novices at Downside, was writing on behalf of Ullathorne to the founder of the Order, Brother Edmund Rice, pointing out that there were only four priests to attend to the needs of 'about 20,000 poor souls, most of whom are Irish'.¹¹ He wanted well-regulated schools for the religious and moral education of the rising generation. Ten years were to elapse before they came. When Polding, then Bishop of Sydney, was in Europe in 1841, he wrote from London a formal petition to the Holy See that some Irish Christian Brothers be sent to Australia.¹² Rome supported his plea and the Superior General, Brother Paul Riordan, yielded. Education in the colony was in a state of flux. Governor Bourke's efforts to introduce the Irish national system had failed and he had adopted the measure of giving some support to the schools of each denomination. Governor Gipps, his successor, was in favour of a national system of education, but saw that Bourke's failure came from a desire to comprehend all denominations. He decided to gear his system to suit the largest number, the Protestants, in the hope of winning Bishop Broughton's support, and to seek to placate the Catholics by giving them a separate grant. The British and foreign school system which he proposed in 1839 excluded denominational religious teaching but listed Biblical extracts to be read in the schools. Contrary to Gipps's expectation, Broughton opposed the measure with his customary vehemence.

To compel us to send our children to Schools in which that prohibition of teaching them our proper doctrines forms the fundamental regulation, will be as contrary to our principles as to require Roman

¹⁰ 2 Nov. 1832, quoted in Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, Vol. I, p. 223.

¹¹ A. I. Keenan, 'History of Institute', Pt I, p. 9, in *Christian Brothers' Educational Record*.

¹² P. F. Moran, *History of the Catholic Church in Australasia*, p. 224.

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Catholics to send their children to a School where the Scriptures are to be commonly read,¹³

he proclaimed with an unwonted consideration for the feelings of Catholics. The Secretary of State rebuked Gipps for offering the Catholics a separate grant, as this opened the way for similar demands by other denominations.¹⁴ Gipps had to concede temporary defeat. The churches made new efforts to improve their schools, knowing they had but a short breathing space before there would be another effort to overthrow them. There was urgency, then, in Polding's request for the Christian Brothers.

Everyone, it seems, volunteered to go to the missions, and the first Brother chosen was a Francis Thornton, one-time first assistant to the General and a most accomplished man, who was to be the Superior. After a visit from Polding and Gregory in 1842, however, this appointment was changed, possibly when it was realised that the Brothers would conduct parish schools at primary level only. He was replaced as Superior by a young man, Stephen Carroll, who was but twenty-nine when he sailed with Polding, Gregory, and the other missionaries—nineteen in all—in November 1842. His two companions were younger: Brother Peter Scannell, twenty-eight, and Brother Francis Larkin, twenty-six. Polding and Gregory had accepted the terms laid down by the Superior General of the Brothers:

1. Nothing is to be required of the Brothers or their successors that would prevent the strict observance of their Rule.
2. The Brothers are to have the internal arrangement of their schools under their own control.
3. The Brothers are to be provided with a male servant, and a furnished dwelling house suitable to their state, occupied exclusively by themselves, and free of expense.
4. Each Brother is to be allowed yearly £50, or some such sum as may be necessary for his support according to Rule.¹⁵

When the Brothers arrived in Sydney there was, of course, no house ready for them, and the three occupied one room on the upper floor of the Archbishop's house in Woolloomooloo. 'My house is full', Polding wrote at this time to Father Therry in Hobart, 'and I

¹³ Broughton's speech before the Legislative Council, 27 Aug. 1839, quoted in A. G. Austin, *Select Documents in Australian Education, 1788-1900*, p. 72.

¹⁴ Austin, *Australian Education, 1788-1900*, pp. 31-47.

¹⁵ Keenan, *op. cit.*, Pt I, p. 22.

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think about twenty sit down to dinner every day.¹⁶ These numbers comprised the Benedictine community, the other priests staying there, and the Christian Brothers. It was six months before the Brothers moved into a house of their own. The following year, 1844, they settled into a house in Castlereagh Street, 'a brick dwelling, six rooms, two floors',¹⁷ which was to serve them until their departure in 1847. The rent was paid from diocesan funds, as well as the stipend of £37 10s per quarter to fulfil the conditions laid down that each Brother be paid £50 per year.

Polding introduced the Brothers to the Catholics of Sydney in most glowing terms at a meeting of the St Patrick's Church Society on 21 March 1843, proclaiming them as men who had renounced the world and its pleasures to dedicate themselves to the cause of religion and the education of the poor.¹⁸ Their work began on 3 April with each of the Brothers staffing one of the three principal Catholic schools of the city—Kent Street, Abercrombie Street, and Macquarie Street. The *Morning Chronicle* of 4 November 1843 recorded the combined public examination of the three schools conducted by the Brothers, and stated that the Vicar-General (Murphy) and the clergy who were present 'were much pleased with the great progress made by the scholars for the short time they have been placed under the kind and efficient teaching of the "Christian Brothers"'. The schools at the time received government aid, in that all teachers were given a salary—£20 per year plus one penny for 'each day's actual attendance of every child in the school'. This sum, together with any school fees collected from the children, was handed over to the Vicar-General, who was responsible for the support of the Brothers.

Though the beginning of the Brothers' work was marked with success, all was not well with the Church schools. In 1844 a Select Committee of the Legislative Council, under the chairmanship of Robert Lowe, editor of the *Atlas*, inquired into the state of education. They admitted in their Report that the deficiencies in education were partly attributable to the ignorance and dissolute habits of many parents and partly to the want of good schoolmasters, but they claimed that 'a far greater portion of the evil has risen from the strictly denominational character of the public schools'. The Committee wanted to

¹⁶ 4 May 1843, Moran, op. cit., p. 311.

¹⁷ Keenan, op. cit., Pt II, p. 16.

¹⁸ *Australasian Chronicle*, 21 March 1843.

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introduce the Irish national system, rejected in Bourke's time, and with this in view examined twenty-one witnesses. Brother Peter Scannell was called before the Committee to give an account of the system of education followed in his schools. He reported that it was based on that of Bell and Lancaster, and that the teachers were well trained to deal with this method. When asked his opinion of the schools in the colony, he remarked that he thought the few Catholic schools he had seen were very backward. W. A. Duncan, a former teacher, who was also called to give evidence, declared that the schools conducted by the Christian Brothers were the only ones in the colony with any system.¹⁹ This was possibly one of Duncan's exaggerated comments, but he did recognise that the Brothers were efficiently trained.

The Legislative Council voted by thirteen votes to twelve in favour of the national system. On this narrow margin, and because of strong clerical opposition, Gipps would do nothing,²⁰ though the majority interviewed by the Committee also favoured a national system. The Brothers continued to teach in the colony, but in an atmosphere unfavourable to the denominational schools.

The Brothers were not happy in the colony. Carroll was critical of Polding and Gregory. They had been living at Polding's house after their arrival and he did not appreciate Polding's procrastination in getting them a house of their own. 'We saw much of this in Dr. Polding,' Carroll wrote, 'and with what we heard besides we lost much respect for him'; and he commented, with reference to Gregory, that Polding 'was carried away much by a very imprudent confidant'. However, Brother Francis Larkin in his *Memoirs*²¹ spoke in glowing terms of Polding's kindness, and of one incident in particular. After an illness Polding arranged for him to go on holidays, but sent for him first and gave him some of his own warm clothing. Carroll, on the other hand, complained that Polding showed no interest in them and worked them too hard in the heat.

The climax to all their troubles came just before the Archbishop's departure for Europe in 1846. Their one postulant would be ready

¹⁹ *N.S.W.V.P.*, Vol. II, 1844, Report of the Select Committee on Education.

²⁰ Austin, *Australian Education*, pp. 42-3.

²¹ Brother Larkin came back to Australia in 1881. When he was in Brisbane after that year, one of the Brothers committed his reminiscences to writing.

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to conduct a school before the Archbishop's return, so the Brothers approached him to know to what school he was to be appointed. According to Brother Carroll, Polding told him in no uncertain terms that the postulant was completely at the disposal of the Archbishop and that they were not to interest themselves about him—to which they replied that if he did not belong to them, they need not support him. The Archbishop reminded them that the money they received was not theirs, but belonged to the mission. They could go home after some time if they pleased, but not his young subjects. The Superior General, writing to Rome of the complaints received from the Brothers in Sydney, said that Polding and Gregory seemed to want to subject the Brothers and their successors to their own jurisdiction, and to have them severed from the Institute—'a fatal precedent in our Society', commented the General.²² Polding assured the Brothers he would see their Superior in Ireland and settle everything with him. The Brothers studied Polding's itinerary as given in the English paper, *The Tablet*, but there was no mention of a visit to Waterford, where their Superior was stationed. They became alarmed, particularly when Gregory, in Polding's absence, produced a rescript which Polding had received from Rome, setting up a separate institute of the Sisters of Charity in Australia. It was then they decided to leave, in order, as Carroll stated, 'that no document could reach us from Rome to upset our intentions'.²³

The Superior General of the Congregation did not know they were coming until they were on the water. Carroll claimed he had recalled them and that they hastened to obey. The years would have clouded his memory a little, as when the news of their intended departure was known, Bishop Willson began negotiations with them to come to his diocese. After some discussion, however, this plan was dropped. It would seem that, had the General recalled them, they would not have considered the possibility of going to another diocese. Besides, the General told Polding that, far from taking the Brothers from his diocese, he urged them to remain.²⁴ The Brothers had sufficient money to pay their passages back and to present the General with £100 on their return. They left Sydney on the *Walmer Castle* on 27

²² Riordan to Kirby, 17 Aug. 1846, typescript in C.B.A.

²³ Memoirs of Brother Stephen Carroll, C.B.A.

²⁴ Riordan to Franzoni, 8 Nov. 1847, C.B.A.

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March 1847, and arrived in London on 22 July.²⁵ Polding knew nothing of their departure until he met one of the trio in a bookshop in Liverpool.

All their complaints were laid before Polding by the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda in a letter which reached him in Liverpool. He refuted the charges of failing to comply with the regulations laid down by the Brothers as regards their domestic concerns, the management of their schools, and the financial arrangements. He could not find in their Constitutions one word which justified the claim to exemption from episcopal authority; so, he told the Cardinal, 'I will never sanction an unwarranted assumption of exemption from the authority which God has appointed to rule in His Church'. He granted that their complaints were founded respecting the reception of novices, but added that

Their only reply ought to have been to the effect that they could not receive them on the terms proposed, and not an abandonment of the duties they came out to fulfil . . . In reference to the expressions stated to have been used in conversation—these are not facts. In their fullest meaning they suppose contingencies which might or might not arise. It were worse than childish to make these a ground for positive action, for a breach of contract, for the abandonment of schools in full confidence to their care.²⁶

Years later Polding, writing to Rome to refute charges made against his administration by some members of his Congregation, dismissed the subject of the Christian Brothers with the statement that, having undertaken to found a noviceship without authority, they were recalled by their Superiors. This was a gross over-simplification of the matter, particularly as the Superiors maintained that the members of the Congregation in Australia, because of the great distance from the Mother house in Ireland, had been given permission 'to admit postulants, educate novices and admit them to vows as we do here under the obedience of the Institute', and that the Archbishop assented to this.²⁷ Polding stated to the Cardinal Prefect, 'Before the question respecting the reception of novices was mooted, I never heard a word of complaint on any one subject'.²⁸ Their complaint was in reality a fear, as Carroll so clearly stated when he explained they had left in a

²⁵ Memoirs of Brother Stephen Carroll, C.B.A.

²⁶ Keenan, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

²⁷ Riordan to Franzoni, 8 Nov. 1847, C.B.A.

²⁸ Keenan, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

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hurry before a rescript from Rome set up the Australian group as a distinct Congregation. This fear was justified, in their eyes, by the rescript for the Sisters of Charity, not knowing that this had been agreed to by the Congregation. Their difficulties were accentuated by the fact that they were all young, even though the Superior General claimed he had sent 'three experienced Brothers to Sydney'.²⁹ For this reason they were more ready to judge everything from their own point of view, less ready to make any adaptations that might be necessary to suit the different conditions of missionary life in a developing society. It can only be surmised how different the situation would have been if the experienced and mature Brother Thornton had come as originally planned. They had been made apprehensive by the men with whom they came in contact and by the atmosphere of the whole colony.

Another group that went out before us told us they were sorry they did not go home, too, in time, when they could have done so [Brother Stephen Carroll noted in his Memoirs], and they it was who first pointed out the difficulties that lay before us.

The four Italian Passionists who came out with them in 1843 left the mission in 1846, having first had their Mission to the Aborigines at Moreton Bay erected into a prefecture without any reference to Polding. There were many of their own countrymen, too, who did not want the English Benedictines to rule over them, and who were not slow to voice their protests. They had come at a time when the whole colony was in a state of unrest, when any form of authoritarianism was being decried, when men who had been given a share in the government of their colony were agitating for more.

When they arrived in Sydney the Vicar-General was Father Francis Murphy, who was not only a fellow-countryman, but who also knew their Institute and had been responsible for introducing their Brothers into Liverpool when he had worked there as a priest before coming to Australia. In 1844 Murphy was made Bishop of Adelaide and his place as Vicar-General taken by Gregory. Forty years later Brother Carroll in his Memoirs could still give vent to their strong feelings against him.

Soon after our going there [he wrote] he [Polding] appointed a Vicar-General to office—one that gave general dissatisfaction to all parties;

²⁹ Riordan to Franzoni, 8 Nov. 1847, C.B.A.

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he was youthful, without experience and rash. I am sorry to say he could wield the Bishop as he pleased, and this led to many bad results. Were it not for him, things might have gone on smoothly in that distant land.

Carroll's Memoirs are the only evidence of the relations that existed between Gregory and the Brothers. It was not a case of Gregory's wielding Polding as he pleased. Gregory wanted one thing—to enforce Polding's plan of an abbey-diocese. Everything had to be subordinated to this and if there were some who failed to comply, they could not, in his opinion, expect special consideration. The Brothers experienced the same trouble with Bishop Quinn of Brisbane as late as 1880 but they managed to survive Quinn's repeated attempts to subject them to his will.³⁰

THE SISTERS OF CHARITY

When the five Sisters of Charity sailed for Australia with Ullathorne in 1838 their foundress, Mother M. Augustine Aikenhead, had discussed with them the expediency of forming the Australian houses into a separate Congregation. She reminded them very strongly of this when writing to Sister John Cahill and Sister de Sales O'Brien, two of the foundation members of the Australian Congregation, reprimanding them for what appeared at a distance to be a lack of submission to their ecclesiastical Superiors. However, before they received this letter, Sisters Cahill, O'Brien, and Xavier Williams—the last was still a novice when she arrived—left Sydney for Hobart Town, where Dr Willson had invited them. As another of the foundation members, Sister Lawrence Cator, had returned to Ireland in 1846, this left only one of the original group, Sister Baptist de Lacy, under Polding's jurisdiction.

Polding was in Europe when these events happened, and Gregory, as Vicar-General, was in sole charge of the archdiocese. Up to the time of Polding's departure in 1846, all had seemed well with the Sisters of Charity, as with the Christian Brothers; Ullathorne had been well pleased with the Sisters he had brought to Australia. 'The Sisters of Charity are some of the very best and most experienced members of the Institute', he wrote to Dr Brown from London just before sailing. 'Mrs. Aikenhead has made a great sacrifice and made

³⁰ O'Donoghue, 'Mother Vincent Whitty', Ch. 5.

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it nobly.³¹ Polding, on his side, prepared for their coming, as he claimed to Heptonstall in a letter of 28 December 1838:

I have selected a house for them at Parramatta near the Church, near the School House, the best of the kind in the Colony, and near the Factory. It is not the thing I could wish it to be, but the best to be found . . . How they will be supported is a secret to me in the bosom of Providence not made known, but this is certain, that we will want bread ourselves before they are without the comforts of life.³²

They arrived two weeks before they were expected, and the house was not ready. A better organiser, taking into account the uncertainty of shipping timetables, would have foreseen this possibility. In the meantime the nuns stayed at the Archbishop's house.

Within the week after landing [Polding wrote to Heptonstall] they were formed into a religious community, the Rev. Mother being appointed and the different offices filled up under my obedience. They appear so happy and cheerful, I shall feel quite a loss when they leave me . . . The good they will do here is immense, and they are excited to commence.³³

After three weeks they were settled in a house at Parramatta. Ullathorne stated that Mr William Davis, a wealthy emancipist who had been convicted after the insurrection of 1798, would provide the convent for the nuns, and that he paid 'the value of a good house and garden for them, very near the Church',³⁴ while Polding said that the 'house and garden, which have been secured to the Institute for ever',³⁵ were purchased through the offices of the Association for the Propagation of the Faith.³⁶ The Sisters themselves stated that the

³¹ 2 Aug. 1838, quoted in Birt, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 371.

³² Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 341.

³³ 12 Jan. 1839, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 342.

³⁴ Ullathorne, *From Cabin Boy to Archbishop*, p. 145.

³⁵ Birt, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 380.

³⁶ The property was given to the Sisters of Charity by a Deed of Conveyance dated 2 April 1840. After the Sisters had gone to Hobart, Polding wanted them to hand over the property to the Archbishop and the Vicar-General for the archdiocese, but the Sisters refused, claiming that it was given to the Order. The property was held in trust for them, the Sisters of Charity, for the next forty years, when, by agreement, it was given in exchange to the Sisters of Mercy who began a school at Parramatta. Polding's comment on the purchase of the property was written in a report to Rome at a time when he was trying to secure the property for the archdiocese and when his memory was clouded as to the real facts of the case (J. Cullen, *The Australian Daughters of Mother M. Aikenhead*, p. 33).

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money for the house (£1,400) was provided by Polding, the clergy of Sydney, and Davis, and that the property was given as a 'perpetual possession'.³⁷ Ullathorne spoke glowingly of the work of the Sisters among the female prisoners at Parramatta, and of the benefit of their coming, not only to the prisoners, but to the whole colony. Governor Gipps and his lady called on them often and sent them presents from the garden of their country house at Parramatta. The Governor would have been happy to allow the Sisters a pension but they thought it better to keep themselves independent. Besides the work among the female prisoners, they visited the sick in the hospital and in their homes, and had charge of the Orphan School. They had at least one postulant in March 1839, and others were waiting to join them. Their house was too small, and, 'instead of having their convent, as the Bishop had hoped, half erected ere this, it is not yet begun'.³⁸ This lack of organisation on the part of the Bishop was evident in all his work and was almost the despair of Ullathorne, his Vicar-General at this time. He was worn out by his labour for the mission and his efforts to organise Polding!

My chief consolation in all my cares is my dear Convent of Sisters of Charity [he wrote to Brown in October 1839]. I have had it all my own way from the beginning. It is a community of saints . . . It was the sense of the desolation of the Convent without a soul to know or understand them, which tugged most desperately at my heart and conscience strings, or I believe I should not now be here.³⁹

The next letter, written early in December, was brighter, and said that a part of the convent had been filiated to Sydney and that a second Orphan School, to be supported by the government, was to be begun.

Sister John Cahill had been appointed Superior of the group by Mother Aikenhead. Why Ullathorne saw fit to remove her from the office on the journey and appoint in her place Sister de Sales O'Brien he did not make clear, except to say that the voyage was a difficult one. Ullathorne was very conscious that he was responsible for the five nuns on this five-month-long journey, and had very decided ideas as to how they should conduct themselves. Polding renamed Sister

³⁷ Petition of the Sisters of Charity to Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, 9 Nov. 1852, H.A.A.

³⁸ Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 412.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 439.

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John as Superior, and appointed a young nun, Sister Lawrence Cator, whom Mother Aikenhead had advised him never to place in positions of authority, and who was not sufficiently long in the Congregation to qualify for such positions, as assistant to the Superior and Mistress of Novices. To another young nun he gave a voice in the government of the Congregation, though the Constitutions demanded of her another three years before this privilege was granted. Mother Aikenhead reminded her Australian daughters of this breach of their Constitutions when they wrote later, complaining that the ecclesiastical authorities were interfering in the government of their Institute.

Before coming out, each of the five Sisters had signed a paper authorising the foundress to retain any funds given to the Congregation on their behalf. Now they wrote to her, asking for a refund of their dowries, as they were in dire need. Polding stated at the time of their arrival that £2,000 had been deposited at 10 per cent—the interest to provide for the Sisters, and in 1847 Sister de Sales O'Brien informed the Archbishop of Dublin they had about £33 a year for each professed Sister, but three other Sisters had to be kept on this, and a gardener paid £20 a year.⁴⁰ This obviously was considered feasible, as the same arrangements were being made for the Benedictine Sisters when they came to the colony in 1848. Yet it was less than that given to the Christian Brothers. The Sisters in 1839 all wrote independently, asking that money paid to the Congregation in Ireland on their behalf be diverted to New South Wales. Both Archbishop Murray, the ecclesiastical Superior in Ireland, and Mother Aikenhead reminded them—and Polding—very strongly of what the Constitutions had to say on the matter, and what they themselves had agreed to before leaving Ireland. The Sisters in Australia felt keenly this difference with their Mother Foundress, and resented the situation which forced them to such an action. Soon afterwards, Sister John Cahill resigned as Superior, as she felt incapable of facing the demands of her position. Polding granted the request of the Sisters for a Constitutional election, and, against the Constitutions, gave to the youngest the right to vote. Mother de Sales O'Brien was elected Head Superior for a period of six years.

At this time Ullathorne, who had brought the Sisters to Australia and who had taken a great interest in their welfare, returned to Europe.

⁴⁰ S.C.A.

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Poor souls, [said Ullathorne, describing his last meeting with them] they wept all the Mass, feeling that the one person who thoroughly understood them, who had looked most to their interests and had guided them, was leaving them most probably for ever. They had never been thoroughly sympathised with except by myself. They feared their Rule and Institute would be tampered with, and that proved in after times but too true . . . What they feared, and I confess what I feared also, was their encountering the spirit of improving away the old, already approved by the Holy See and in full operation in the parent houses, and replacing it by 'improvements of Australian manufacture'.⁴¹

Ullathorne wrote this thirty years after the event, and may have forgotten that he himself had done some 'tampering' in the beginning, replacing the Superior appointed by Mother Aikenhead, and had done nothing to prevent Polding from placing young, unformed Sisters into positions of authority. But in support of this it can be argued that there was but one formed Sister among the five who came to Australia in 1838, and that was Sister John Cahill.

While Polding was in Europe in 1842, he petitioned the Holy See for a rescript erecting the Australian filiation into a separate Congregation, and had it granted. He informed the Irish branch of the Congregation of this rescript, but did not promulgate it in Australia. One of the pioneers, Sister Lawrence Cator, wanted to return to Ireland, as Archbishop Murray had said that he would be willing to accept back any who wished to come. Polding felt that the publication of the rescript might deter her from her course, and he considered it would be better for the Australian Congregation if she returned, and this she did when Polding himself was again in Europe in 1846.⁴²

It was at this time that Gregory made known the rescript by affixing it to the door of the chapel on the day of the profession of one of the Sisters. Gregory had wanted the votes of the community taken before the novice was admitted to profession, but Mother de Sales O'Brien stated this was not part of their Constitutions, and gained her point. Gregory retaliated by showing them that they were now a separate Congregation under the authority of the Archbishop of Sydney, and in his absence, of his Vicar-General. To prove that he had this authority he deposed Mother de Sales O'Brien as Head Superior and stated that all offices had ceased. He then proceeded to appoint new offices,

⁴¹ Ullathorne, *From Cabin Boy to Archbishop*, p. 166.

⁴² Polding to Aikenhead, S.C.A.

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and acted himself as Head Superior. Letters from Mother de Sales O'Brien and Sister John Cahill, both of whom Gregory ordered to leave New South Wales, went to Mother Aikenhead, asking permission to return to Ireland or to go to Van Diemen's Land, where Bishop Willson was anxious to have their services. At the same time Sister Baptist de Lacy was criticising the conduct of these two Sisters, whom the other Sisters had declared unfit to rule them, and praising the generosity and solicitude towards the Institute of Polding and Gregory.⁴³ On receipt of this letter Mother Aikenhead wrote to Mother de Sales O'Brien:

I had been informed by our Archbishop during Dr. Polding's last visit to Europe, 1842, that His Grace of Sydney had mentioned his having obtained an ample Rescript authorising him to form the members of the Sisters of Charity under his jurisdiction into a separate Congregation, distinct from the Irish Congregation. Now I recollect perfectly that the expediency of such a measure had been spoken of by me to you and Sr. M. John, and I could detail many conversations and circumstances which proved that you were both far from entertaining any repugnance to the measure.

Indeed how could anything else be contemplated. I think, if you will recall all that passed immediately on your arrival in Sydney, you must feel yourselves to have been entirely willing to adopt the measure. If you considered yourselves members of our Congregation acknowledging the authority of the Head Superior, much that was done by you was unjustifiable. Worse still, I must observe with very great pain, you actually proved an utter want of respect for the essential points of the Constitution.

I have heard of complaints being made that you had been pained by hearing that your Constitutions were held in contempt. My feeling on the occasion was an intense sorrow from the conviction that you and Sr. M. John had from the beginning given cause to any person of sound judgment to suppose that neither of you had the least value for the letter of our holy Constitutions.⁴⁴

But even before this letter was written, Mother de Sales O'Brien, Sister John Cahill and Sister Xavier Williams were already in Hobart Town, as Gregory would not allow them to stay until Polding's return. When he did return in 1848 he appointed a Head Superior and then asked them to undertake another work in Sydney—the care of a House of Refuge. The Superior of this house was Mother Scholastica Gibbons who, on the death of the Head Superior, had been elected to

⁴³ Sister de Lacy to M. Aikenhead, March 1847, S.C.A.

⁴⁴ 19 Aug. 1847, S.C.A.

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that position by the Sisters. In 1856, while Polding was again absent in Europe, 'Tarmons', the property of Sir Charles Nicholson, had been bought by public subscription to set up as a hospital under the care of the Sisters of Charity, though the purchase was made in the names of Plunkett, McEncroe, and Sister de Lacy. Sister Baptist de Lacy was in charge. This was in 1857. Polding had come back from Rome with permission to begin an Order of women to care for the House of Refuge and to undertake any work he saw fit. These formed the Order of the Good Shepherd, and with Polding as co-founder was Mother Scholastica Gibbons, who was responsible for the training of the young aspirants to religious life. She was placed in an anomalous position—Head Superior of one religious Order, and co-founder and Superior of another. The Sisters of Charity had withdrawn from the House of Refuge, all except Mother Scholastica, who was responsible for the Order of the Good Samaritan, as the new Congregation came to be called.

St Vincent's Hospital, under Sister de Lacy, received the patronage of both Protestants and Catholics, and at Sister de Lacy's request, had a Protestant, Dr James Robertson, as its attendant surgeon. But within the community there was a feeling of unrest. A convert from Protestantism, Miss Gray (Sister Vincent), was training to become a Sister of Charity. Against the advice of Gregory, who had instructed her in the Catholic faith, she had been professed. According to Polding, the older sisters complained that she then became the confidante of Sister de Lacy, who discussed matters with her and Robertson, rather than with them. Polding also claimed, in his explanation to Rome, that he was asked by the other Sisters, on his return from Europe, to make a visitation of the convent. This he did, and concluded that the trouble lay in Sister de Lacy being both Rectress of the convent and in charge of the hospital. He suggested she be relieved of her office of Superior in the convent and retain that of the hospital.⁴⁵ Following the incident of the removal of the Protestant Bibles from St Vincent's, Sister de Lacy decided to return to Ireland.

She had been connected with St Vincent's Hospital from its beginning. Now, like all the great people of the mission—the *Freeman's Journal* linked her name with that of Ullathorne, Murphy,

⁴⁵ Pièce Justicative of Polding to Propaganda, 14 May 1860, S.A.A.

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and Davis—she had to go. The immediate cause of her departure was an incident in the hospital which was whipped to exaggerated proportions by a humiliated and disgruntled group of laymen. The facts were first given to the public by the *Freeman's Journal* reporting a select meeting of Catholics held at the residence of Jeremiah Moore the bookseller. J. H. Plunkett, the great friend of Sister de Lacy and one of the prime movers in the foundation of the hospital, was instrumental in convening the meeting and was one of the first to address it. He reminded those present that the hospital had been subscribed to by Protestants as well as Catholics and that the Institution was for all denominations. For this reason the Sisters elected Dr Robertson, a Protestant, as its attendant surgeon. The facts which Plunkett placed before the meeting he had from Robertson, who had appraised Polding of a deviation from the rules of the hospital. Father P. Kenyon, a chaplain to the hospital, was visiting one of the wards and had removed from the room the Protestant Bibles which were there for the use of the Protestant patients. Kenyon had removed these books in a manner extremely offensive to the patients, who complained of him, Plunkett stated, and he added that the Archbishop agreed that Kenyon was unauthorised to do such a thing.

Butler added further information. The books, inscribed 'for the use of Saint Vincent's', had been replaced by order of the Archbishop, and had been removed a second time by Kenyon, who declared he would take the matter to Gregory. Robertson sent in his resignation because, on remonstrating a second time to Polding, he was told by Makinson, his secretary, that the Archbishop was mistaken about the books and he could do nothing. Then falling back on their standard explanation for all their troubles, he concluded that it was probably Gregory who had caused Polding to change his mind. The whole incident was a challenge to their sense of justice, Deniehy pointed out. Protestants had confided in their justice, their honour. The free exercise of religion in these institutions must be protected.⁴⁶ The report of the meeting published in the *Freeman's Journal* was copied by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and Butler, in a letter to that paper, withdrew his earlier statement that the Bibles were removed a second time. They were not. Gregory and Kenyon likewise replied to the *Herald*. Gregory denied having had anything to do with the incident, and Kenyon proclaimed many of the facts given to be absolutely

⁴⁶ *F.J.*, 1 June 1859.

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untrue. He had removed the books unobtrusively, then told Sister de Lacy that it was not lawful for the Sisters to supply such books. He felt that through want of knowledge they were doing wrong, and his intention was to put them right. That was all he had done. He had certainly never appealed to Gregory against the decisions of the Archbishop; had never, in fact, mentioned Gregory's name, nor even thought of him. He had scarcely ever given a passing thought to the matter until he heard the sad end. Makinson, too, replied that so far from saying the Archbishop was mistaken in his decision to return the books, he had agreed with Robertson that in a free hospital access must be had to every kind of devotional book required by the patients. The objection lay to the inscription on the inside of the book—'for the use of St. Vincent's Hospital'—as this could lead to a misunderstanding or could be an opportunity for calumny to 'anyone who might regard His Grace's administration with ill-will'.⁴⁷

It seems evident that the facts of the incident had been grossly misrepresented, but the *Freeman's Journal* was undaunted by such revelations. The case of Sister de Lacy became merged into the vital issue of layman versus cleric.

Polding held that, as Sister de Lacy entered the Order in Ireland to be trained for the Australian mission, she had no claim on the Irish Sisters, above all since the rescript which set up the separate Congregation in Australia. Because of this, no means were forthcoming from official sources to pay her fare, for which the authorities, in the person of Gregory, were severely condemned.

She has gone of her own mero motu, without the sanction of His Grace [Gregory wrote in a letter defending himself against the published assertions of prominent Catholics]. I am convinced that, if Mrs. de Lacy had been left to act according to her own unbiassed judgment, and not (to use her own words) according to the advice of those whom she had consulted in this matter, she would not have taken so precipitate a step.⁴⁸

To which the *Freeman's Journal* replied, 'We have heard too many rumors of complaints, dissatisfaction and annoyance, concerning the Sisters of Charity, within the last ten or twelve years, to believe that she went away through a mere whim or caprice'.⁴⁹

Years earlier Sister de Lacy had written to her Foundress in defence of Polding and Gregory, and blamed the lack of religious spirit of

⁴⁷ *S.M.H.*, 7 June 1859.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ 11 June 1859, leader.

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her two Sisters, Cahill and O'Brien, for their unrest. Twelve years later she was in a similar situation. On whom does she lay the blame? Cullen, Archbishop of Dublin, on hearing her story, gave her permission to remain in his diocese, and laid her complaints before Rome, though Polding had written to him about the whole situation and claimed Sister de Lacy for his mission. Polding was of the opinion, shared by others, that when she knew that Miss Gray was to renounce her religious profession and her faith, she got out of the way.⁵⁰

Sister de Lacy herself stated that by staying in the colony she was endangering her soul 'by yielding and complying with what is against our Holy Constitutions'. She then declared that she would never sign any document 'which is not Truth'. 'The state of this diocese is most deplorable', she added.⁵¹

The *Freeman's Journal* made an issue of her departure, and blamed 'the terrible absolutism which governs our ecclesiastical affairs' as its cause.⁵² The leader of 8 June 1859 asked what was the real cause of her going. 'Was she ever placed in the dilemma of either compromising the spirit and practice of her own Rule, or incurring ecclesiastical displeasure by not consenting to an amendment?' In the *Journal* of the same day appeared letters from Gregory and Mother Scholastica Gibbons regarding a document in favour of the Benedictine administration that Sister de Lacy had supposedly refused to sign. Mother Gibbons denied having given such a document to Sister de Lacy. The *Freeman's Journal* referred to her 'degradation' when she ceased to be Rectress of the hospital,⁵³ and held her up as a victim of Benedictine oppression. It regretted her going 'as she would have been an important witness before the delegate of the Holy See whom the laity expect to visit this Colony in answer to their petition to that effect'.⁵⁴

Her departure marked the close of an era in the history of the Sisters of Charity in Australia. Every one of the five Foundresses who had come out in 1838 had left the colony, three setting up a separate group in Van Diemen's Land. Questions came crowding in—was Gregory entirely to blame for the split in the community? Did he really want to turn the Sisters of Charity into Benedictines, an accusation so often levelled against him? Why did he go about things the way he did?

⁵⁰ Polding to unnamed bishop, 20 June 1859, S.A.A.

⁵¹ To Mother McCarty, 25 May 1859, S.C.A.

⁵² 1 June 1859.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 28 May 1859.

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There was, unfortunately, no impartial observer of events at the time they were happening—no one but the protagonists and an excitable laity, prone to support any cause that furthered their fight against the Benedictines in general and Gregory in particular. The two Sisters sent from Sydney and the third who went with them to Hobart received high praise from Willson and his priests for their devoted work among the prisoners, and above all for their lives as religious.⁵⁵ Mother Aikenhead had condemned their conduct when they were in positions of authority in New South Wales, but she did this after receiving a letter from Sister de Lacy. Just as Mother Aikenhead was guided in this matter by Sister de Lacy, so apparently was Gregory, who reacted in a similar manner, except that his action was to send them promptly from the Sydney Congregation and refuse to have any communication with either Sister Cahill or Sister O'Brien. He complained to Geoghegan of Willson's very harsh attitude towards him on this point, writing, 'I cannot think the Bishop has seen one half of the correspondence between me and the Nuns. I am sure he has not. What I did, I was called upon to do by the Sisters themselves and that, too, in writing'.⁵⁶ Polding acted in a similar way later when he relieved Sister de Lacy of her charge as Rectress following what he claimed were complaints made by the Sisters.

Willson's 'harsh attitude' to Gregory on this point came from the evidence presented to him by Sister Xavier Williams, who had elected to go to Hobart with the Sisters O'Brien and Cahill;⁵⁷ evidence which, he said, was backed up by Gregory's own letter to Sister Williams at the time she was named Superior of the small remaining group.⁵⁸ In this letter, Gregory asked her to assure the two Sisters that it did not rest with them how long they remained in New South Wales. Sister O'Brien, he claimed, had proved herself incompetent to fulfil the charge committed to her, and both she and Sister Cahill had lost the confidence of all the Sisters. They could not expect then that he act otherwise than to carry into effect the oft expressed desire of every member of the Congregation. Sister Williams told Willson that she soon repented of giving her consent to the change proposed, seeing she could not fulfil the vows she had taken in her Mother house in

⁵⁵ Letter of Willson to Aikenhead referred to in the *Annals of the Sisters of Charity*.

⁵⁶ 20 Sept. 1859, S.A.A.

⁵⁷ Willson to Gregory, 29 June 1859, H.A.A.

⁵⁸ 22 April 1847, H.A.A.

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Dublin,⁵⁹ and that Sister de Lacy was of the same mind. Willson, then, ignored Gregory's claim to be acting in the name of the Sisters, and looked only to the ruthlessness of his methods of doing so.

Though Polding and Gregory were charged with trying to turn the Sisters of Charity into Benedictines, and though, according to Sister John Cahill⁶⁰ in a letter to Archbishop Murray of Dublin, four professed Sisters declared their intention of becoming Benedictines, not one of them did so.

What did Gregory himself really think of the Sisters of Charity?

Sydney also possesses the advantage of a community of Sisters of Charity [he wrote in 1851 in his Report on the Mission to Rome]. They are few in number, but here, as elsewhere, they are zealous and attract the sympathy and admiration even of those who are external to the Church.

Then, after referring to the foundation of the Benedictine nuns at Subiaco, he added,

Taken together with the Sisters of Charity in Sydney, they display the two grand divisions of religious vocation for Catholic females, in forms that are most easily understood and appreciated by the world in general.⁶¹

This was certainly an official statement, but it can be argued that he had no need to mention them at all, and his doing so implied that he recognised their worth. When Sister de Lacy claimed that she heard him say that he wished there was not a Sister of Charity in the colony,⁶² this could well have been in a moment of exasperation, as, according to Polding, they had been more or less a cause of trouble to Gregory and himself from the beginning.⁶³ A harsh statement, with no real basis of truth surely, but made in the remembrance of gestures of paternalistic concern on Gregory's part which were not appreciated by the older nuns, though the younger ones, according to Mother de Sales O'Brien, were ready to become 'Benedictines or Gregorians or anything else he pleases'.⁶⁴ He had acted as Head

⁵⁹ She was a novice when she left Dublin, and actually made her vows in New South Wales. What was implied was that she could not live the life of a Sister of Charity as she had experienced it in Dublin.

⁶⁰ 18 May 1847, S.C.A.

⁶¹ Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 275-6.

⁶² Sister de Lacy to Mother McCarty, 25 May 1859, S.C.A.

⁶³ Polding to unnamed bishop, 20 June 1859, S.A.A.

⁶⁴ Mother de Sales O'Brien to Mother Aikenhead, Passion Sunday, 1847, S.C.A.

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Superior after deposing the Sister elected by the community, and had spent much time at the convent, directing which houses the Sisters were to be in, what habits they were to wear, what they were to drink at dinner, and visiting them when sick. Gregory was apparently grieved at the lack of response! In 1847 he wrote to Sister Xavier Williams what must be one of the classics of clerical literature, denouncing women who dared to subject to investigation the conduct of the highest official of the Church in the colony (at that time, himself). 'Truly this is a new era in ecclesiastical discipline,' he notes, 'when those whom St. Paul says may not open their mouths in the Church of God, fearlessly ascend the tribunal of Justice.' 'What, dear Sister,' he exclaims, 'would have been the result had not my conduct been equal to the ordeal which it has been made to undergo.' His strong sense of his position was underlined when it was a question of dealing with women!⁶⁵

Polding wrote in his explanation to Rome of the affair of Sister de Lacy:

It is but just to add that the Vicar-General, Abbott Gregory, was not in any manner mixed up in this matter. Though so much blamed by a few wicked men having the *Freeman's Journal* an infidel paper at their command, Abbot Gregory had not visited the Convent for many months and had declined any interference in its concerns.⁶⁶

What brought about this policy of non-interference on Gregory's part we can only guess, but it came as a climax to years of struggle to work out an effective and agreeable compromise between an authoritarian form of government and the Rules and Constitutions of a particular religious Order. Gregory had few or no gifts for handling men. He certainly had no knowledge of the psychology of women. After years of trial, he came to the conclusion it was best to leave them alone! Neither Polding nor Gregory wanted to turn the Sisters of Charity into Benedictines, despite the understandable apprehension of the Sisters. Both were happy to see the Orders working side by side.

I am glad to tell you [Polding wrote to Heptonstall] that a letter yesterday had finally decided the family about which I wrote, to go to

⁶⁵ Gregory to Williams, 16 April 1847.

⁶⁶ Pièce justificative of Polding to Propaganda, 14 May 1860, S.A.A.

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N.S. Wales: a mother and 3 daughters. The mother and one daughter wish to be Benedictines, the other two propose to be Sisters of Charity.⁶⁷

A number of the young girls educated by the Benedictine nuns chose to enter with the Sisters of Charity. Yet it cannot be denied that Polding and Gregory, particularly Gregory, did interfere in the government of the Order. Why? First, as ecclesiastical Superiors they felt they had a right and an obligation to do so. Secondly, as Superiors with a knowledge of the needs and demands of the mission, they felt they were in a better position to know the right thing to do to fulfil these needs. Polding's dream-plan envisaged a community of people working in close collaboration under the one head who was the prime mover of all. When Polding presented his report of the mission to Rome in 1841, Ullathorne remarked that his own name was not even mentioned, though he had been Vicar-General—'A fact which did not surprise me, or give me the least idea that it meant anything personal', he remarked drily. 'It was simply a result of a mental habit.'⁶⁸ Though paternalistic, Polding's government was highly centralised. As Vicar-General it was Gregory's duty to support Polding's policy, and in this instance it was not difficult, as his own views were in harmony with those of Polding. Polding was more elastic in his approach to people. Gregory had to learn that the command and strategy of the smaller companies forming his army had to be understood and respected before they could be used efficiently and effectively. Gregory had experience of one religious Order—the Benedictines—and it was only a limited experience. He thought within the limits of this framework. Everything had to be submitted to the good of the whole. In this he was acting not so much as a Benedictine, but as a missionary within a Benedictine framework. He was working not for the furtherance of his own Order, but for the good of the mission as he saw it.

THE PASSIONISTS

On the same ship with Polding and the Christian Brothers were four Fathers of the Passionist Order⁶⁹ who, at Polding's express invitation,

⁶⁷ 18 May 1842, quoted in Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 36.

⁶⁸ Ullathorne, *From Cabin Boy to Archbishop*, p. 199.

⁶⁹ The Order was founded in 1737 in Tuscany, Italy, by St Paul of the Cross (Paul Danei), to sanctify men through devotion to the Passion of Christ. To achieve this end they undertook the work of missions, giving of retreats, and preaching.

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were coming to work among the Aborigines and to begin a mission among those who had not been contaminated by contact with the whites. Such was Polding's general plan. The Passionists were in Sydney before this was in any way reduced to practical details. Polding had hoped to have government support for his venture, but the most that Governor Gipps could do in 1843, a year of economic crisis, was to grant the mission a two-year lease on land at Stradbroke Island in Moreton Bay. Reports had said that the inhabitants of the island were a fine type of native,⁷⁰ and, as far as Polding knew, they had not been in contact with white men. Polding and Joseph Snell, one of the four, went to the island first, and Gregory followed later with the other three. The buildings on the island, which had been used by the government, they found unfit for habitation. The conditions were far less satisfactory than they had been led to believe. Polding, however, had told them that the arrangements were temporary. He had brought them here where the natives were more settled so they could learn their language and their customs and from there move to other fields. The missionaries had no money of their own.⁷¹ The £200 a year that Polding allotted to them⁷² he kept in Sydney to use for their supplies of food and clothing, which came through Brisbane, and which they had to go in an open boat to collect. They were completely dependent on Polding, who had no understanding of the task he had given these men to do.

I am convinced by my own experience [he wrote to the Central Council of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith] that the faith would easily spread among the tribes which are removed from all intercourse with the Europeans . . . These savages . . . appear to us intelligent, cheerful and very observing. I had from time to time the opportunity of seeing them, and when I could speak to them on religion I found it very easy to make them comprehend the principal truths of the Catholic faith.⁷³

The missionaries soon found this was not so, and a visit from Bishop Pompallier of New Zealand, who had successfully brought Christianity to numbers of Maoris, assured them that the fault was not theirs; it lay in the type of native they were dealing with. They re-

⁷⁰ O. Thorpe, *The First Mission to the Australian Aborigines*, p. 58.

⁷¹ Pesciaroli to Father General of Passionists, 2 Nov. 1848, Thorpe, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

⁷² Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 136.

⁷³ Thorpe, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

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ported to both Polding and the government that the only hope lay in looking after the Aboriginal children, educating them, and helping them to live settled lives. This suggestion was not accepted. 'What would the state of affairs have been if I had given permission to feed and clothe an indefinite number of children? For it has to be remembered that what is given to one must be given to all.'⁷⁴ Such was Polding's verdict. To the mid-nineteenth century European the Australian Aborigine appeared unbelievably uncivilised. The Passionists' solution to the problem was one that has been universally adopted by missionaries working among primitive pagan peoples. Polding may have thought that a school would only bring the natives under European influence and thus be a cause of division and strife among a people whose hope of salvation, in his opinion, lay in their isolation from such an influence. Or it may be that his pecuniary problems weighed so heavily on him that they blurred his vision of the future. After four years of fruitless effort, the mission was abandoned at the suggestion of the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda and by the direct command of the Father General of the Order. Father Brady, newly-consecrated Bishop of Perth, was in Rome at the time and wanted missionaries for the natives in the West. Three of the four Passionists set out to go there. The fourth, the Superior of the group, Raymund Vaccari, stayed on for some time in the hope of carrying on the work alone, but this, too, was a failure.

The question comes naturally to mind: did the Passionists fail because they were members of an Order trying to be made to fit into the Benedictine pattern? Polding had in his reports to Propaganda given his reasons why the mission had failed. The Fathers, he stated, had made a grave mistake in not submitting themselves to him. They wanted to do things in their own way and always in opposition to what he wanted, and they had neither the zeal nor the foresight to organise works necessary to a mission. They had no proper understanding of what a mission to pagans entailed.⁷⁵ What Polding did not state was that most of these difficulties stemmed from one root. When the Passionist missionaries were named, the Superior was Father Raymund Vaccari, who was well known in Italy, and who had friends in high places. These recommended that the mission be set up as a prefecture and Vaccari be named Prefect Apostolic, thus

⁷⁴ Polding to Franzoni, 10 April 1845, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 195.

⁷⁵ Pesciaroli to Father General, 2 Nov. 1848, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 222.

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removing the missionaries from the immediate jurisdiction of Polding. This was done while Polding was in Rome, though he declared later he knew nothing about it. The first intimation he had of it was in a letter from Vaccari written while both were in the same house in Sydney. 'I acknowledge no legitimate Superior over me and my companions', stated Vaccari, 'except the Holy See, Your Excellency as Vicar-Apostolic, or whoever holds your place.'⁷⁶ Three days later in another letter he asked that the Archbishop deal with him directly and not through an interpreter, a reference either to Gregory, the newly named Prior of St Mary's monastery where they were staying, or to the Vicar-General, Murphy. To prove to Polding the truth of his claims, Vaccari presented him with the Letters Patent establishing the prefecture. Writing of this incident to Propaganda, Polding said:

I was surprised to hear from the Superior of the Passionists that they desired to be considered as a body independent of the chief ecclesiastical authority already established here. When I received the reasons on which this request was founded, I recognised the Faculties of which till then I had heard so much.⁷⁷

Less than three months before this, Propaganda had written to Polding,

It has been reported to me that your Excellency does not look favourably on the continuance of the Prefecture of the Australian Mission which was set up with your consent when you were at Rome . . . I have thought out one reason that may explain the matter; either that you did not weigh the matter fully when you were in Rome or that you have found difficulties there which you did not anticipate.⁷⁸

Whether Polding did or did not know, the presenting of the Letters Patent of the Passionists was, in the words of one of them, 'the apple of discord, our grave mistake'.⁷⁹ It cut across Polding's dream of blending the episcopal authority with the abbatial. He had wanted Benedictine monks to take on the mission and had had visions of erecting a second monastery there,⁸⁰ but Benedictine personnel were not available, and he had had to seek help elsewhere. A mission to the Aborigines had been in the forefront of his thoughts since he had

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 132.

⁷⁷ Polding to Franzoni, 10 April 1845, quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 195-6.

⁷⁸ Franzoni to Polding, 19 Dec. 1844, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 184.

⁷⁹ Pesciaroli to Father General, 2 Nov. 1848, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 223.

⁸⁰ Polding to Heptonstall, 9 June 1843, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 190.

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first come in contact with them. It was understandably a disappointment that he was not to be intimately connected with it.

However, like most of Polding's plans, it was half-formulated and over-idealised. Ullathorne had said that Polding was more attracted to missionary labour than to the conduct of affairs, which left the working out of things to him. The trouble came, Ullathorne continued, from Polding's not realising the importance of steadily looking a difficulty all through before taking it in hand to deal with it thoroughly.⁸¹ In 1840 Ullathorne had gone, and his place as Vicar-General had been taken by Murphy, who was not as close to Polding. Though Gregory visited the mission when it first began, and again with Pompallier a year later, there is no evidence of his having been directly connected with it. The brunt of this failure from the Benedictine side must fall on Polding.

Archbishop Polding may be a saint, but he has kept none of the promises he made when he tore four religious away from us [the Father General wrote to fellow Passionist Dominic Barberi in England]. Either he has unjust ideas or had bad advisers for he has relegated the Passionists to an almost deserted island, where they have not the means to accomplish anything nor even the means of obtaining what is necessary.⁸²

Polding had written to the Passionists in 1846 that at their sufferings were '*Praeter meam intentionem*',⁸³ and Vaccari wrote to Propaganda in Polding's defence:

I can honestly say that I have never met an Archbishop or even a Bishop that led a life as poor as that of Archbishop Polding. He had other ideas about the welfare of our mission, but he has been unable to put them into execution, and I can say with all truth that what he has given to us he has taken from his own mouth.⁸⁴

The trouble came from Polding's inability to outline a situation clearly or, more profoundly, to see a situation clearly. 'He never detailed a case well,' Ullathorne explained, 'so as to secure its being seen both from the centre and all round. Thus something might come out to confuse a line of action after it had been adopted and set

⁸¹ Ullathorne, *From Cabin Boy to Archbishop*, p. 187.

⁸² 13 April 1847, quoted in Thorpe, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

⁸³ 'Not my intention'; Polding to Father General, 2 Nov. 1848, quoted in Thorpe, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

⁸⁴ 19 Nov. 1845, quoted in Thorpe, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

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in operation.⁸⁵ He had a blurred vision, and managed always to convey the bright colours that his optimistic nature was so prone to see. The missionaries lost the brightness in the face of cold reality, and found that Polding was just not prepared to meet their needs. The tensions inherent in such a situation were aggravated by the particular difficulties of a mission in a raw colonial society in which there was at once too much settled church life and too little, and which did not follow the conventional patterns of a mission to the heathen in a civilised or uncivilised land. This lay at the bottom of so much of the trouble in the archdiocese, a trouble that was emphasised when it affected a community of people as members of a religious Order. The failure of the Passionists in their work with the Aborigines served to underline this fact, and to clarify much that happened to the Christian Brothers and the Sisters of Charity.

Gregory was to blame in the way he went about enforcing Polding's plan.

Dr. Gregory has been charged with driving away the Sisters of Charity to Hobart Town—three out of the four nuns who originally came out here had to leave for that place; Dr. Gregory has been charged with driving away the Christian Brothers, to the irreparable loss of the Colony and the ruin of the rising youth

chanted Judge Therry at a public meeting held in 1854 after the sudden departure of Polding and Gregory for Europe. And Willson wrote to Polding of him, 'When I reflect on the removal of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and on his treatment of the Sisters of Charity . . . I must confess that I have no confidence in his judgment or prudence'.⁸⁶ It was not a case of his wielding the Bishop as he pleased, but of his being unaware of the feelings of others. As Brother Carroll said, 'He was youthful, without experience and rash'. Nothing else could account for his telling the young Brothers on the journey out that their Superior's authority over them was at an end, and implying that they were solely under the jurisdiction of Polding. Gregory had little experience of serving under another, and what experience he had was under Superiors who placed every confidence in him, and whose obligations, as Benedictines, were the

⁸⁵ *From Cabin Boy to Archbishop*, p. 187.

⁸⁶ From transcript of letter in Hobart Archdiocesan Archives, made by Monsignor Cullen, n.d.

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same as his own. Polding obviously depended on him to carry out his ideas. The rescript against the Sisters of Charity, though in Polding's possession since 1842, was not made known until 1846, when Gregory produced it to bolster his authority. Had Polding explained the rescript and its consequences to the Sisters, such an impulsive action on Gregory's part would have been unnecessary. As Polding was absent at the time, it was Gregory who bore the brunt, not only of his own act, but of the whole situation.

THE BENEDICTINE NUNS

In the light of all this, it is interesting to follow the story of the Benedictine nuns in the colony. For Polding, the relationship that existed between the monastery and the convent was the fulfilment of his dream-plan in that regard. As he was the Superior of the house, it was dependent on him. The nuns were Benedictines, and it was natural that they should look to the Benedictine Fathers as their guides. They followed the same Rule and were fed at the same spiritual source, so when Polding placed an ideal, however high, before them, they understood his language and responded as he hoped they would. This is what he naïvely believed he could do with all religious who came under his jurisdiction—to blend harmoniously the episcopal with the abbatial. What he forgot was that these other religious did not come prepared to accept his abbatial authority—they had their own Rules and higher Superiors to whom they had already given their allegiance. And even the Benedictines felt there was a point beyond which they could not go.

Two Benedictine nuns came to the colony in 1848, one of them being Gregory's sister, Jane, known as Dame Scholastica Gregory. She and another had entered the Benedictine priory of Princethorpe, England, with a view to being trained for the Australian foundation that Polding wanted. Dame Gregory's companion joined the community at Princethorpe, and an older woman from Stanbrook Abbey, Magdalen le Clerc, came as companion. Scholastica Gregory was thirty-one when she arrived here, four years younger than the brother whom she doted on. The two nuns stayed at Polding's house while he looked for a place to put them. He could never change. 'I thought it would have been a very easy affair to place the two Sisters who accompanied me in a proper domicile. It has been a very difficult

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job.⁸⁷ They were to begin a school for young ladies, and a suitable position had to be found. After some time, the estate of Hannibal Macarthur, 'The Vineyard', came on the market—700 acres bounded by the Parramatta River on one side, with a fine house situated on it. Polding bought it very cheaply, and 'The Vineyard' became 'Subiaco'. He set aside 150 acres for the nuns and the school, and laid down that the estate would be for the support of both monks and nuns. Until the school began the Archbishop undertook the support of the nuns, as the house had no settled revenue. In return the nuns were to mend and partly make the clothing of the monks, do all the laundry work for the community at St Mary's, and the altar linen of the cathedral. Though five novices had joined the two professed Sisters, this was a heavy load to bear in addition to the work entailed in looking after their own house and property. Like those of the Passionists, the wants of the Subiaco community were supplied by the procurator at St Mary's, who gave what he considered necessary. The nuns were completely dependent on him. In addition, Polding had reserved to himself as Founder the supreme authority of the house, and appointed Dame Magdalen in charge of spiritual matters and Dame Scholastica of temporal matters, both on an equal footing. This meant there was no Superior in the house to make decisions and accept responsibility. Dame Scholastica's health broke down and she died in 1850 at the age of thirty-three. Dame Magdalen was appointed Superior by Polding, but with very limited powers, and a school was begun. Even then, economic independence was not granted, as the money from the school had to be paid to the procurator at St Mary's. It was not until more nuns arrived from Princethorpe and informed Polding of the injustice being done to the community of Subiaco that he allowed them to manage their own business affairs. Until this happened, Polding laid down the details that concerned the lives of the nuns and of the few children in the school, though Dame Magdalen was told that for the time being the mode of instruction of the children would be in great measure within her discretion and the hours of study and repose she could arrange to suit the duties of the house.⁸⁸ The time to be given to teaching the novices the rubrics of the Breviary and singing was laid down as half an hour each day for each duty.

⁸⁷ Polding to Heptonstall, 20 Oct. 1848, quoted in Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 141.

⁸⁸ Polding to Benedictine nuns, n.d., S.A.A.

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He could put before them the beauty of their state, telling them to consider themselves one with their religious brethren [the monks at St Mary's].

All eat in common of one bread, all drink of the same cup, all derive their support from the one common fund—all in like manner must contribute to alleviate the general expenses in their love for holy Poverty and in Religious affection.⁸⁹

He could tell them to bear each others' burdens and thus fulfil the law of Christ, but he was unmindful of the fact that the nuns were bearing a burden beyond their physical strength. Scholastica Gregory, affectionate, self-sacrificing, and eager to please, wrote to the Prioress at Princethorpe: 'I may say we have everything hearts could wish for as regards bodily comforts'. But even she could not close her eyes to their position. 'At present we have as much as we can do to work for ourselves and prevent money being spent, and I assure you I find it hard enough to make ends meet.'⁹⁰ Dr C. H. Davis, Coadjutor to Polding, was responsible for any comforts they had in their life. 'He is exceedingly kind to us and will not as far as his means will allow, suffer us to want for anything', Dame Scholastica said in the same letter. And Dame Magdalen, referring to Davis after his death in 1854 said, 'When I had the dear good Bishop to direct me I had not a moment's anxiety'. She added the revealing comment: 'I must leave all things in the hands of our Good God, do my duty in my trying position and resign myself to His Holy Will as to the future whatever may be His all wise designs over myself or those under my charge'.⁹¹

There is little evidence of the part played by Gregory in this difficult period in the life of the convent before the death of his sister. She had but one reference to him in a letter, saying that the Archbishop came to see them, accompanied often by her 'own dear Harry'.⁹² The Benedictine Journal noted a number of these visits to Subiaco, but there is no record of his having made any effort to alleviate their position. After the death of Dame Scholastica, who had been the Mistress of Novices, he gave more time and thought to the

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ 20 May 1849, S.A.A.

⁹¹ 27 May 1854, S.A.A.

⁹² Sister Scholastica to Prioress of Princethorpe, 20 May 1849, S.A.A.

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care of the nuns. In 1851 one who had been a novice under Dame Scholastica wrote to Princethorpe:

The Very Reverend Dr. Gregory is about leaving us for Europe and no one is more fit than he to conduct to Australia two or three Sisters if you, dear Mother, could spare them. He has watched over us all with all the tenderness, care and kind love of the best and most affectionate of fathers. He has guided and directed us in the same holy spirit of strict discipline that our dear Mother ever strongly inculcated into our minds. You will easily conceive our bitter trial in losing one so dear to us, one that we had always revered, esteemed and looked up to with all the confidence that could be placed in human support.⁹³

The Superior, writing at the same time, spoke of his delicate state of health, and did hope that his 'precious life may yet be spared many years',⁹⁴ but made no comment on his efforts to guide the community. It is evident, though, that there was no resentment against him for taking this interest. He had the advantage of being brother to Dame Scholastica, who was much loved by the young nuns she trained.

Whatever Gregory's position, there were doubts in the mind of the Prioress of Princethorpe, and she hesitated before sending more of her nuns to join the Sydney foundation. Benedictine though she was, she wanted to be sure what was the situation at Subiaco, to prevent, as she said to Polding, 'any misconception as to the conditions under which the Sisters themselves understand that they are placed in becoming the spiritual children of Your Grace'.⁹⁵ The first point concerned a dowry. The Archbishop, she made it clear, was completely responsible for the support of the Sisters, and was not to expect them to depend on their Mother house. She next wanted a word of assurance from Polding that the Constitutions, which were those of Princethorpe, had been strictly adhered to, and that only accidental modifications required by the circumstances of the new foundation had been introduced, so that the nuns 'were going to change nothing of any moment except convent and climate'. Polding replied by return mail (he was in England at the time), assuring her that the Sisters would not require to have any claim on the Mother house, and that his object in bringing them out was simply to establish

⁹³ Dame Placida to Princethorpe, 2 March 1851, S.A.A.

⁹⁴ Dame Magdalen le Clerc to Princethorpe, 18 Feb. 1851, S.A.A.

⁹⁵ Dame Chastelet to Polding, 1 Sept. 1855, S.A.A.

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the house at Subiaco according to the Constitutions of Princethorpe.⁹⁶

Accordingly, three more nuns who had volunteered were sent to Subiaco on conditions laid down by the Prioress of Princethorpe who, in spite of Polding's assurances, was still distrustful of the situation. The three were lent for five years. If at the end of that time they found that the convent at Subiaco did not correspond to their monastic aspirations, they were free to return to Princethorpe. All of this Polding agreed to.⁹⁷ The three arrived at Subiaco in the beginning of 1856. In 1860 they were writing to the Prioress at Princethorpe details of difficulties the house was experiencing with ecclesiastical Superiors, difficulties which to them seemed insurmountable. This letter reached the Prioress on her deathbed, and her last act was to recall the three to Princethorpe. Polding wrote his submission to the wish of the Prioress.

In accordance with the strongly expressed injunctions of your saintly predecessor on her death-bed, and of your own earnest desires the sisters of Princethorpe now return to the house of their Profession. And though all has not been accomplished which was proposed, yet much good has been done. Great help has been given when aid was so much required.⁹⁸

After this move Polding granted the nuns at Subiaco economic independence, and in 1864 for the first time they elected their Prioress. Whether it was that Polding respected the rights of a Prioress who was elected or whether he had at last learned that too much interference in the government of a community was harmful, he now refused to act authoritatively in the affairs of Subiaco. One of the Sisters had asked to see him, but, as he felt it was solely to do with matters of internal government, he wrote to the Prioress:

It will never do for the members of a Community out of time of visitation, to solicit the interference of an authority external to that which governs the community, and for that authority to interfere, unless in a case of absolute necessity, which the present is not. I will assist you to the utmost by advice—but for your own sake, for the upholding of your authority—for the peace of the Community—any active interference on my part must not be.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Polding to Prioress of Princethorpe, 3 Sept. 1855, S.A.A.

⁹⁷ Dame Chivot to Stanbrook, n.d., 1890, S.A.A.

⁹⁸ Polding to Princethorpe, 5 Feb. 1861, S.A.A.

⁹⁹ Polding to Prioress of Subiaco, 5 March 1864, S.A.A.

Other Religious Orders

It is interesting to note that in the same year, 1864, the Sisters of Charity were firmly re-established in Australia. Following the departure of Sister de Lacy, there remained in the Congregation three professed Sisters, one domestic Sister, and two novices—all trained in Australia. After considering following Sister de Lacy to Dublin, they decided to make one more effort to establish the Congregation in Australia, and approached Polding. He assured them he wanted their services and would do everything to facilitate their work. He would grant them an election of a Head Superior when the Congregation would be in a better position to vote in a General Assembly. That Assembly took place in 1864, and the Congregation prospered without further interference.¹

In spite of the difficulties experienced by the Benedictine nuns, there was a relationship between Polding, Gregory, and themselves which had the marks of affectionate familiarity such as exists between members of the same family. Gregory's relations with the community were like those of a brother. As long as Sister Scholastica was at Subiaco he would always have been assured of a loving welcome. 'I love him as fondly as ever and truly with just reason,' she wrote of him, 'for he is a dear brother.'² He returned her affection. At the time of her death, Dame Magdalen noted that his 'heart seemed ready to burst as he bid his last adieu to his most beloved sister'.³ His interest in the community increased rather than diminished after her death, and he took on the duties of spiritual director in her place. It is difficult to know if he were loved at the convent for his own sake or for his sister's. He felt at ease with those who, like the Benedictine nuns, were ready to accept him as a person and not as an official of the diocese, and was not afraid to show to them his gay and affectionate nature. There are no letters of his to show exactly the relationship that did exist between him and the Sisters, but it must have had warmth and strength to have survived the test of distance and time, for in 1869 he was writing to Polding, 'Why do they not write to me from Subiaco. I wrote there last.'⁴

Polding's letters to them were written in a carefree, easy style and suggested that he looked to them for the relaxation and comfort he

¹ Cullen, *The Australian Daughters of Mother M. Aikenhead*, p. 135.

² To Princethorpe, 14 Oct. 1848, S.A.A.

³ To Princethorpe, 20 Oct. 1850, S.A.A.

⁴ 6 Jan. 1869, S.A.A.

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so much needed. Even after 1864 he wrote to Mother Walburga Wallis, the newly-elected Prioress, and to the community and school:

You are all—Mother Reverend though you be—children too, young and old—a set of vaureens—not one line by mail or telegraph, so a word from me you shall not have, not one of you. I will not even tell you of my arrival in Melbourne nor that I am dizzy and all of a ‘trimble’.⁵

To one of the nuns he wrote at another time, ‘I am very well—and though my knee pains me occasionally I have got rid of that disgraceful lump, and walk as a respectable biped ought to do’.⁶ He followed with fatherly interest the progress of Jane Therry, daughter of the Judge, who entered the Order in 1858, and of Justina Merewether, daughter of a friend in England, who joined the community at Subiaco, and who was to Polding ‘as little Benjamin was to the aged Patriarch’.⁷ This was Polding’s ideal—a happy, easy relationship where he could help all to carry out their vocation with inspiration, courage, and joy. It was the image he wanted to create in his diocese—the father at the head of his family. He—and others—paid dearly for the vision he saw but dimly, for the plans he dreamed but never worked out until he was in the midst of them. His own nuns suffered no less than others.

⁵ N.d., S.A.A.

⁶ N.d., S.A.A.

⁷ Polding to Dame Justina Merewether, n.d., S.A.A.

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FROM the time the cry of 'liberty, equality, and fraternity' had echoed around Europe, men had become increasingly aware of themselves. The liberal tendencies which this cry fostered awakened in them a sense of their individual importance and of their corporate power. They clamoured for more say in the government of their country, and set on foot movements to attain it. The spirit of such movements became evident in the Church, where the laity wanted a more active part in temporal affairs. The most effective way of accomplishing this and of making known their views, not only to those inside the Church, was to establish an organ which would voice them. The liberal-minded John England, Bishop of Charleston, founded in 1822 the first American Catholic weekly newspaper, the *United States Catholic Miscellany*.¹ Though this aimed primarily at instructing the immigrant in his religious faith and in the ways of American life, it did, in its early years, give excessive space to Ireland and its problems. The problems John England and other American bishops had to face were similar to those confronting the Australian hierarchy. The majority of the Catholic population in the United States at this date was formed of semi-literate Irish who made up the working force of the country. They needed leadership to defend themselves against the attacks of the Nativist and Know-Nothing movements. For this, John England founded the *Miscellany*. McEncroe, who had served under England before coming to Australia, sought to solve the problems of his new country by the same methods. As early as 1837 he tried to establish a Catholic paper in Sydney. With the approval of Polding he attempted to find enough shareholders to buy up the *Australian*. This he was unable to do. However, in 1839, with the backing of a number of influential Catholics, mainly wealthy emancipists, and with Polding's blessing, he successfully launched the *Australasian Chronicle* with W. A. Duncan, a convert from Presbyte-

¹ J. T. Ellis, *American Catholicism*, p. 57.

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rianism, its first editor. He outlined the purpose of the paper as the maintenance of Catholics' political rights, not the propagation of the Catholic religion.² For the Irish, Catholics' political rights were bound up with the rights of Irishmen and strongly associated with their centuries-old struggle for freedom.

In naming a convert as editor, McEncroe unwittingly introduced another element into this theme. Converts to Catholicism at this period, particularly in New South Wales, suffered a loss of social prestige, as there were few Catholics belonging to the intellectual or upper classes. To recompense themselves for this loss, and to prove to their Protestant friends and relations that their freedom was not restricted, they adopted a high-handed attitude not only to their fellow Catholics, but also to ecclesiastical authority. In a predominantly Irish setting, they became impatient of national prejudices and were as critical of any infringement of these on religion as they were of any action of ecclesiastical Superiors which did not accord with their thinking. English converts were divided roughly into two classes—the ultramontanes, who emphasised reliance on Rome and its authoritarianism—W. G. Ward declared he would like a Papal Bull for breakfast every morning³—and the liberal Catholics. These latter insisted that Catholics must appear intellectually respectable in the eyes of Protestants and keep up with new developments in science and the arts. To educate Catholics and to voice the opinions of the liberal Catholics on subjects of philosophical, literary, and moral interest, one of these converts, John Moore Capes, founded in 1848 the *Rambler*.⁴ It became the organ of the lay converts, who looked upon the Catholic clergy of England as limited in attainments and activity and the laity as isolated from the intellectual and public life of their country. The 'old Catholics' resented the freedom of thought and speech as found in the *Rambler*. Capes wrote in his own defence: 'Every person . . . ecclesiastic or layman, has an unquestionable right to publish and defend any opinion whatever that he pleases on those theological subjects which are not already ruled by the Church herself. . . .'⁵ The position of the laity in the Church was further empha-

² *A.C.*, 19 Nov. 1839.

³ M. Trevor, *Newman*, Vol. II, *Light in Winter*, p. 442.

⁴ J. L. Altholz, *The Liberal Catholic Movement in England*, Ch. I.

⁵ Letter by 'Z' on 'The Right of Free Discussion', *Rambler*, 19 Aug. 1848, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 14.

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sised by Newman, who became for a short time editor of the paper. In a lengthy article, 'On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine', his farewell as editor, he defended the right of the laity to share in the building up of the Church's doctrine, claiming that the teaching Church, the bishops, are better off when surrounded by enthusiastic partisans than when they cut off the faithful from a study of the divine doctrines and expect an unquestioning faith in their word which, concluded Newman, 'in the educated classes will terminate in indifference, and in the poorer, in superstition'.⁶

The *Rambler* had been influenced by the liberal Catholics of France, Lamennais and his paper *L'Avenir*, and Montalembert and the *Correspondant*. Lamennais began as the champion of ultramontaniam against Gallicanism and the government of Charles X which sought to use the Church for its own purposes. He glorified the role of the people, and argued that they should be reconciled to religion through a common devotion to liberty. If the Church demanded liberty for itself it must give it to others, so *L'Avenir* supported freedom of conscience, of thought, of the press, and the separation of church and state. These principles were opposed by the majority of the French bishops, who were tainted with Gallicanism. Lamennais and his friends turned to the Pope, whose authority they had upheld, expecting a sympathetic hearing. Instead, Gregory XVI condemned them in his encyclical, *Mirari Vos*. All submitted, but Lamennais left the Church two years later.

Montalembert's submission did not mean the abandonment of his desire to espouse the Church to the liberal theories of his age. He founded a Catholic party the aim of which was freedom of instruction for religious bodies, and was thus able to unite Catholics behind a cry for liberty. In 1850, however, the party split into two sections—the ultramontanes who, under the disillusioned Pius IX, had come to regard the Church as in a state of siege, fighting for its existence against the forces of liberalism, and who were therefore authoritarian, and the liberals under Montalembert, who were still hoping to reconcile Catholicism with the modern world. The ultramontanist, Veuillot, carried French Catholic opinion with him, so the leadership of the liberals passed to the Germans under Mohler and later Dollinger.⁷

⁶ J. H. Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, p. 106.

⁷ E. E. Y. Hales, *The Catholic Church in the Modern World*, pp. 95-100, 135-40.

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Lord Acton, an English liberal Catholic associated with the *Rambler*, had studied under Dollinger in Germany, and brought many of his ideas to the Catholics of England through the pages of that paper.

Though separated by thousands of miles, the Catholics of New South Wales had many of these ideas brought to them through the *Freeman's Journal*, the organ of the Irish Catholics, which had been founded by McEncroe in 1850 after the *Sydney Chronicle*⁸ had ceased publication in 1849. Its first editor was McEncroe himself. He was an admirer of Montalembert—whose picture was found among his papers⁹—and read his paper and the *Rambler* among others from overseas. The early numbers of the *Freeman's Journal* gave extracts from Montalembert's speeches or articles of the *Rambler*, but never anything inflammatory. Though McEncroe was reading the organs of the liberal Catholics in France and England, the full impact of their principles was to hit Sydney at the end of the fifties. The *Freeman's Journal* was at this time (1850) what it was stated to be, a journal for the propagation of news to Catholics and a commentary on affairs of the state. By 1853 the editor claimed to have done good by advocating the cessation of transportation, the elective principle in the formation of the second Legislative Council, and a useful system of education, and by checking the grasping propensities of a domineering squattocracy.¹⁰ Letters to the *Freeman's Journal* were more in defence of the Church and the rights of Catholics than in defiance of ecclesiastical authority. In 1855, however, the *Journal* began to be more concerned with the differences within the Church itself. The big issues of the colony had kept Catholics united in fighting for their rights. Now, when the political battles tended to cut across the division of Protestant and Catholic, Catholics began to apply the principles of liberalism more to the government of their Church. They began by looking at the members who composed it. The leader of 7 July was headed 'English and Irish', and spoke of the differences between the two, applying the remarks to the nationalities in general and not to Catholics in particular, though it was easy to hear the undertones. It gave three sources for these differences—race, religion, and English pride. Englishmen, it claimed, had

⁸ The paper had changed its name from the *Australasian Chronicle* to the *Morning Chronicle* and finally to the *Sydney Chronicle*.

⁹ In S.A.A.

¹⁰ *F.J.*, 12 Nov. 1853.

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ever looked down on the 'ignorant Irish', the 'low Irish', the 'mere Irish'.¹¹ The defence of Ireland and the Irish became more marked in the following week, when the leader deplored 'the apparent dislike which the children of Irish parents in Australia have for everything Irish'.¹² Belonging, on the whole, to a lower social class, the Irish were sensitive to their position. The liberal movement which had spread to the colony increased the agitation for reform, and efforts were made to further extend the franchise.

The spirit of equality was strong. Wentworth's efforts to establish an aristocracy in the colony were severely defeated. Daniel Deniehy, an erratic and brilliant young orator, did not spare the aspiring aristocrats in his speech on the Bill introduced into the Legislative Assembly.¹³ For James Macarthur's coat of arms he suggested 'a field vert, the heraldic term for green, and emblazoned on this field should be a rum keg of a New South Wales order of chivalry'. After more biting satire at the expense of the 'Botany Bay aristocrats', he concluded, 'it might be well to ridicule the doings of such a clique, but their doings merited burning indignation'.

The Irish, in particular, fought for a country of equal opportunity where each was rewarded according to his ability and effort. Irishmen were becoming prominent in the public life of the colony. John O'Shanassy and Gavan Duffy, both future premiers, were to the fore in the political field in Victoria. In New South Wales two men stood out from the others, both for the time they had been in the colony and for the official positions which they held. Roger Therry had come out in 1829 as Commissioner of the Court of Requests. During his thirty years in the colony he held successively the offices of Attorney-General, Resident Judge of Port Phillip, and Judge of the Supreme Court of New South Wales. He was elected a member for Camden at the first elections held in 1843. John Hubert Plunkett came to the colony in 1832 as Solicitor-General, and later became Attorney-General. He, too, was a member of the Legislative Council and of the National Schools Board. The Irish Australians, Deniehy and W. B. Dalley, represented the people in the Assembly. Others were taking their place in the professional world. P. Faucett, E. Butler and J. Moore-Dillon were all in legal practice, Moore-Dillon being

¹¹ *F.J.*, 7 July 1855.

¹² *Ibid.*, 14 July 1855.

¹³ C. M. H. Clark, *Select Documents in Australian History*, Vol. II, p. 341.

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the Crown Solicitor. They were not numerous, but they were vocal both in the affairs of the colony and of the Church. They mixed with Protestants of similar standing and became more conscious of their position. Both groups refused to regard themselves as infants in a colonial setting. They resented clergy who came as missionaries to a people incapable of taking an active intelligent part in the management of their own affairs. For the Anglicans the issue came to a head in the formulation of a Constitution for the colonial Church. The bishops of Australasia drew up a report which seemed to laymen to give them a second-class status and to make the clergy supreme.¹⁴ Meetings of parish members were loud in their protest against the plan. Bishop Broughton of Sydney could not placate them by allowing some amendments, though still leaving to the bishop the power of veto. The Anglicans of New South Wales drew up a counter-petition to present to the Imperial Parliament.

For Broughton and for Polding and Gregory the problem was the same. They had come to the colony when the Churches and the colony were in their infant stage. Because of the growth in the political and economic spheres the colony had achieved a remarkable degree of independence by 1850. This brought with it a corresponding awareness on the part of the colonists of a growth in their status as citizens. Ecclesiastical authorities found it difficult to adjust themselves to this increasingly independent spirit on the part of the laity. Polding and Gregory found it a greater problem than Broughton. The structure of the Catholic Church was hierarchical, and since the Council of Trent the tradition of the Church had given a minor role to the laity. In addition, Polding and Gregory were members of an Order the government of which was authoritarian, albeit paternal, in nature, where the monks saw the will of God in the directions of their abbot, and where their sanctity lay in submitting to him as to Christ. Ullathorne expressed the attitude of ecclesiastical authority to the laity in his reaction to the *Rambler's* stand on the issue of collegiate education: 'those who are but as children amongst us, forgetting their pupilage, have undertaken to rebuke, censure and condemn the acts of those in authority in our Church'.¹⁵ It was the function of

¹⁴ K. J. Cable, 'St. James' Church, King Street, Sydney, 1819-1894', *J.R.A.H.S.*, Vol. 50, Nov. 1964, p. 361.

¹⁵ Letter to the *Tablet*, 9 Dec. 1848, quoted in C. Butler, *The Life and Times of Bishop Ullathorne 1806-1889*, Vol. I, p. 128.

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bishops to govern, the duty of priests and laity to obey, he maintained. The educated laity saw in the monastery a symbol of this patronising attitude on the part of their ecclesiastical Superiors. In their view, it was an imposition on the Church of the 1850s, which had all the means of governing itself. 'If then any Abbot of St. Mary's . . . tell you that laymen must not meet, as laymen, to consider these things,' Laicus wrote in complaint to the *Freeman's Journal*, 'let me tell you what French laymen have done in these matters.' He then proceeded to quote from Cardinal Gousset's *Moral Theology* concerning the part of the laity in Church government.¹⁶ Butler protested that the authorities at St Mary's had repelled the laity until they stood isolated from their confidence.¹⁷ In contending for 'the great principle' that priests should live in their parishes at one with their people, the Benedictine, Patrick Farrelly, reflected the view that the monastery was isolated from the Church. For him there was in this the added attraction of being freed from obligations he regretted having undertaken. Nevertheless it was indicative of the feelings of a group of laymen within the Church. These men were unwilling to feel inferior to Protestants. The Anglicans and Presbyterians had asserted their rights as laymen within their respective Churches. Catholics of similar standing had to assert theirs.

Though this spirit had been growing in the Catholic Church over the years, it was not until Polding and Gregory left for Europe in 1854 that it was given free expression. Polding had left the colony unexpectedly and had tendered his resignation from the Australian mission because, as Judge Therry told the people, he was under the impression 'that, by reason of rumors and surmises, and a conduct and bearing on the part of some persons, the confidence of the people in him was diminished, and thereby his usefulness impaired'.¹⁸ The laity protested they did not desire his withdrawal, and moved a resolution to 'earnestly entreat' him to return 'to his attached flock with the utmost promptitude'. With Gregory it was otherwise. The meeting desired to 'express its grateful sense of the long and zealous labours of the Vicar-General', but there was no expression of regret at his departure and no request to him to return. At one of the preliminary meetings prior to the public meeting, the question of

¹⁶ *F.J.*, 23 March 1859.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2 March 1859.

¹⁸ *S.M.H.*, 28 March 1854.

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Gregory's return was raised. The chairman, Therry, enumerated the charges made against Gregory—that he had driven away the Sisters of Charity and the Christian Brothers; that he had been the active agent, if not the true cause, of the open rebellion of his own monks. Without actually condemning him, he gave the impression, related an eye-witness, that he was 'totally unfit for the awfully responsible position His Grace placed him in'. All were unanimous in not extending to him an invitation to return.¹⁹ Apart from Therry's, the names of those who attended this preliminary meeting are unknown. It is difficult to assess how universal was this decision against Gregory's return. All the business at the general meeting that followed was conducted in accordance with pre-arranged plans. The general public could well have understood that Gregory was included in the invitation extended to Polding. The incident served to underline the fact that by 1854 a group of active, vocal laymen were ready to put themselves forward to establish their right to intervene in the government of their Church. At this time, however, their attack on Gregory was hidden behind high-sounding phrases in praise of Polding.

When Michael D'Arcy took over the *Freeman's Journal* in 1856 the Irish element in the Church came more than ever to the fore, and the tendency to fight for Ireland in Australia was more strongly emphasised. McEncroe, feeling that journalism was not a clergyman's work, announced that the *Journal* was to be handed over to laymen.²⁰ This was a significant move, as it meant that the laity had control of the only Catholic public organ in the archdiocese. D'Arcy was not slow to use his position. He appointed as editor an ex-monk, the brilliant Sheridan Moore, who was under Church censure for having violated his vows. Moore claimed his vows were not valid and were, therefore, not violated, but his appointment as editor was condemned by McEncroe, who thought it 'inconsistent and improper to allow a person under the censure of the Church to conduct a paper, the object of which is to advocate the principles and discipline of the Church'.²¹ Polding, and Gregory, too, fought against him.

Polding and Gregory tried their utmost to crush me [D'Arcy wrote to his brother David], and finding that they did not succeed, they are

¹⁹ *F.J.*, 12 March 1859, letter of Veritas.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 17 Jan. 1857, leader, quoting letter of McEncroe of 28 May 1856.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 28 Feb. 1857, libel (Moore *v.* Wright).

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now at work to try and oust Moore and thereby to injure the paper, but I will not, in fact cannot, permit this rascally clerical despotism.²²

D'Arcy felt the opposition to him was based on anti-Irish and personal antipathies,²³ and he would, as he said, have 'butchered' Polding and Gregory without remorse.²⁴

However, D'Arcy was defeated. Legal action forced Moore to resign the editorship, and D'Arcy had to hand over the paper to its proprietor, McEncroe, who then appointed Jabez King Heydon as its editor. Heydon was an Englishman who, as a young man in his twenties, had migrated to Australia. He followed the Tractarian movement from afar and was received into the Catholic Church in 1845.²⁵ As a convert, his viewpoint was different from that of the rabidly Irish, highly-emotional D'Arcy. Heydon was an omnivorous reader and imported many books from overseas. He had been personally influenced by liberal movements in England and on the Continent. The *Rambler's* stress on lay action and the striving for a higher level and more intelligent direction of activity by laity and clergy was taken up by Heydon and made the dominant theme of his editorship. Under him the *Freeman's Journal* spared no one who stood in the way of this ideal.

Heydon is exposing the *Benedictines* and their *incompetency*. Duncan is slashing them as Isidore and many others [D'Arcy wrote gleefully to his brother]. Old Mc [Archdeacon McEnroe] thought to *muzzle* him and not let him publish the letters, and he told him plainly he would not stifle public opinion.²⁶

Duncan's aims were those of Heydon. To raise the social, moral, and intellectual level of the Catholic body he began by 'slashing' the Irish as much as the Benedictines. Irish patriotism transported to another country and fostered there

becomes a real disease preventing it from amalgamating and identifying itself with the general stock of the country it inhabits . . . Our religion is neither English nor Irish but Catholic, and our patriotism . . . must be neither the one nor the other but Australian,

²² 28 Oct. 1856, S.A.A.

²³ *F.J.*, 17 Jan. 1857, leader.

²⁴ M. D'Arcy to J. D'Arcy, 28 Oct. 1856, S.A.A.

²⁵ M. Collingridge (his granddaughter), 'Jabez King Heydon', Australian Catholic Historical Society Archives.

²⁶ M. D'Arcy to J. D'Arcy, 15 May 1858, S.A.A.

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he proclaimed.²⁷ He agreed the Irish had suffered, and he admired them, but

is this continued whining about old grievances . . . never to cease? [he asked] . . . in this and other countries where Irishmen have no grievance whatever to keep up the memory of former sufferings, this perpetual chant about their ancient glories and sufferings is at once offensive to others and highly injurious to themselves; and whether they believe me or not, I am sure that I am their friend in telling them so.²⁸

Both Heydon and Duncan denied that their criticisms of ecclesiastical affairs were directed against the members of the Benedictine Order. Duncan stated that though some wished to annihilate the Australian Benedictines, he did not. He wanted them to bestir themselves and do some good. He acknowledged the greatness of the Order in times past, and asserted that he bore it no dislike. His objection was to the 'false and irregular' position it occupied in the colony and its failure to answer his expectations.²⁹ *Alumnus Benedictinus* had defended the Order on the grounds that its primary object was not the mission but the sanctification of its own members.³⁰ If that was the case, Duncan countered, they should not 'laud it over the secular clergy, as the latter complained, and, as everybody believes, exclude all the missionary orders whose vocation it is to do the very thing that, according to alumnus, Benedictines ought not to do'. He argued that a clergy fit to lead the Catholic laity of the colony must have the mission as their primary object. They must be abroad at their post, in season, out of season. They must urge and assist and direct the laity in founding missions and churches and schools and charitable works and—this was the burning point for Duncan—they must be ready to reason and to talk with the laity on these and similar subjects, and not hunt them from the sanctuary as intruders when they came to offer an opinion on these matters. 'It is not that I love the Benedictines less, but because I love the Church and my adopted country more,' Duncan concluded, 'that I beg for missionaries of this sort.'³¹

Others took up the cry of greater freedom for the laity, which

²⁷ *F.J.*, 16 May 1857.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 20 June 1857, letter of Icolmkill.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 16 June 1857, letter of Isidore.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 22 May 1858.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 16 June 1858.

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became the cry not only of liberalism, but also of strong nationalism when the Irish rose against their English Superiors. 'The feeling is abroad among the humbler and many of the middle classes of Catholics that they are not considered of sufficient importance to the clergy to be worthy of any further notice beyond that which they are bound to give in the exercise of their duty', Rusticus claimed.³² The Irish were always battling against this feeling of inferiority with regard to the English Benedictines. Macdermott voiced it when he stated that many in the colony held that it was easier to obtain an audience with the Governor than to get the ear of the clergy at St Mary's. The Archbishop would not yield to their pressure when they did get his ear. It was said that he would rather cut off his right arm than make a simple concession to their requests.³³

The laity were becoming bolder in their complaints and demands. 'To lay organisation we must look now as to the last resource for infusing new life and vigor into our Institutions', Polycarp claimed.³⁴ Each week the editor of the *Freeman's Journal* had addressed to him letters which were at first directed against the anti-liberal attitude of the system in general, and then against the one who symbolised all that they were fighting. Gregory, as Vicar-General, stood between the people and Polding. As one of the few important figures in the colonial Church, Polding became synonymous with it. To fight against him meant fighting against the institution, and, for all their high-powered speeches, these men were its loyal sons. They had to find someone on whom to vent their wrath. With Gregory they could feel they were hitting at ecclesiastical authority without touching the Church itself; for their argument lay, not with its spiritual jurisdiction, nor with its doctrines, but with its temporal administration. This opposition, which had been gathering momentum over the years, came to a head in 1857 with the founding of St John's College in the University of Sydney. The University was founded as a strictly secular institution, but after many negotiations, it granted to the denominations the right to establish affiliated

³² Ibid., 5 May 1858. Rusticus was the pseudonym of Captain Macdermott. The key to these pseudonyms is found in the copy of the 1858 *Freeman's Journal* at Riverview College.

³³ Ibid., 11 Aug. 1858, letter of Resurgo.

³⁴ Ibid., 21 April 1858, letter of Polycarp (O'Connor).

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colleges.³⁵ The Anglican Church was the first to take advantage of this. Its senior bishop, Bishop W. Tyrrell of Newcastle, would have nothing to do with the godless University, and wanted its teaching functions to be incorporated in the different colleges, which would impart religious knowledge as well.³⁶ The Vice-Provost, Charles Nicholson, argued that the Act of 1850, setting up the University, had been interpreted by the Senate to mean that there would be only one teaching body. The Anglican Church refused to co-operate in this venture, and had no official representative on the Senate when it met in 1851.³⁷ A number of the Anglican laity and some of the clergy revolted against this attitude of their Church authorities and called public meetings to discuss the foundation of a Church of England College in affiliation with the University. St Paul's was founded in 1854 by laymen, in direct opposition to the policy of their ecclesiastical Superiors. In drawing up a Constitution for the College they took care to keep ecclesiastical influence at a minimum by giving the Bishop the title of Visitor, with no defined rights. The elected Fellows were supporters of the original committee, so the policy of no ecclesiastical interference was carried on.³⁸

The Catholics had as their representative on the first Senate Bishop Davis, who played an active part in having the Colleges recognised within the framework of the University.³⁹ He died in May 1854. It was not until December 1857 that St John's College was incorporated into the University in terms similar to the statute of St Paul's. St John's became the arena where ecclesiastical authority and the laity fought for supremacy. Independent men should be elected to the Council of the College, the *Freeman's Journal* maintained—men who understood fully the relative positions of the clergy and laity in respect to each other.⁴⁰ St Paul's had been established by the power of the laity; the initiative for the founding of St John's came from St Mary's, but the laity took up the challenge. The *Freeman's Journal* used the occasion of the election of Fellows

³⁵ Minutes of the Senate, 21 March 1853, Sydney University Archives.

³⁶ K. J. Cable, 'The University of Sydney and its Affiliated Colleges, 1850-1880', *The Australian University*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1964, pp. 196-8.

³⁷ Minutes of the Senate, 3 Feb. 1851, Sydney University Archives.

³⁸ Cable, 'The University of Sydney and its Affiliated Colleges', p. 204.

³⁹ Minutes of the Senate, 27 Sept. 1852, 21 March 1853, Sydney University Archives.

⁴⁰ 23 Jan. 1858.

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to St John's as an excuse for guarded attacks on the Benedictines and on Gregory. 'We of the laity have been hitherto too supine', said Heydon in the leader of 30 January 1858. 'We have leaned too heavily upon our clergy.' If the Orphan School was not well conducted because the Sisters of Charity were not there, if there were no good Catholic schools because the Christian Brothers had left the colony, if so many of the good priests had left the shores for other lands, the fault in some way, in Heydon's eyes, was attributable to the laity. Duncan was more blatant in his attack and more direct in his appeal to admit other Orders into the diocese.⁴¹ McEncroe objected to the misstatements in these letters regarding the departure of the Orders mentioned, and their irrelevance in connection with the election of Fellows to St John's.⁴² He censured Heydon for opening the columns of the *Freeman's Journal* to letters 'indirectly reflecting on our venerable and indefatigable Archbishop and his Clergy'.⁴³ Polycarp took up the defence of the *Journal*, which he claimed represented the views and expressed the wishes of the greater number of the laity. Polycarp wished to emphasise that they were children no longer and that they would act with an independence worthy of adults. He stated definitely that now that the people knew the difference between a 'free press' and a 'gagged press' they would never again support a journal which was 'held firmly between the finger and thumb of some reverend censor'.⁴⁴

O'Connor was prominent in the campaign that preceded the election of the Fellows of St John's. At the meeting, at St Benedict's parish, of subscribers to St John's College to elect its Fellows, O'Connor rose to explain the purpose of their meeting. The Act of Incorporation provided that the Fellows be elected by the subscribers at a meeting in Sydney. The Archbishop, hoping to bypass the election, had prepared a list of nominees to submit to the meeting. O'Connor objected to this. He was supported by Plunkett, who advised that the matter be referred to a committee to consider the best means of carrying out the election. This was done. A list of candidates was then drawn up by those present, leaving the details of the election to the committee. This was to be done in parishes,

⁴¹ *F.J.*, 16 June 1858, letter of Isidore.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 6 Feb. 1858.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 21 April 1858.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 12 May 1858.

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with the clergyman of each district as the returning officer. At Parramatta the parish priest, Bede Sumner, announced from the altar that he had received from Gregory a list of names to be recommended for election. He exhorted the people to stand by their Archbishop and to vote for the men of his choice, as there was a clique against him in Sydney. O'Connor declared, 'with his hand upon his heart', that such a statement was untrue. The trouble, he stated, lay with Gregory, who tried to thrust his own nominees 'down our throats'. He had no right to dictate, though from what he knew of Gregory's character, his interference arose not from any cunning, but from 'high-handed suppression of the rights of the laity'. At the same meeting a subscriber expressed the feelings of this group of the laity when he proclaimed that, 'no matter how he would obey in ecclesiastical matters, he would not submit in civil matters . . . Dr. Gregory had no right to send forth a list'.⁴⁵ There were others among the laity who thought differently, however, and demanded of O'Connor that he withdraw his 'uncalled-for' and 'unjustifiable' remarks about Gregory.⁴⁶

Such public criticism of his Vicar-General called for public action on the part of Polding, as he well knew that the attack on Gregory was aimed at his administration. He issued on 9 June a Pastoral on the subject of election of Fellows to St John's College. 'Confidence has been disturbed where it ought to have rested, namely in your Archbishop and clergy', he told his flock, and asserted that the whole affair had been treated as though it were the subject matter of 'vulgar party elections'. He laid down the necessary qualifications for election. The honour of a Fellowship existed only in so far as a man was fitted for it. Apart from being a good, practical Catholic, he needed to be well educated, with some social standing. He did not doubt that the people would place their trust in the clergy and in those who were with them rather than in the few who were against. O'Connor answered him by proclaiming his trust in Heydon, who knew better than anyone 'the social condition, and the earnestness and unselfishness' of those who had worked with him to bring the election of Fellows to a peaceful conclusion.⁴⁷ Earlier the Archbishop had thanked God that there were only a few who thought the clergy

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 20 Feb. 1858.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 27 Feb. 1858, letter of *Amicus Curiae*.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 16 June 1858, letter of Polycarp.

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should not have the whole management of the election, but the votes at a meeting proved otherwise. Polding in his Pastoral had spoken of the Fellows working harmoniously under the authority of a Visitor.⁴⁸ O'Connor could not let this pass. The power of the Visitor is 'latent not active', he retorted, taking his line from the Fellows of St Paul's. Having refuted, point by point, all that Polding had written in his Pastoral, he then expressed the hope, backed by some 'internal evidences', that 'the missive . . . thrown among them' did not emanate directly from the Archbishop, but came 'from a mind less informed and a heart less impressed with what is due to himself and his people' than could be ascribed to Polding. Even if Gregory were responsible for it, the Pastoral had its uses, O'Connor conceded, in showing the laity that if they were to have any rights at all they had to win them.⁴⁹

The election of the Fellows, which had been such a bone of contention, was finally carried out in St Mary's Cathedral on 16 June 1858.⁵⁰ There were fifty names from which to choose the eighteen Fellows—twelve laymen and six clergy. Gregory's name appeared with those of McEncroe and Therry among the clergy who were elected, while prominent critics of archdiocesan policy, Plunkett, Roger Therry, Heydon, O'Connor, Butler, and Macdonnell,⁵¹ formed part of the elected lay group.

The election coincided with the publication of the *Monitum Pastorale* of Polding, Willson, and Goold, addressed to the clergy of their dioceses in condemnation of that 'insolent and most foul liberty, which does not hesitate to commit to public print what each one may think concerning faith, discipline, authority and ecclesiastical individuals'.⁵² There was no doubt that the subjects of this condemnation were the *Freeman's Journal*, that public journal 'which insolently (though without any lawful title to do so) recommends

⁴⁸ 9 April 1858, S.A.A.

⁴⁹ *F.J.*, 16 June 1858.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 19 June 1858.

⁵¹ Randal Macdonnell was a headmaster of Paddington High School who later became Inspector of Schools in Queensland, a promotion due to his anti-clericalism, some claimed. Polding was not the only bishop who felt the force of his criticism. He caused as much or more trouble to Quinn, who stated that he had quarrelled with and misrepresented every ecclesiastical Superior he had had in Australia.

⁵² Clark, *Select Documents in Australian History*, p. 718.

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itself as the defender of Catholic faith and discipline', and its contributors, 'roaring lions' who 'in their audaciousness' usurped everything to themselves. The bishops showed no sympathy with a laity who examined everything; weighed everything with minds 'perhaps but lightly imbued with Catholic faith and discipline'. There was, they claimed, nothing reserved for 'episcopal authority and loving obedience of the faithful and confiding soul'.⁵³ The condemned men were quick to respond. The *Monitum Pastorale* was nothing other than an attempt to 'blacken and condemn [the *Freeman's Journal* for the] zealous and independent manner in which it discussed matters of vital importance to Catholics in the colony'. Furthermore it had expressed a fear 'that the faithful would become infected by the circulation of truth and justice among them'.⁵⁴ But this was what the faithful demanded, Heydon protested—the liberty to point out the real wants and necessities of the country; they demanded the right to be free, to be mature men, to be able to say 'yes' when they felt in their conscience they ought, and to say 'no' if they felt themselves right in doing so.⁵⁵ They were censured, the *Journal* stated, because they had ventured to find fault with the Benedictine administration, yet the French paper *Univers* had opposed a group of French bishops, and the Pope had pronounced in favour of the *Journal*. In the light of this verdict, Heydon became bolder in his stand for liberty. When the *Journal* pointed out the deficiencies of the administration, he declared that it was voicing complaints that were nearly universal, and 'we must of necessity complain, unless we are deaf, dumb, blind and paralysed'. The critics were, however, magnanimous in their attitude to Polding, admitting that if they were in his position, they would find it hard to accustom themselves to any rule of action other than the autocratic one which had existed in every department.⁵⁶ Nevertheless Duncan, seeing himself as the champion of those thousands who, he claimed, had thus far confided in him, pointed out that the universal practice of the Church was to try first to reclaim the writers by gentle persuasion. If not successful, then the Church proceeded to condemn by describing accurately the title and character of each production and the name of the author.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *F.J.*, 26 June 1858, letter of Erinach.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 23 June 1858, leader.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 3 July 1858.

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'On the one hand', he concluded, 'we have the established discipline of the Catholic Church; on the other, its miserable substitute in New South Wales.'⁵⁷

A question of vital importance was raised. Was the Australian Church to be governed by ecclesiastical law or by a 'quasi-abbot' in the name of the Archbishop? The Catholics in the colony would be worthless, Heydon proclaimed, if they 'suffered a few unmerited angry words' to deter them from getting at the root of the evil and removing it at all costs. He insisted that they asked no new thing of the Archbishop. What they wanted was that he 'shake off that hidden, paralysing influence which drove many worthy men from the colony', among them 'the now highly distinguished Bishop of Birmingham', Ullathorne, and that he govern according to ecclesiastical law.⁵⁸ Ullathorne's departure had nothing to do with Gregory's 'paralysing influence' over the Archbishop. He was, however, one man who had left the colony and attained fame elsewhere. The moral was too good to miss.

The situation was not unique to Sydney, nor was the attitude of the Benedictines dictated solely by their monastic training. There existed in Melbourne a group of laymen who clamoured for a share in the government of the Church, and who were a source of trouble to Goold. Viator, of Melbourne, had written to the *Freeman's Journal* praising its 'manly stand' against the *Monitum Pastorale*, but reminding the Catholics of Sydney that they were better off than those of Melbourne, whose wants were 'legion'. They wanted priests who could preach and give retreats. They wanted Christian Brothers for their schools and not teachers whose only merit was to 'suck the thumb' of the priest who chanced to employ them. Following Sydney's suggestion, they wanted Rome to send a nuncio to the country.⁵⁹ A deputation had approached Goold before his departure for Europe, but it was not received. Instead, the Vicar-General replied to their address that the Bishop would be 'guided by the discipline of the Church' in matters concerning the laity. The words could have been spoken equally well by Gregory on behalf of Polding.⁶⁰ The

⁵⁷ Ibid., 14 July 1858, letter of Isidore. He was following events from Brisbane, where he had gone in 1846 as sub-collector of customs—a position Gipps obtained for him after he lost the editorship of the *Weekly Register*.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 7 July 1858, leader.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 21 July 1858.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 10 July 1858, letter of Catholicus of Melbourne.

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Vicar-General, Geoghegan, sent to Polding a copy 'of a shameful and sacrilegious libel' on the Bishop, clergy, and diocese of Melbourne, which O'Grady, the Melbourne correspondent of the *Freeman's Journal*, had been chiefly responsible for sending to Rome.⁶¹

The reaction to the *Monitum Pastorale* proved to Polding that this dissident group of the laity were not to be threatened into silent subjection. They had always rebelled against those who claimed that the laity had nothing to do with the Church but obey its recognised teachers, participate in its graces, and endow it with their worldly goods without inquiry as to the application of such endowments.⁶² They were not suddenly to abandon this position because of an admonition which one of them claimed was not the voice of the authority of the Church but of the anger of a prelate, holding that the *Monitum* was the work of Polding, despite the signatures of Willson and Goold.⁶³ Less than one month after its publication, Polding invited the laity to submit, through the Reverend J. Therry, a list of grievances and suggestions. A public meeting nominated seven men to fulfil this task in its name. Plunkett, Butler, Heydon, Hart (Member for New England), O'Connor, Macdonnell, and Davis drew up a petition to Polding to make known to him 'the wishes of the people in regard to the administration of Catholic affairs within the Archdiocese'. These wishes were that Polding should head an organisation of the faithful who would assist him 'by their advice and their funds' on matters concerning the introduction into the colony of clergy of all Orders, of religious and lay teachers, and concerning the establishment of schools, the appointment of school inspectors, and—a final touch, reminiscent of their Protestant brethren—the appointment of Church wardens.⁶⁴ Plunkett, who probably felt that the radical nature of the petitions was too compromising, given the attitude of Polding, for one who liked to keep the confidence of both parties, and Macdonnell, for whom they were probably not radical enough, withdrew from the committee before putting their signatures to this document, which was given to the press before it was given to the Archbishop.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Geoghegan to Polding, 2 Sept. 1858, S.A.A.

⁶² *F.J.*, 14 April 1858.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 3 July 1858, letter of A Lay Catholic (Duncan?), and leader.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 31 July 1858.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 11 Aug. 1858, letter of Dean O'Connell.

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Polding replied through Maurus O'Connell, an Australian Benedictine and Dean of Sydney, that a pastoral had already been prepared on matters mentioned in the petition but, he added, 'There are several subjects touched on which do not come within the province of the laity nor within the scope of archiepiscopal authority'.⁶⁶ Polding regretted that the common courtesy of not committing to the public press such a correspondence had not in their case been observed; to which the committee replied by drawing the attention of the laity to the coldness with which the Archbishop repelled 'the advances towards the cordial co-operation between the laity and the ecclesiastical authority'⁶⁷ asked for by Polding himself. It is noteworthy that Polding and Gregory used the columns of the *Sydney Morning Herald* for their communications with the laity, the only time that journal entered into the controversy.

Speculation ran high among the laity when word was released that a conference of the clergy was to be held at Campbelltown to discuss, as the *Freeman's Journal* put it, 'the various matters contained in the late address to His Grace from the laity'. Heydon exhorted the clergy to 'speak out their griefs' to 'secure that measure of independence which the Canon Law gives them'.⁶⁸ Resurgo used the occasion to launch a bitter attack on Gregory and the Benedictines. He spoke of priests assembled in solemn conclave 'to apostrophise the glowing proboscis of the fat Brother [Gregory] who officiates as guardian angel of that rural retreat for Benedictines, wearied with the toil of hoodwinking the "low Irish" of the city . . . The Rod of Iron forever!' he concluded.⁶⁹ The *Journal* anticipated a Pastoral acquainting all of the deliberations of the Conference. This would be, it claimed, 'a signal for reconciliation, . . . for renewed confidence in our beloved Archbishop'.⁷⁰ But no such Pastoral came, because of 'the unfilial and contemptuous manner' in which recent Pastorals had been treated, said Father Kenyon⁷¹ in a sermon following the event. Whatever the cause, the *Journal* claimed the Archbishop had 'missed the chance to heal the breach between

⁶⁶ *S.M.H.*, 12 Aug. 1858.

⁶⁷ *F.J.*, 11 Aug. 1858.

⁶⁸ 14 Aug. 1858, leader.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 8 Sept. 1858.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 11 Sept. 1858.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 18 Sept. 1858.

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himself and the laity'.⁷² They had been treated like 'fools or children', abandoned to rumours of most conflicting character.⁷³ The priests were not allowed to give out much information, but McEncroe, from the sanctuary at St Mary's, spoke of a remarkable unanimity on the main themes of contention—more bishops, more teachers, religious and lay, greater co-operation between clergy and laity in the management of the temporal affairs of the Church.⁷⁴

Goold, writing from Rome to Geoghegan, regretted that the Conference had ever taken place,⁷⁵ feeling, undoubtedly, that too much attention had been paid to the complaints of the laity. Polding, however, had not moved from his entrenched position. He wrote to Rome condemning the *Freeman's Journal* and McEncroe for his association with it, claiming that it would be comparatively harmless 'were it not for the avowed connexion of a clergyman with its property and management'. McEncroe sympathised with the position of the layman, and, while condemning some of the articles, refused to condemn the paper. What could have so infatuated the Archdeacon, Polding could not imagine, unless a former residence in America had 'so accustomed him to the extravagancies of a licentious, tyrannical press, that he has lost all moral sensibility on the subject'.⁷⁶ So great was Polding's indignation that he considered depriving him of his dignity in the Cathedral Church, and withdrawing his faculties. He wondered, too, if he would be justified in appointing a priest censor to a paper assuming the title of Catholic.

McEncroe having refused to resume the responsibility of editorship, the *Freeman's Journal* was still in the hands of Heydon in 1859. Letters from minor figures appeared, to show that the paper was what its title claimed for it—a journal of free men. On 23 February all the ill-feeling which had been smouldering since the refusal of the Archbishop to meet the delegation of the laity suddenly burst into flame. 'Treason', the leader declared in bold letters, 'Treason against Holy Church and the lambs of her flock'. The brunt of Christian warfare, it maintained, had been directed against the

⁷² Ibid., 15 Sept. 1858.

⁷³ Ibid., 11 Sept. 1858, letter of Resurgo.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 15 Sept. 1858.

⁷⁵ 25 Nov. 1858, S.A.A.

⁷⁶ Polding to Propaganda, n.d., S.A.A.

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'baneful influence' of Protestant officials, but

it has been left to us of this diocese to experience the bitter shame of seeing our Pastor undo the work which thousands of heroes, clerical and lay, from the time of St. Thomas a'Beckett until now, have sacrificed life and limb and goods in one unceasing warfare to obtain and preserve for us.⁷⁷

Word had come that Gregory had applied to Cowper, the Colonial Secretary, for the appointment of a Protestant physician to the seat on the Board of Management of the Catholic Orphan School, which had been vacated by Plunkett. He had lost his senses, the *Freeman's Journal* stated, for what he had done was tantamount to saying that among all the Catholics of the colony there was not one of equal standing with the Protestant physician, Dr Bassett. He had deliberately entrusted 'the care of his lambs to wolves'. 'Desperate diseases' required 'desperate remedies'. There was always an instance from past colonial history which could serve to illustrate their point. When Bishop Brady of Perth 'played his fantastic tricks', the *Journal* reminded its readers, 'the aid of Rome was then invoked, and soon law and Christian peace were re-established'. Desperate remedies were resorted to. The *Freeman's Journal* of 26 February announced a public meeting to be held on that very day, 'to take into consideration a series of resolutions respecting the recent nomination' of Bassett, and 'to consider the present state of Catholic affairs in New South Wales'. A preliminary meeting had been held under the chairmanship of L. Sentis, Consul for France, who was chosen, it was stated, because he was the only one who held 'an impartial situation', and because of his high respect for the Archbishop and clergy of St Mary's. But as Sentis was the first to get the news of the appointment, and passed it on to Heydon, it is probable that the two men had become friends through the French Marist Fathers at Hunter's Hill. Heydon had known these priests since their arrival, and had moved to their parish. His education had been continued under their tutelage, and the French influence with its Gallican tendencies was strong in the writings of the *Freeman's Journal*. Heydon had played a prominent part in arranging the preliminary meeting. He had called on Cowper to ask him to withhold the appointment until he heard from the Catholics. Plunkett had called on the Archbishop, and reported that though Polding knew

⁷⁷ *F.J.*, 23 Feb. 1859.

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of the appointment, he admitted it was 'ill-considered'. The preliminary meeting was then held, and resolutions adopted to thank Cowper for not having accepted 'the extraordinary suggestion of the Abbot Gregory', and to ask him to propose to the Governor-General that the Catholics of Sydney have the right to nominate two Catholics to the Board of the Catholic Orphan School.⁷⁸ A committee of five (Deniehy, R. O'Connor, J. K. Heydon, J. Clinton, and Sentis) was appointed to wait on Cowper with these resolutions.⁷⁹

At the public meeting which followed, Heydon gave the reason for assembling the Catholics. He realised that in calling such a meeting they 'were exposing the infirmities of one whom they were bound by the most solemn obligations to respect', but they had had a previous experience when, for the sake of the Archbishop, they had met 'in quietness' and sent him a document of their grievances without making anything public. They had been treated with contempt, as 'mere tinkers and tailors . . . nobodies'.⁸⁰ They had learnt their lesson. The most forceful speech at the meeting was made by Deniehy, a young lawyer, who had experienced many changes of fortune. Both his mother and father had been convicts, his mother having to get the Governor's permission to marry, as she was still serving her sentence at the time. Their brilliant but reckless son became a lawyer and won a name for himself as a scholar and an orator. In 1857 he became a Member for Argyle in the seat vacated by Plunkett, and a man of some reputation in the radical group. He had fought for the abolition of state aid in 1858, and had come up against Gregory, who wanted to find out the names of clerics who had supposedly spoken in favour of the motion.⁸¹

At the meeting following Bassett's appointment, he moved that the Catholics of New South Wales could no longer have confidence in an ecclesiastical administration which had crowned a long course of maladministration by an act 'so fraught with danger to the holiest Catholic interests'. For this reason he proposed that until such time as the affairs of the Church were in the hands of dignitaries worthy of their trust, a provisional committee, composed of members of the

⁷⁸ A second vacancy would occur when Judge Therry left the colony in a few months' time.

⁷⁹ *F.J.*, 2 March 1859.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ B. T. Dowd, 'Daniel Henry Deniehy', *J.R.A.H.S.*, Vol. XXXIII, Pt II, 1947, p. 57.

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present meeting, be appointed to deal directly with the government in the administration of Catholic institutions deriving support from the government. To give an air of legality to the whole proceedings, he wanted a report on the mismanagement of the diocese to be sent to Rome, with a petition that Rome extricate them from their difficult position. A Protestant had no place on the Board of a Roman Catholic institution, Deniehy protested. The appointment was a blunder. It implied that the Right Reverend Abbot either did not believe that there was a Catholic of sufficient respectability or intelligence for the appointment, or that if there were persons fit, he declined to trust any member of the Catholic body. He had no love for the young men of the colony. If they raised themselves to positions of standing, the 'aristocratical clergy' did not mind making use of them, but they would never help them to get there. It was for the meeting to decide whether they would condemn 'in the most stringent terms' the act of the Right Reverend Abbot.

Deniehy's speech aroused the crowd. Polding, to whose advantage it was to play down the intelligence of the opposition, said they were good and religious people, but 'as a body they are peculiarly liable to be misguided and set on fire by any plausible agitator who addresses himself confidently to their simplicity and blameless ignorance'.⁸² It was difficult for others to get a hearing. Faucett denied the truth of Deniehy's assertions about the maladministration of the diocese. He objected to the appointment of a Provisional Committee, as giving to the laity a power that belonged to the clergy. Let them appeal to Rome. 'If the Right Reverend Abbot had done wrong, the evil would soon be remedied from Rome.' 'Send him out of this,' the crowd shouted of Gregory, 'send him home.'

Despite the efforts of men like Faucett, Edward McEncroe (cousin of the Archdeacon) and W. Loughnan, the resolutions of Deniehy were carried, and the meeting broke up with three cheers for Deniehy, O'Connor (the chairman) and Heydon. The meeting had voted to forward a copy of the resolutions to the Colonial Secretary and to the Archbishop, and this was accordingly done, the letter to Cowper bearing the names of two nominees for the Board of the Orphanage in the name of the Provisional Committee—Deniehy,

⁸² Polding to Propaganda, n.d., S.A.A.

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O'Connor, R. Macdonnell, W. McEvilly, W. Reynolds,⁸³ and Sentis. While waiting for the result of these resolutions, the *Freeman's Journal* kept the whole issue before the people. 'Has an orphan no soul, that he is of so little value? . . . Surely the soul of the orphan is a treasure as worthy of preservation, of jealous care and vigilance—a jewel as rich and precious—a flower as fragrant . . . as that of any scion of the proudest stock.' In safeguarding the souls of these children, the Catholic laity were told by the gentlemen who condescend to patronise God's Church that they executed a revolution, deposed their spiritual rulers, and usurped their power. Strange, the *Freeman's Journal* ruminated, if justice were found on the side of a dilettante Vicar-General and Cawtholics of his cliquel Yet, the Lord Abbot, this more than '*dimidium animae*' of His Grace, showed the value he placed on the orphans by giving them a non-Catholic guardian.⁸⁴

On the day that this appeared, 2 March, Polding addressed to the leaders of the 'revolution' a monition, compelling them to withdraw from and renounce the proceedings of the meeting of 26 February, under threat of excommunication.⁸⁵ They submitted, only that they might seek redress from Rome. At the same time he spoke to all the people: 'It must needs be that scandals come, but woe to that man through whom the scandal cometh'. In this Pastoral, read on 6 March, Polding sought to restore peace to the community. He exhorted them not to confuse an interference, albeit uncalled for, in the affairs of the Orphan School, with the misdeed of certain persons who had attempted to 'interpose non-Catholic and lay authority in order to embarrass free ecclesiastical administration by your Archbishop'. It was because of this misdeed alone that he acted as he did. He had no alternative, for the law of the Church against 'flagrant defiance of her authority' was 'explicit and stringent'. Having established this distinction, he pointed out that, despite assertions to the contrary, the management of the Orphan School was always intended to be under ecclesiastical authority, and from its beginnings it had been ruled by the Vicar-General or a cleric of equally high standing in the name of the Archbishop. Murphy, McEncroe, and

⁸³ Walter McEvilly was librarian of the Parliament of New South Wales, and Reynolds was a Solicitor and Proctor of the Supreme Court.

⁸⁴ *F.J.*, 2 March 1859.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 9 March 1859.

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Davis had been associated with it, and now Gregory,

of whom the least we will say is, and we say it without dreading a shadow of contradiction, that he has spent here in the service of the Church his means and his health and his life; and further that he was one of the principal originators of the very establishment.⁸⁶

Bassett, the resident doctor, was appointed to the Board for the sole purpose of

rendering available in the highest degree his medical knowledge and superintendence; for the same reason, one of the original members of the board had been a Protestant doctor. However wise the appointment, it was not a necessity, so Bassett's name was withdrawn when it was known that the nature and object of the appointment was misunderstood, not by heathens, nor by enemies, but by 'self-styled friends'. Our grey hairs may indeed go down in sorrow to the grave⁸⁷

Polding concluded.

Support for the ecclesiastical administration came from an unexpected quarter. The *Sydney Morning Herald*, on this and on most occasions, chose to ignore the wranglings of its Catholic fellow colonists. *Bell's Life in Sydney*, a sporting paper with an unsavoury reputation, but with no political affiliations, took up the cause. It printed an engraving of Gregory, and in its editorial 'reviewed the situation'. The editors believed that the supposed cause of the trouble—the appointment of a Protestant doctor—was merely a convenient pretext for a 'course of proceeding' which they believed to be unprecedented among the Roman Catholics of this or any other country. When the ecclesiastical authorities proved they were willing to listen to the laity by withdrawing Bassett's nomination, what was the necessity of inviting ministerial interference, unless that course had been previously resolved on by those eager for quarrel and ripe for insubordination against the pastors of their faith? They had nothing to do with the steps taken by the heads of the Catholic Church, the editors concluded, but they would have been wanting in their duty as public journalists if they had failed to speak out boldly when they saw Abbot Gregory wilfully maligned by systematic misrepresentation. He was an ecclesiastic who had spent 'the best years of his life, the ablest of his energies, and the greater part of his property in endeavouring faithfully to discharge the duties of the high and holy office to which he had been ordained'. As a last retort

⁸⁶ Pastoral letter of J. B. Polding, Quinquagesima Sunday, 1859.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

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to the 'rebels', they wondered why Mr Heydon, who showed such concern for orphans being doctored by a Protestant physician, sent his children to a Protestant school!⁸⁸ The only comment the *Freeman's Journal* made on this attack on its position was to offer Gregory its sympathy on the 'degradation' inflicted on him by the advocacy of *Bell's Life*.⁸⁹ They preferred to devote space to letters which pointed out, in answer to a correspondent's query, that Gregory had not been invited back to the colony in 1854 when he and Polding had left so unexpectedly.⁹⁰ They printed also the lengthy letters of submission of O'Connor and Macdonnell, which were used as yet another means of slandering Gregory, who, as Vicar-General, had published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* the letter threatening excommunication.⁹¹ 'We have yielded, but for the information of our Protestant friends we tell them it has been only for a time', Heydon explained.⁹² What the Protestants thought of them was something that occupied their minds, and in the *Freeman's Journal* in the next week⁹³ appeared two long extracts, one from the Melbourne *Argus* and the other from the Anglican equivalent of the *Freeman's Journal*, the *Church Sentinel*—both favourable to the stand taken by the laity.

Lay power in the Church is analogous to popular power in the state [said the *Argus*], and it would be strange that any intelligent class of men should fail early to recognise the fact in the midst of our rapid political developments.⁹⁴

The *Church Sentinel* cared not whether those under censure had 'succumbed or not to the terrorising influence of ecclesiastical fulminations'.⁹⁵ Its concern lay in the fact that 'the undoubted right' of its fellow citizens to meet peacefully in public assembly and openly express their opinions had been grossly interfered with by a law that is not the law of the land. The responsibility for such a situation, it insisted, lay with those who persisted in the maintenance of a state endowment.

⁸⁸ *Bell's Life in Sydney*, 12 March 1859.

⁸⁹ *F.J.*, 19 March 1859, leader.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12 March 1859, letter of Veritas.

⁹¹ *S.M.H.*, 4 March 1859.

⁹² *F.J.*, 12 March 1859.

⁹³ 16 March 1859.

⁹⁴ *Argus*, 9 March 1859.

⁹⁵ Extract from the *Church Sentinel*, published in *Freeman's Journal*, 16th March 1859.

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The abolition of state aid was a topic under discussion from the beginning of these upheavals in the Church. In June 1858, Catholicus wrote on 'No State Aid to Religion', to relieve Catholicity, as he said, of the reproach levelled at her by her enemies, that she could not exist when transplanted to a new country without outside help, as her laws were repugnant to advancement. After speaking of the advantages of separation of church and state, he got to the real point of his remarks—independence of the state implied dependence on the laity. 'The power of the purse strings' was a phrase that came readily to the lips of men who were claiming a measure of authority over the clergy in temporal matters.⁹⁶ By the beginning of 1859 there had been a partial withdrawal of state aid.⁹⁷ The Catholics of the Maneroo district proved their willingness to support a pastor if only they would be given one. "They want no Government or other subsidy. They bring the funds in their own hands and demand a priest because they are able and willing to support him."⁹⁸ Yet when the clergy asked the laity to contribute to their support, the laity were indignant. 'The Catholic laity is the worm that will not turn when trampled underfoot.'⁹⁹ Polding spoke out strongly against the abolition of state aid and the introduction of the voluntary system. There were some, he said, who, in good faith, confused the meaning of the word 'voluntary'. There was nothing voluntary about Church support. It was a duty. The only aspect in which it was voluntary was regarding the amount. There were others who confused the meaning because their one wish was to subvert the discipline of the Church and bring her ministers into an unseemly, intolerable bondage. They 'desire licence for their caprice, the power to starve the faithful priest who may happen to be distasteful and to support the rebellious and unworthy one against the arm of discipline'.¹ He could not have been clearer!

The issue of state aid was the glowing coal which kept heat in the fire between the great bursts of flame. Such a burst of flame was the departure of Sister de Lacy, one of the first Sisters of Charity to come

⁹⁶ *F.J.*, 8 Sept. 1858, letter of Resurgo; 2 March 1859, leader and Denichy's speech.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1 Jan. 1859.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 23 March 1859.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 20 April 1859, letter of Aider & Abettor.

¹ Pastoral letter of Polding.

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to the colony. Her story was a starting point from which to launch an attack on the ecclesiastical administration of the colony.

The whole Catholic community is at present disturbed and agitated by intestine quarrels . . . Whilst we are fighting for truth and liberty and for everything valuable to us as Catholics [the *Freeman's Journal* obtusely observed], we see the opposite party urged on and influenced by one controlling power, which baulks all our efforts, and does so without any apparent object save the love of opposition and the spirit of party.²

They were not prepared to acknowledge any concession Gregory made in their favour, as when O'Connor was named a member of the Orphanage Board. Their appeal to Rome was against the intervention of the spiritual power 'where there neither is nor can be spiritual jurisdiction'.³ Rome avoided giving a decision on their long list of complaints directed against the ecclesiastical authorities and particularly 'the indiscreet and capricious behaviour' of the Vicar-General, who had been for the past twenty years the main cause of stagnation in the religious and educational enterprises of the colony, and of discontent in the minds of the people. Barnabo merely pointed out that the appeal had been made 'in the absence of any knowledge of the canonical rules established with reference to the laity', sent them copies of three Apostolic Briefs dealing with these, and begged them to make their appeal in future in canonical form.⁴ The laity exulted in Rome's recognition of their right to appeal, and refused to see in the communication anything but a justification of their cause.⁵ Rome, however, was no lover of lay interference in Church government, and made no fine distinction between spiritual and temporal power in the administration of its affairs. Pius IX had sent an envoy to America to work out the 'trustee' problem, which was a source of trouble in the first half of the nineteenth century. It was his task to insist that bishops and priests have absolute control in all diocesan and parochial matters. The trustees had acquired powers which were not consonant with Catholic tradition. The problem is still a vital one in the twentieth century, and has been the subject of much discussion on the floor of Vatican Council II. The issue is divided. Some bishops

² 22 June 1859.

³ Ibid., 24 Sept. 1859.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 28 Sept. 1859.

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are ready to allow the laity greater freedom—more active participation in the life of the Church. There are others who insist on the need to stress obedience to the hierarchy, on the necessity of the clergy to keep a firm grip on all initiative. 'On the one hand, the Church might appeal for its strength to the free, faithful conscience, on the other, to the trained docility of those who never stepped out of line.'⁶

Polding and Gregory were not alone in their problem, nor were the Catholic laity of New South Wales unique in their efforts to have a greater say in the affairs of their Church. The position of the laity was accentuated by the increasing political power of a state emerging from colonialism. Fired by the liberal movements abroad, they had taken, many of them, a prominent part in this fight for freedom, and had themselves gained in power and prestige. The educated Irish in particular felt a sense of inferiority when they compared their position with that of their Protestant brethren. This sense of inferiority spurred them on to gain equal powers in their own Church and to cease being treated as children, or worse, as nothings. To converts, also, such a position was repugnant, and men like Heydon and Duncan were of their class in raising the cry against what they deemed clerical oppression. The Irish, through a lifetime habit, could easily be led to revolt against authority, particularly when that authority was English. Faced with all these problems, Polding, with his particular type of monastic background and training, and Gregory, with his aggressive manner and lack of training, had little chance of coping successfully. Polding's personal characteristics were such, however, that men easily forgave him and turned to him when in trouble. Yet they could not forget the grievance, and wanted someone to blame. Gregory was an obvious target.

⁶ M. Novak, *The Open Church*, p. 140.

VIII

The Secular Clergy of the Abbey-Diocese

AFTER Polding had obtained permission from Rome to set up his Benedictine monastery and to create an abbey-diocese, he wrote to Archbishop Murray of Dublin that he hoped that by having the Archbishop the principal Superior of the whole mission he would avoid 'the grievous inconveniences which have sometimes occurred from the meeting of two orders of clergy'.¹ As long as religious Orders have been involved in the work of a diocese, difficulties have been encountered with the bishop of the diocese. Though they all have a common ideal in working for the Kingdom of God on earth, they are distinct groups, each with a rule of life mapped out. The bishop, as head of the diocese, needs these groups to work in conjunction with the diocesan or secular priests he has under his immediate command. The difficulty lies in the extent and manner of the co-operation. The bishop wants to solve a problem, carry on a work in the way that seems best to him. This may cut across the rules and way of life of the religious or regular clergy and their Superior may feel obliged to withdraw them, to the displeasure of the bishop. For the diocese of New South Wales the problem was, so to speak, upside down. It was the regular clergy who were in charge of the diocese, and the secular clergy who had to fit into the pattern created by them.

The monastery was the centre of the design. Polding hoped that all candidates for the priesthood would be candidates, also, for the monastic life, and that among the priests of the diocese there would be 'but one fold and one shepherd'. This plan became impracticable when the steady stream of Benedictines needed to implement it was not forthcoming. The appeal made to the Irish clergy to minister to the needs of their fellow-countrymen in Australia met with a generous response. There were Irish clergy in the country when the

¹ 19 Oct. 1843, quoted in Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, Vol. II, p. 66.

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Church was under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Mauritius, but it was only with the advent of a resident bishop that they came in force. While Ullathorne was in Europe in 1837-8, he recruited some priests for the mission. When he saw that the English Benedictine Congregation was not prepared to send its monks to New South Wales, he turned to Ireland to supply missionaries for a land the Catholic population of which was largely Irish. Of the eighteen whom Ullathorne recruited at this time all were Irish except one. Among them were men whose names would be deservedly remembered—Francis Murphy, James Alipius Goold, John Brady, Richard Walsh, John Lynch, and Patrick Bonaventure Geoghegan. Charles Lovat, the only Englishman, was brought out to conduct the seminary. 'He was a man of no ordinary abilities and attainments' in the opinion of Dean J. Kenny, a student in the seminary when Lovat arrived. Before coming to the colony, Lovat had been Professor of Physics and Moral Theology at the Jesuit College of Stonyhurst in England. He was also a distinguished classical scholar.²

Except for Goold, who was a member of the Order of St Augustine, and Geoghegan, who was a Franciscan, all were secular priests or students studying to become so.³ By 1857 over 80 per cent of the clergy in the colony were Irish.⁴ Though a seminary had been established under Lovat in 1838, the majority of the Irish students received most of their training in the seminaries in Ireland. Maynooth had been established in 1795, and it was followed by Carlow and Cork. In 1843, the same year that Polding made his seminary Benedictine, Father Luke Hand founded in Ireland the seminary of All Hallows to train priests for the missions. Therry and McEncroe saw to it that there were places kept there for future priests for Australia, and each was responsible for payment for six of these young men every year. All Hallows became the Alma Mater of most of the clergy in the country. In its early years it differed from Maynooth in that it was poor and the students who came to it were from poorer families, with little or no education. The training given was not profound, and was pragmatic in character. The men who

² J. Kenny, *History of the Commencement and Progress of Catholicity in Australia*, p. 119.

³ Goold and Geoghegan, though religious, formed part of the secular clergy as they had come out as individual priests and not as part of a community.

⁴ *F.J.*, 23 May 1857, letter of Erin-Go-Bragh.

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came from there were men of action rather than scholars, and men to whom the priesthood brought a degree of prestige and social standing that they would not otherwise have had. The first priest to come to the colony from All Hallows was Father W. McGinty, who arrived in 1847. On being asked by Polding whether he would be received as a Benedictine he told him plainly that he preferred the Order of St Peter.⁵ The training of such men had not been aimed to inspire them with an understanding and love of the monastic state. Their minds were too filled with the glories of Ireland and their nationalism too closely allied to their Catholicism to find in them the balance, the universality, and the detachment of the monk. As late as 1867 complaints were being made of the type of priest turned out by the Irish seminaries. Makinson, the ex-Church of England minister who became private secretary to Polding, was a cultured English gentleman, having everything in common with the Benedictines, little or nothing with the Irish clergy, and sharing to a marked degree the convert's impatience with a nationalist religion. His view of the Irish clergy may have been exaggerated, but it would have reflected something of the view of the English Benedictines and of the educated Protestants of some social standing. He spoke of the 'violent and somewhat coarse zeal of some of the younger priests' in a letter to Gregory.

I suppose one may soon fall into cant and nonsense in talking about gentlemanly behaviour [he admitted], but I do wish Rome would do something to have the priests that are sent out from Ireland better furnished with a little ordinary refinement, and accomplishment and knowledge of the world, and above all that they should keep their Hibernianism at least a little below their Catholicism. There is a rather bitter feeling growing up here against Catholics.⁶

Makinson realised that in his social, racial, and religious outlook the Irish secular priest differed from the English Benedictine.

Though Polding clung, in theory, to his ideal of the abbey-diocese, he was realist enough to know that he could not make men what they did not wish to be, and that in the situation in which the colonial Church was placed he had men who were best suited to deal with the Irish people scattered over his vast diocese. The greater number of these men proved themselves self-sacrificing, devoted, and

⁵ *All Hallows Annual*, 1950-1, p. 193.

⁶ 22 Feb. 1867, D.A.

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zealous missionaries. Michael Kavanagh once rode 150 miles through the night on a sick call.⁷ Edmund Mahony died at the age of thirty-three because, though a sick man, he gave no thought to sparing himself.⁸ Polding appreciated their worth. Gregory, too, was on terms of friendship with them. William Fitzpatrick wrote to his priest-brother in Australia in 1842:

one of your many and kind friends Dr. Gregory called on my mother and requested an opportunity of showing his respect for you by offering to be the bearer of a letter from us. He even pressed the matter so far as to say that if there was not a letter sent after him to Liverpool he would come back again for it.⁹

In 1850 Gregory and Dean J. Grant, who had come to the colony in 1838, went to Europe together. The difficult Therry was always spoken of by Gregory as 'my dear friend'. 'The vexed question,' he once wrote to him, 'if any question worthy of such a description could arise, my dear friend, between you and me. . . .'¹⁰ At another time he could playfully ask him, 'Why do you come to St. Mary's so often?'¹¹ On his side, Therry expressed his confidence in him by accepting him as one of his delegates in the scandalous dispute with Willson.¹² Both Gregory and Polding gave the impression that their sympathies were with Therry rather than with the Bishop in that affair. When Therry was unsettled in Melbourne and eventually got permission to move, McEncroe knew he could appeal to him to leave things 'quiet' and in order, because of the reflection that might otherwise be cast on Gregory for appointing him to 'that important mission'.¹³

McEncroe and Therry belonged to the group of priests who were in the colony before the Benedictines arrived. Each in turn had been the recognised leader of the Irish Catholics. When Therry's star set at the time of the Hobart troubles, McEncroe's rose to a position of prominence which it held until his death in 1868. He was conscious of his role and played his part well. He considered that the English

⁷ *F.J.*, 7 Nov. 1850.

⁸ The names and works of these men have been glorified by P. Hartigan (John O'Brien) in his articles, 'In Diebus Illis', in *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. XX, Jan. 1943, et seq.

⁹ 17 Oct. 1842, S.A.A.

¹⁰ 25 Oct. 1858, Therry Papers.

¹¹ 11 Aug. 1858, Therry Papers.

¹² See Chapter 2.

¹³ 5 Feb. 1847, Therry Papers.

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Benedictines and the abbey-diocese ideal did not answer the needs of the mission. 'I have written to the Holy Father, offering a few suggestions about supplying New South Wales with priests', he wrote to Goold. 'It is obvious that the "Infant" Benedictine Monastery cannot. Irish students or priests will not come.'¹⁴

When Goold passed through Sydney on his way to Rome in 1857 he noted in his diary that though his stay had been short, it was long enough to afford him the opportunity to observe the state of the Church.

Everything connected with its spiritual administration and temporal management is an eulogium—high and flattering—on the zeal, piety and talent of the Archbishop [he wrote]. It is true I had painful evidence given me of a growing dissatisfaction among the ecclesiastics, but from all I could learn it appeared to arise from no fault of the Archbishop in the administration of the Diocese.¹⁵

Goold attributed the cause of the discontent to the priests, and particularly to the foreign priests who fomented it if they were not its originators. Goold, though an Irishman, was not a fanatical one. As a religious he would have had more sympathy with and understanding of Polding and Gregory and the particular problems they faced in adapting themselves to the mentality of men whose upbringing and training were so different from their own.

McEncroe was not wholly unsympathetic. He defended the Benedictines against the attacks of the laity, though his estimate of the Benedictines as missionaries to colonial New South Wales is obvious in his defence.

The Benedictines have done as much, if not more, than the same number of any other missionaries could do within the same time, towards building and ornamenting our Churches, and introducing order and solemnity in the celebration of the divine worship.¹⁶

From what is known of McEncroe, the beautifying of churches and the perfection of liturgical worship did not rate high with him in ministering to the needs of the Irish colonial Catholics. His grievance was not with the Benedictines themselves—'they are faithfully discharging the duties of their sacred calling,' he wrote in the same letter, 'and are much respected by the members of their

¹⁴ 1 March 1851, quoted in Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 166-7.

¹⁵ P. F. Moran, *History of the Catholic Church in Australasia*, p. 736.

¹⁶ *F.J.*, 9 June 1858, letter of An Old Colonist.

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several congregations'—but with their system. He wanted no far-sighted, high-visioned view of the Church which could not come to grips with the problems that were facing it now. He founded the *Freeman's Journal* to meet some of those problems—the education of the Irish Catholic, the defence and support of Catholic principles, and the advancement of Catholic interests in Australia,¹⁷ synonymous in McEncroe's mind, as in that of so many others, with the advancement of the interests of the Irish. When Polding wished to take from the priests a percentage of the government stipends for the support of the monastery and the mission, McEncroe objected strongly, though he was willing to pay a much larger amount to provide for Irish seminarians at All Hallows. No Irish students or priests wanted to come to New South Wales, he wrote to Rome, because

they have heard that the Archbishop intends to supply his mission with Benedictine monks, and that the Irish clergy will be employed only as *assistants* to the English Benedictines, and to act as 'tithe collectors' for the monastery.¹⁸

McEncroe's objection may not have been as one-sided as would appear. The stipend system was intended for parochial clergy, and was devised on the model of the Church of England, the parish clergy of which were in a position of virtual local independence. The Benedictine monks who were engaged in parochial duties received the same stipend as the secular clergy. These latter felt that, in giving up part of theirs for the upkeep of the monastery, they were giving to the monks whose economic position was similar to their own. McEncroe's answer to the problem was to set up new dioceses, with Irish bishops who would attract more Irish priests.

I am satisfied [he stated] that if Monseigneur Polding had employed half the time, pains, and expense, that he has laid out on founding his Order in New South Wales, in training up Irish students and others for his mission, he would ere this have had his Diocese better provided for.¹⁹

McEncroe took pains to assure the Pope that these remarks did not proceed from any want of reverence to Polding. He was a most

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 19 June 1858.

¹⁸ McEncroe to His Holiness Pius IX, 12 March 1851, quoted in Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 179.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

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zealous bishop and had done much for religion. He had shown his confidence in McEncroe by appointing him Archdeacon and Chancellor of his diocese, and had been infinitely patient in bearing with his faults. His plea was not directed against Polding, but came from a desire to save his Irish Catholic countrymen.²⁰ McEncroe stopped at nothing to carry out his aim.

The laity supported him in his endeavours, and championed the cause of the secular priest.

The Archdeacon is the man whom of all others, we Irish Catholics look to for support in our struggle for emancipation from the baneful influence exercised over our *poor, patient* but *highly gifted few* secular pastors in this colony, by the Order of St. Benedict,

proclaimed Catholicus in the pages of the *Freeman's Journal*.²¹ A few vocal Catholics made it clear that they wanted secular clergy, not Benedictines, to minister to their needs,²² and, at the time of the Campbelltown Conference, urged the clergy to exert their independence. They brought to their notice the fact that, as seculars, they could be moved from district to district and even dismissed at a moment's notice, whilst

their brethren of the Benedictine Order, no matter how they may have transgressed, . . . are only punished, or rather rewarded by being recalled from their missionary duties to perform those more strictly appertaining to them as monks within the precincts of St. Mary's.²³

R. O'Connor, a Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and always to the fore in the battle against the Benedictines, reminded the secular clergy that they were sent to the outback, while the Benedictines, who, he claimed, could not even explain the faith to congregations, were given the city parishes.²⁴ Father J. Donovan was a case in point. He was curate at St Benedict's, where the Benedictine, M. Corish, was the pastor. One of the laity wrote to the *Freeman's Journal* that Donovan had been badly treated by Corish, not even being allowed to dine with him when there were guests, but that this was to be expected, as the Benedictines scoffed at the secular priests. McEncroe denied the truth of these statements. He had been to

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 178-9.

²¹ 22 May 1858.

²² *F.J.*, 26 May 1858, letter of Polycarp.

²³ Ibid., 14 Aug. 1858, leader.

²⁴ Ibid., 5 June 1858, letter of Polycarp.

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dinner at St Benedict's when Corish pressed Donovan to stay but he refused.²⁵ Donovan had been critical of the Benedictines, and had written in the *Freeman's Journal* against them and their administration. In the leader of 26 May 1858, which he wrote, he had said that they stood 'as a wall between Catholicity and the country'. When Polding questioned him on his writings, Donovan became excited, claimed the Archbishop had no right to make such inquiries, and stated he would leave the mission.²⁶ And so, according to the critics of the administration, one more gifted young priest was driven from the country. Ten years earlier Polding had written to Heptonstall, his London agent, with reference to care in selecting priests for the mission: 'Oh they are saints, but let them feel they are under authority and immediately they turn their noses from us at least to the East—out of Sydney Heads'.²⁷

When Polding and his suffragans issued the *Monitum Pastorale* condemning the *Freeman's Journal*, a layman claimed it was

for advocating the rights of their . . . non-Benedictine clergy, by seeking for them the common right of toleration, so as to offer encouragement to the worthy missionaries of Carlow and All Hallows (whence alone we are likely to receive them) to embark for this much-deserted and needy mission.²⁸

McEncroe objected to the publication of such letters in the pages of the *Freeman's Journal*, as 'they only enkindle strife and excite an unkind feeling between clergy and laity, and between the secular and regular members of the priesthood'.²⁹

The work of the laity was supported by some of the priests, even those who had been on friendly terms with Polding and Gregory. Polding wrote to Dean Grant in 1861, asking him to withdraw the document containing his signature and the signatures of other priests of the district, which had been circulated after the public meeting of 1859 when an appeal was sent to Rome. When Grant protested that the document only complained of the want of schools and of priests, Polding replied that these were wants which Grant himself could well do something about. He insisted that if

²⁵ Ibid., 9 June 1858.

²⁶ Ibid., 26 May 1858, letter of Candidus (McEncroe).

²⁷ 24 Oct. 1848, D.A.

²⁸ *F.J.*, 26 June 1858, letter of Erinach.

²⁹ Ibid., 9 June 1858, letter of An Old Colonist.

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Grant wished to resume the paternal and filial relations that had existed between them for the last twenty years, he must either withdraw the document if the assertions were untrue, or assure him that it had not been communicated to anyone other than the Archbishop.³⁰ Polding did not object to his priests making such claims, provided they could substantiate them. He did object to the laity being drawn into a discussion which he felt was one strictly between the Archbishop and his priests. Grant obviously satisfied Polding, for a month later he wrote a letter which was friendly in tone to Grant but very strong with regard to two young priests under Grant's care who had not bothered to reply to a circular of the Archbishop's:

How is it possible for me, my good friend [he wrote], not to consider in the conduct of these young men, so bold in their unsubstantiated criticism upon the supineness and neglect of their Archbishop, symptoms not of discourtesy only but of absolute disrespect? . . . To whom or to what are they indebted for all they have of honor in the Church of God, or of estimable position before man?³¹

he concluded, referring to the independent and superior air adopted often by those who acquire suddenly a power and prestige they have never had before.

There were members of the laity who defended the Benedictines at the expense of the secular clergy. One, who signed himself 'a working man', claimed that if there were not enough priests in the colony the fault lay with the people. Many priests came to the mission, and, 'like birds of passage', remained as long as it suited them, then went home. The people encouraged them to amass wealth and thus become independent. When it was suggested to them that they might improve in some way, they resigned their mission. Their former parishioners then gave them an address and a subscription to send them to other missions. 'These remarks cannot apply to the Benedictines', he concluded. 'They have already left all.'³² Though Polycarp condemned such statements, Polding agreed with them. To guard against such dangers, he had drawn up his plan of a mission served by monks vowed to poverty. Since this had not been possible, he tried to protect his secular missionaries from the evil of amassing wealth.

³⁰ 6 Feb., n.d., but from data, 1861, S.A.A.

³¹ 25 March 1861, S.A.A.

³² *F.J.*, 2 June 1858.

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And now . . . Let me entreat you in the love of Jesus Christ [he wrote to a young priest] to guard your heart whilst it is yet uncontaminated from the curse of the priesthood—the love of money. Oh, how many, otherwise good and blameless, are involved by this in endless ruin! . . . It in practice makes the priest act as if the mission were made for him, and not he for the mission.³³

As an English monk, Polding had no understanding of the Irish secular priest with regard to money. By the mid-nineteenth century remittances from Irishmen in America to their families made up an essential part of the Irish economy.³⁴ The priest with no vow of poverty and with a sense of responsibility towards his family, often living in great poverty, may well have felt obliged to do what he could to support them. The monk left all, the secular did not, and he came to the country in the dual role of son of the Church and son of his family. His problem lay in maintaining a balance between the two. He was, first and foremost, a missionary, owing service to his mission and obedience to his Superiors, and no excuse can be found for a neglect of either. The acquisition of money did engender an independent spirit, and the chief way in which this manifested itself was for the priest to encourage or to allow protests against his removal from a parish to be made to the Archbishop. 'The frequency of petitions against the removal of missionary priests in the archdiocese threatens serious embarrassment to the due course of ecclesiastical administration and discipline', Polding wrote to his priests in 1861.³⁵ It was fitting, he said, that parishioners should value their pastors and wish to keep them among them, but

I need scarcely remind you how easily these petitions sometimes pass from solicitation to dictation; from expressions of regret at the departure of one priest, to insinuations of anticipated aversion and hostility to his successor.

Polding was not blind to the cause. 'I know that in some cases the presumed encouragement, and even the active suggestion, of the priest, has been at work.' Nor was he alone in his problem.

³³ 13 Feb. 1861, quoted in Moran, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

³⁴ A. Schrier, *Ireland and the American Emigration, 1850-1900*, pp. 104-9. A conservative estimate is that there was an annual average return of at least \$5,000,000. No comparable study has been done for Australia. Money was certainly sent to Ireland for the education of priests, but no assessment has been made of the amount sent to individual families.

³⁵ Pastoral letter, 1 Nov. 1861, S.A.A.

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In Ireland, some Bishops have found the habit of petitioning against the removal of priests so mischievous and intolerable, that they have judged themselves compelled to make it known, that the very fact of such a petition shall be almost a decisive reason against granting its prayer.

Petitions, testimonials, they all came, he argued, from the 'un-Catholic spirit of Presbyterianism'.³⁶ The union of laity and clergy had so often been the cause of the rift between the bishop and the priest.

Duncan, though a severe critic of the colonial ecclesiastical administration, found no place for national differences in the Church, 'whose title of Catholic, or Universal, virtually brands with schism every attempt to create national parties within her pale'.³⁷ This misplaced patriotism had even been the cause of the laity's supporting suspended priests against their bishops. For Polding, national differences, and even those between secular and regular, were linked to the issue of *l'esprit presbyterien*. He attributed the desire of the laity to abolish state aid and introduce the voluntary system to this spirit, to

a desire to subvert the discipline of the Church and bring her ministers into an unseemly, intolerable bondage . . . They would subvert the divinely appointed hierarchy, and introduce a presbyterianism controlled by the wretched tyranny of moneyed or loud-tongued oligarchs,

he wrote to his clergy.³⁸ The problem of Presbyterianism, or its American counterparts, Haroldism and Hoganism, was accentuated when both laity and clergy were Irish, as a strong link had been forged between priest and people in their united struggle for freedom. Their efforts to gain independence—the priest for the people, and the people for the priest—were not directed against one person, one nationality, but against any obstacle in their path. Willson in Hobart, Goold and Geoghegan in Melbourne, Polding and Gregory in Sydney, and Quinn in Brisbane were all at some time objects of attack. Therry and his trustees yielded not an inch to Willson. McGinty in Ipswich had the trustees of his parish behind him when he defied Quinn and refused to hand over money which had been

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ *F.J.*, 16 May 1857, letter of Icolmkill.

³⁸ 3 Sept. 1859, S.A.A., copy in Benedictine Journal.

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set aside for a boys' school.³⁹ P. Dunne, M. McAlroy, P. Bermingham, and J. Barry in Melbourne were sources of trouble to Goold, and later to Polding, when they moved into his diocese. The bishops referred to them as 'the clique'. Dunne came to the Melbourne diocese in 1850 and went to the goldfield of Ballarat. Bermingham and McAlroy arrived in 1854, and the three priests were together at Geelong. Trouble occurred there among the priests, and the three were moved at a week's notice. Dunne went to Belfast in Victoria, in charge of the parish. The first thing he did was to organise the parish to begin the building of a church, for which £1,000 had already been collected. This, he stated, was at the express orders of the Bishop, who promised a further £1,000 from the government grant. He had the Congregation elect a committee to assist him in carrying out the work. Within a month, J. Fitzpatrick, Vicar-General of the diocese with Geoghegan, wrote to say that no portion of the government grant had been allotted to Belfast for that year, and that he had had to draw on the £1,000 in hand to pay the Reverend W. Shinnick what was owing to him for money spent on the presbytery at Belfast. He needed the money urgently to build a presbytery at his present mission. This was the beginning of a series of letters between Dunne and the Vicar-General, the tone of Dunne's becoming more and more defiant. The original letter, at least, Dunne showed to his committee, who were brought in to fight for him. It was the time, too, of the state election, at which state aid was one of the big issues. Dunne and his parishioners notified their representative, Gavan Duffy, to vote for its abolition. When Goold recalled Dunne, he delayed in coming, waiting to see out the election, and, as a result, was deprived of his priestly faculties. The local paper, and even the *Argus*, took up his cause, claiming that his removal was due to his refusal to 'identify himself with the misappropriation of the Church Building Fund'. In fact, the paper claimed, it was 'for acting straightforward and independent that the Reverend Mr. Dunne has been sacrificed'.⁴⁰ This and an offensively worded letter signed by a number of the Belfast parishioners did nothing to raise Dunne in the estimate of his Bishop. He turned to Polding, who,

³⁹ C. Roberts, 'The Beginnings of the Church in Queensland', *A.C.R.*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 4, Oct. 1959, pp. 278-9.

⁴⁰ Copy of statement addressed by Rev. P. Dunne to Most Rev. Dr Polding, 1 Feb. 1859, S.A.A.

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acting on Dunne's evidence, was ready to sympathise, but did insist that he send back to the people of Belfast the testimonial and the address, 'containing expressions calumnious and savouring of gross insubordination', which he had received from them.⁴¹ They, understanding people, changed the wording of the address and sent it back with the testimonial!

When Dunne finally left the diocese of Melbourne and sailed for Ireland, Polding not only offered him a place in New South Wales on his return from Europe, but even invited him to bring out priests with him, provided they were zealous and disinterested.⁴² A visit to Melbourne in the meantime gave him the truth about Dunne. He had been very active in getting up an address and testimonial on his own behalf, having slips, with columns for signatures, printed and sent out with the injunction to get as many names and as much money as possible. Polding discovered, too, that his assertions about the lack of confidence of the clergy and laity in the ecclesiastical administration and about priests leaving the mission were unfounded. Geoghegan, too, had sent him a copy of 'a shameful and sacrilegious libel' on the Bishop, clergy, and diocese of Melbourne which, though composed by a layman, had been sent to Rome at Dunne's instigation.⁴³ The Donegal Relief Fund had been used by him in an effort to bring out priests to his own liking—invited, and therefore selected, by the subscribers to the Fund to accompany the immigrants they were bringing out. Polding realised not only that he ran the risk of offending Goold by receiving such a man, but also that he was inviting into his diocese 'old practised hands ready for cabal and intrigue'.⁴⁴ Through Heptonstall he told him his services were no longer needed in the archdiocese. Dunne had used his invitation, however, to get a hearing at Rome and with the Irish bishops who would not otherwise have received him.⁴⁵ He left his rubbish for Goold, then in Europe, to dispose of—personal venom against Goold, Geoghegan, and the diocese. 'In fact he has made his case a *Carlow grievance*', Goold told Geoghegan,⁴⁶ referring to the situation in the Melbourne diocese where Goold, a Cork man, was supposedly pre-

⁴¹ Polding to Propaganda, 1857, S.A.A.

⁴² Polding to unnamed recipient (possibly Gregory), 29 May 1858, S.A.A.

⁴³ Geoghegan to Polding, 2 Sept. 1858, S.A.A.

⁴⁴ Polding to unnamed recipient, 29 May 1858, S.A.A.

⁴⁵ Goold to Geoghegan, 28 Dec. 1858, S.A.A.

⁴⁶ 9 Sept. 1858, S.A.A.

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judiced in favour of men from that seminary to the detriment of those from Carlow and All Hallows.⁴⁷ Dunne compiled a number of extracts from letters which, as private and confidential, he presented to Propaganda—'private and confidential stabs of assassins', Goold called them.⁴⁸ They speak of the deplorable state of religion in the Melbourne diocese. A Mr Phelan, writing back to his former parish priest in Ireland, thought that all would be well if only they had different priests and a different bishop. There were only seven or eight good priests in the whole diocese—the others were friars, quite unsuitable for the missions. The Reverend P. Powell wanted the bishops of Ireland to petition the Pope to recall 'Goold and his friar brigade'. The friars in the diocese were Goold and Geoghegan. The latter Dunne took it on himself to condemn, saying that, though the priests were happy to live under Goold, all, with very few exceptions, felt they would be better off without Geoghegan. The best priests had left the diocese, as they had 'no protection against the unjust persecution of some of their Superiors'.⁴⁹ Goold refuted all these assertions and wrote to Geoghegan, 'Don't trouble yourself about Dunne or his unhappy dupes . . . *Everything has been satisfactorily settled at Rome*'.⁵⁰ The Pope remarked of such men that they were the greatest enemies of religion—'persecuting religious in the name of religion'.⁵¹ Dunne, like others of the clique, like Farrelly, Moore, and the discontented Benedictines, hid his personal grievances, insubordination, and ambitions behind a respectable front.

I hold now the same opinion I have always held, and which every sane and reasonable man, lay or cleric, must hold [Dunne declared], that money collected from the public, even for ecclesiastical purposes, ought to be rendered an account of to the public.⁵²

He too, contended 'for a great principle'.

Up to 1857 none of the secular clergy or laity of the diocese of New South Wales had so openly defied the Archbishop as 'Dunne and his dupes' had Goold, so Polding felt he was able, unasked, to write a private, confidential account of the affairs of the Melbourne

⁴⁷ Polding to Propaganda, 9 April 1858, S.A.A.

⁴⁸ Goold to Geoghegan, 12 Nov. 1858, S.A.A.

⁴⁹ Extracts from Dunne's Notice to Propaganda, sent by Goold to Geoghegan, 12 Nov. 1858, S.A.A.

⁵⁰ 18 May 1859, S.A.A.

⁵¹ Goold to Geoghegan, 3 Dec. 1858, S.A.A.

⁵² Copy of statement addressed by Dunne to Polding, 1 Feb. 1859, S.A.A.

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diocese to Propaganda and to state in simple terms his part in the story. Dunne had come to him with his complaints. He had advised him, then had written to Goold counselling him to be lenient and temperate. When Bermingham and McAlroy found that their doings were suspect and that the parishes which they were given were 'not sufficiently remunerative', they, too, turned to Polding and applied for a place in his diocese. They were both educated at Carlow, Polding stated, underlining the assertions made of Goold's unjust treatment of such men.⁵³ To the priests he wrote urging them to continue in their mission, and to Goold he wrote of the communication he had received from 'two of his most valued subjects'. Goold, however, did not value them so highly at this time, as he felt they were 'not guiltless of this man's [Dunne's] intrigues'.⁵⁴ Bermingham he accused of striving to divide the clergy on the question of regulars being in authority over them. This and the Nationalist theme were prominent in Bermingham's repertoire. In 1862 Polding found, on a tour of his diocese, 'a very anti-English spirit of patriotism mixed up with religion where the Bermingham influence prevailed'.⁵⁵ There is no record of what Goold said to Polding in answer to his letter, if he said anything at all. But when Bermingham and McAlroy received their 'exeats' from Goold to return to Ireland, then reapplied to Polding, Polding decided to accept them, 'as their exeats were regular and they themselves without any note of censure'.⁵⁶ Bermingham had written that under the existing circumstances in Victoria he 'could not save [his] soul or advance the interests of our dear Lord' so felt bound in conscience to leave.⁵⁷ McAlroy had been sent to Sale to establish a mission 'without house or school or Church and with an adult Catholic population of about seventy—many of these as servants'. His health could not stand up to it, he decided, and for the peace of his mind he had to get out.⁵⁸ Such were the two men

⁵³ Whether Polding added this because he had first met both men in Carlow or whether they had written it to him to make a better case is not certain, but Bermingham stated elsewhere that he was educated at Maynooth and that McAlroy was the companion of his college days.

⁵⁴ Goold to Polding, n.d., S.A.A.

⁵⁵ Quoted in a letter from Sheehy to Geoghegan, 21 July 1862, S.A.A.

⁵⁶ Polding to Propaganda, 9 April 1857, S.A.A.

⁵⁷ Bermingham to Polding, 4 April 1857, quoted in Bermingham's statement to Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, 9 June 1859, S.A.A.

⁵⁸ McAlroy to Polding, 2 May 1857, quoted by Bermingham to Propaganda, 9 June 1859, S.A.A.

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whom Polding accepted into his diocese. As Geoghegan had borne the brunt of their attacks in Melbourne, so Gregory was to bear them in Sydney. By 1858 Bermingham was already sending his reports to Rome on the 'deplorable state of the Australian Church'. There was 'utter confusion', he claimed,

between the lay and clerical element. We [McAlroy and himself] have created an intense feeling of loyal devotion to Holy Church in the South . . . We have done great things of late in this diocese but yet things are rotten. Brother hates brother—no fraternity . . . oh! if Monsignor Talbot could visit us as Papal Nuncio! What a reception he would meet with in Sydney from the great Catholic community.⁵⁹

The district around Yass where the two were stationed is still strongly Catholic, and the churches there, at Goulburn, and at Wagga, where Bermingham was later stationed, testify to their zeal and hard work. Their trouble lay in their inability to serve under another, in their ambition to hold the highest offices the Church in the country could offer them, and in stopping at nothing to gain their own ends. As long as Polding let them rule like bishops in their district and as long as he acknowledged the work they did, so long would they deign to acknowledge him as their Superior.

That Gregory came in for a great deal of Bermingham's criticism is evident from letters that were written in 1862 after Gregory's recall. 'You say that you are not my enemy', Gregory wrote in reply to a letter from him. 'I believe you though from general report I hear there are but few who have heard you speak of the Australian mission who are of the same opinion.' Bermingham had gone to Rome to report on his experiences in New South Wales, a report in which it was rumoured that Gregory was not to appear 'in a very admirable light'.⁶⁰ It was actually stated that Gregory's conduct to the clergy had been 'harsh and persecuting', and that he had been the cause of unjust treatment of McAlroy and Bermingham.⁶¹ Gregory asked what he had done to bring him into disfavour, unless it were that he had always been very kind to Bermingham.⁶² But Bermingham was too busy defending himself against the assertions of Dean Walsh to respond to any nicer feelings. 'I shall take you up', he said to Walsh,

⁵⁹ 9 May 1858, quoted by Dunne in his Notice to Propaganda, sent by Goold to Geoghegan, 12 Nov. 1858, S.A.A.

⁶⁰ N.d., but 1862, D.A.

⁶¹ Brown to Polding, 19 Sept. 1861, S.A.A.

⁶² Gregory to Bermingham, n.d., but 1862, D.A.

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'as I could not desire a weaker or more vulnerable adversary—Remember you are a living evidence of the condition of the archdiocese, of its wants and vast resources'.⁶³ 'My Irish friends are grateful to you also', he added in a postscript, 'and on your account will begin to hate me, do you understand'. He was refused permission to return to Sydney, but bided his time. Polding wrote to W. Lanigan after he had been made Bishop of Goulburn, telling him he would find McAlroy a great help, but asking him not to allow Bermingham to return to his diocese. 'I may say what I do not wish to write', he concluded.⁶⁴ Lanigan, for reasons not disclosed, did allow him to come back. He also accepted Dunne into his diocese, and the two of them, with McAlroy, worked in the mission until their deaths. But, even while he was 'in exile', Bermingham continued to work against the Australian Church by sending to Patrick Moran, nephew of Cullen, in Rome, reports of every bit of scandal, true or false, which he had obtained from McAlroy. Moran, however, did not accept the evidence uncritically. He it was who later helped to present to Propaganda the 'assertions of Dean Walsh against which Bermingham had to defend himself'.⁶⁵

Polding had rejected Dunne, only to take in two more of the priests who had been a source of trouble to Goold. His action not only caused him deep regret, but strained relations between himself and Goold at a time when a united hierarchy was needed to withstand the assaults being made on their authority, not only from within the country but also from without.

Dr. Polding has made this difficulty for us. God forgive him [Goold wrote from Rome to Geoghegan, referring to Dunne's possible return to Australia]. His visit to my diocese was ungracious & unauthorised, Basta . . . He shall ever have my sympathy. But he does not give his entire confidence & hence one cannot serve him as he wd wish.⁶⁶

Goold continued to find cause for annoyance. In 1860 Polding had employed Bermingham to inquire into the cause of trouble among the Catholics at Newcastle. He did it, he said, from a motive of policy, and Bermingham and all the clergy knew it was not intended

⁶³ 4 March 1862, D.A.

⁶⁴ 31 Jan., n.d., but 1866 or 1867, S.A.A.

⁶⁵ There is a note in Moran's diary (27 Jan. 1865): 'Translated Father Walsh's notes on Australia for Propaganda' (Moran Papers, S.A.A.).

⁶⁶ 28 Dec. 1858, S.A.A.

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as a mark of honour.⁶⁷ Goold did not, however, and wrote indignantly to Polding to know if 'Mr. Bermingham, who has assailed with foul lies and calumnies the Bishop, priests and laity of this diocese, acted as Your Grace's agent' in the Newcastle affair.⁶⁸ Goold, who had been inclined to blame Gregory for earlier acts of interference in the affairs of his diocese, knew that the Archbishop was to blame for all this. When Goold was in Rome in 1858-9, he found difficulty in acting on Polding's behalf. McEncroe, Polding had written, would do him harm in Rome because he felt he was sympathetic to the clique. Goold complained that McEncroe had come furnished with highly flattering letters from Polding and Gregory. Though Polding refuted this statement in a letter to Propaganda, saying that they were merely what would be given to any priest of good repute,⁶⁹ Goold maintained he had made 'the most of his time & title' during his stay.⁷⁰ Polding was slow to act, and Gregory preferred to ignore the accusations of worthless men.

Silence is very well [Goold moaned to Geoghegan], when any good can come of it to religion, but here it only encourages this wretched clique . . . In consequence of this silence, these unhappy men's reports carry weight with them here and in Ireland.⁷¹

Polding had not written to him since he had been away. 'He must stir himself about the vacant sees or the matter will be taken out of his hands.'

Moran in Rome, Cullen and other bishops in Ireland, had had brought to them by the Irish clergy many complaints against the administration of Polding and Gregory, and even that of the Irishman, Goold, who was, after all, a friar. Polding found his good name had been assailed by non-Benedictine priests who considered that he discriminated against other Orders, and by seculars who had been dismissed from the mission as unsuitable. One of these complained to Geoghegan that Polding had spoken disparagingly of him when Polding had been in Europe. Yet, as Polding wrote in vindication to Murray of Dublin, this priest, whom he had requested to retire from the mission, had not been in contact with him at all during his visit,

⁶⁷ Polding to Goold, 13 June 1860, S.A.A.

⁶⁸ 6 June 1860, S.A.A.

⁶⁹ 12 April 1859, S.A.A.

⁷⁰ Goold to Geoghegan, 4 Aug. 1859, S.A.A.

⁷¹ 15 Nov. 1858, S.A.A.

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so his evidence was all on hearsay.⁷² Ryan, who had gone to Norfolk Island, wrote slanderous letters about Polding, but had never served under him at this stage. Polding felt his authority had been weakened by this when the Passionist prefecture and the Perth diocese were both established without consulting him, and Brady appointed to Perth on a statement by Ullathorne, then in England.⁷³ Goold agreed with the policy of Cullen and the Irish, that Irish bishops are best for Irish people, and as

the Catholic Europeans who form our congregation in Australia are, with very few exceptions, Irish, it is most just and natural that Irish Catholics would have pastors of their own nationality . . . Everyone will readily understand that to successfully govern a people, even in spiritual matters, it is expedient to be acquainted with their disposition, their inclination, their habits . . . and especially to secure their affection.⁷⁴

Polding indirectly said the same thing when he wrote to the Cardinal of Propaganda that he was often placed in a difficult situation over the *Freeman's Journal*. It played on national prejudices to such an extent that the Irish took in bad part anything that came from a non-Irish. As even the Irish priests were easily taken in, Polding hesitated before taking measures he considered necessary.⁷⁵ In spite of this, neither Polding nor Goold took kindly to Irish interference in Australian affairs. Writing to Polding of all the misdemeanours of Barry, Goold told him that he had also informed Propaganda, the Bishop of his diocese, and the Archbishops of Dublin and Armagh. And in a resigned manner he added, "They may see in his case another grievance to be redressed, another just

⁷² 10 July 1848, quoted in Moran, *History of the Catholic Church in Australasia*, p. 312.

⁷³ Brady, who had founded the mission of Western Australia, had gone to Rome without Polding's permission and, without his knowledge, presented a report on his mission, recommending that it be made a separate diocese and that Ullathorne be appointed bishop. Propaganda offered the See to Ullathorne. If he refused they wanted his opinion of Brady and a Benedictine whom Ullathorne does not mention. Of Brady, Ullathorne said he was a devout man and a good missionary, but having been educated in France, his knowledge of English was not sufficiently good for him to win the respect of the Governor and officials of the colony. Ullathorne refused the honour, and Brady was appointed (Ullathorne, *From Cabin Boy to Archbishop*, pp. 214-15).

⁷⁴ Moran, *History of the Catholic Church in Australasia*, p. 786.

⁷⁵ 16 Nov. 1859, S.A.A.

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complaint against the Bishops of Australia'.⁷⁶ Polding was to state only two months later that bishops, 'if possible from amongst our own', were the only means of preventing the province from becoming dependent on intervention from without, particularly from Ireland.⁷⁷ The one he had always wanted as bishop was Gregory. 'No one', he claimed, 'had more eminently fitted himself for the Episcopacy by the exact fulfilment of all the duties of a zealous, pious priest.'⁷⁸ McEncroe proclaimed in England and Ireland however, that Propaganda had assured him that Gregory would never be chosen as a bishop.⁷⁹ Polding balanced this in 1859 when he repeated to Propaganda his private conviction that McEncroe was not suited to be a bishop and that, moreover, not one of the bishops of the province would assist at his consecration unless he were expressly ordered to do so.⁸⁰ Austin Sheehy, a Benedictine and Gregory's successor in the office of Vicar-General, was his next hope, but Rome (and Ireland) had other ideas. McAlroy wrote to Polding in 1863 that he had heard in letters from Ireland that new bishops were to be appointed in January and that his name had been favourably recommended by some of the Irish bishops. Polding could hardly contain himself in his letter to Goold:

Pretty cool, is it not? Bishops in Ireland to recommend priests in Australia to the Episcopacy—not to Dioceses in Ireland but in Australia! . . . I wonder whether these Bishops were the vehicles of the wholesale slanders against me for which the Cardinal deemed it his duty to call me to an account . . . I know nothing that would sooner alienate the native population from the Church than a passage in the Cardinal's letter that the discipline of the Church requires that the Irish element should hold rule in all things . . . This is the state of things to which Bermingham the grand oracle and his tools the Irish Bishops are to bring us?⁸¹

It hurt Polding to think that the Cardinal of Propaganda would trust such 'intriguing ambitious men' as Bermingham and his friends, and mistrust him; that on the word of these men he saw fit

⁷⁶ 16 Jan. 1862, S.A.A.

⁷⁷ Polding to unnamed recipient (Goold or Geoghegan), 12 March 1862, S.A.A.

⁷⁸ Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, Vol. II, pp. 257-8.

⁷⁹ Gregory to Propaganda, 13 June 1859, Vol. 6, Oceania, Propaganda Archives.

⁸⁰ 12 April 1859, S.A.A.

⁸¹ Quoted in letter of Polding to Goold, 17 Dec. 1863, S.A.A.

to rebuke a bishop of twenty-nine years' standing and an archbishop of twenty years' standing in the Church. Quinn of Brisbane, appointed only the year before, had advised leaving the appointment of bishops to the Holy See and having them all from home (Ireland), as he knew little about those recommended by his brother bishops. 'What do we know', Polding aptly remarked, 'of those recommended from home?'⁸² The forces against Polding were too strong. Cullen was appointed Archbishop of Armagh in 1849, and was transferred to Dublin in 1852. Previous to this, he had been for sixteen years Rector of the Irish College in Rome. While in that position he had gathered about him a number of promising young men and trained them for future bishoprics: Matthew and James Quinn, James Murray, Robert Dunne, and Patrick Moran all succeeded to dioceses in Australia.⁸³ James Quinn was the first to be launched, while Matthew of Bathurst (a funny signature, Polding thought) and Murray of Maitland were soon to follow. Cullen was no stranger to Polding. When he was nominated for the archbishopric of Dublin, Polding wrote to him: 'the choice of His Holiness, I say in perfect sincerity, is the choice of the Christian world'.⁸⁴ But when he came to the diocese of Dublin, he had occasion to speak to priests from the Australian mission. He had supported Sister de Lacy in her stand against Polding. Brown thought, too, that he was offended that Gregory had not called on him when he was in Dublin. McEncroe wrote to him, as he had written to Murray before him, for support in his policy of 'hibernicisation' of Australia. 'I would die in peace', he told him, 'if I saw two or three active and zealous Irish Bishops appointed to the Sees named in my letter to His Holiness.'⁸⁵ Again in 1858, Peter Francis O'Farrell, the Franciscan, wrote to him backing up McEncroe's proposals. Polding and Gregory had been offended at McEncroe's appeal to Rome for more bishops, he stated,

⁸² Polding to Goold, 1862, quoted in Birt, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 271.

⁸³ It has been claimed that these men were all relatives of Cullen (see C. Roberts, 'James Quinn's Roman Background', *A.C.R.*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 1, 1960). MacSuibhne, in *Paul Cullen and His Contemporaries*, has been unable to trace a family relationship. The confusion could come from the fact that the term 'cousin' was used by many nineteenth-century Irish in a tribal kinship sense, and possibly men like Polding and Vaughan believed it had a more precise implication.

⁸⁴ Moran, *History of the Catholic Church in Australasia*, p. 313.

⁸⁵ 11 April 1856, quoted in Birt, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 233.

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but now the priests in conference at Campbelltown had unanimously agreed to ask for exactly the same thing.⁸⁶

The Archbishop of Dublin was to the Irish cleric the main court of appeal before Rome. When Cullen was the Archbishop, Dublin was Rome! He had become steeped in the outlook of the Roman officials during his long stay in Italy, and he possessed their confidence to an unlimited degree. The Propaganda Archives show how decisive was his influence. As a newly-ordained priest he was asked about an Irish episcopal vacancy, and his evidence appears in the records of Propaganda.⁸⁷ McEncroe did one final act, as far as Gregory was concerned, in invoking the aid of Cullen. He wrote in 1859, while he himself was in Ireland, a letter tantamount to asking Cullen to have Gregory recalled, as he had taken the 'ill-considered' step of appointing a Protestant to the Board of the Catholic Orphanage.⁸⁸ That Cullen took this request to heart can be seen from a letter of Goold to Gregory based on Goold's observations when he was in Rome in 1859. Referring to Gregory's recall, he said that the Cardinal Prefect would not have been a party to it. "There is another whose advice has great—I would say undue weight at Rome who seems to me to have had no small share in bringing about this most unusual measure."⁸⁹

The problems that faced all the bishops in the colonial society of New South Wales when dealing with a group of their priests—Presbyterianism, fostered by an independent spirit among clergy and laity, ambition, and love of money and unaccustomed prestige—were intensified for Polding and Gregory by the fact that they were English dealing with Irish, regulars dictating to seculars. Nationalism was part of the religion of the Irish laymen, and was no less so for the Irish priest. The good of Ireland was the good of the Church, and for anyone to think differently was to think outside the Church. Gregory was accused of having a 'semi-Protestant' viewpoint because he did not see Ireland as the beginning and end of all things. In the difficulties that confronted the Archbishop in the governing of a diocese made up of so many Irish Catholic laity and served by so

⁸⁶ 5 Nov. 1858, quoted in Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 254.

⁸⁷ J. H. Whyte, 'The Appointment of Catholic Bishops in Nineteenth-Century Ireland', *Catholic Historical Review*, April 1962, reprinted in MacSuibhne, *Paul Cullen and His Contemporaries*, Vol. II, p. 419.

⁸⁸ S.A.A.

⁸⁹ 27 March 1860, D.A.

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many Irish secular priests, Gregory was the intermediary. In the address of the priests of the archdiocese read to Gregory before his departure and signed by all but Bermingham, McAlroy, and one other, Therry referred to the complications presented by such a position, and to the silence and patience with which Gregory had borne the misrepresentations, the slanders, with which he had been assailed. In reply, Gregory reminded them of the

difficulties and delicacy of the position of him who stands without intermediate between the Supreme authority on the one hand, and its subject on the other. Who could avoid the risk of incurring some unkind thoughts—of appearing to occasion some offence? Yet you thank me for thoughtfulness and aid, and indulgence, and I am more than content.⁹⁰

McEncroe signed this, implying that the sentiments expressed were his own. His sincerity is not questioned. It was not the priest in Gregory he objected to. He was an Englishman, a member of an Order in a position of authority, and as such, in McEncroe's eyes, an obstacle to the necessary 'take-over' of the Australian Church by an Irish hierarchy.

⁹⁰ *F.J.* 6 Feb. 1861.

The Recall

ON 5 February 1861 Gregory left the colony of New South Wales, recalled ignominiously. Goold had spoken of it as a 'most unusual measure'.¹ Polding, in a letter to Barnabo, Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, was more explicit. He had received, he said, a letter from the President of the English Benedictine Congregation which stated that Gregory was recalled by the express order of the Holy See; yet Barnabo had stated that Polding's remarks concerning Gregory would be passed on to the President, because it was the Congregation that had recalled the Abbot. 'What had he done', Polding asked, 'that he could not be trusted with the real facts of the case?'² For Polding, this was the hardest part of the whole affair—his Vicar-General of sixteen years' standing and his devoted friend of twenty-five years' standing had been taken from him without one word of explanation and without any chance of defending himself.

Has it ever been heard of [he asked Barnabo] that a bishop in Europe has been deprived of his Vicar-General without the complaints against him being known and proved, and without even a direct communication from the supreme authority? Are the Australian Bishops lower in the esteem and affection of the Holy See than their brothers in other parts of the world?³

In a letter to Geoghegan, written nearly a year later, he contrasted the treatment meted out to Sister de Lacy and John McGirr, an Irish priest on the Australian mission, with that given to Gregory.⁴ Barnabo had called Polding to account to answer the charges of McGirr, who four years before had left the Sydney diocese to go to Melbourne. He had written to Rome that Polding had expelled him without justification and without commendation, so that he

¹ Goold to Gregory, 27 March 1860, D.A.

² Polding to Propaganda, 19 Jan. 1861, S.A.A., letter in French, translation mine.

³ Ibid.

⁴ 27 Dec. 1861, S.A.A.

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was destitute and unable to gain admission to another diocese. If Rome had asked him where and how he lived in the last four years, Polding justly remarked, they would have known that, far from being destitute, he was in the Melbourne diocese working as a priest. Sister de Lacy's charges against the administration had been taken up by Cullen and transmitted by him to Rome. Again, Polding was called on to answer them.

Ullathorne had written to Polding that Propaganda had asked him to visit the Australian diocese, Sydney especially. On receiving this letter, so he told Polding, he went straight to Rome to explain why a delegate was not necessary, and why he, above all, should not be the man.⁵ Polding commented to Gregory that Ullathorne wanted to escape from coming out as 'fault finder and fault reporter in the case of one who had taught him his Latin Grammar'.⁶ Ullathorne's solution to the problem, as he himself wrote to Polding, was to recall Gregory to England, as it was thought that in his removal the principal difficulties would cease to exist.⁷ After he had received Ullathorne's letter, Polding advised Gregory to ask the government for leave of absence, hoping to avert the disgrace of his recall. As soon as his departure became known, a letter appeared in the *Empire*,⁸ signed 'A Catholic', which stated that Gregory had been ignominiously recalled. The *Freeman's Journal*, after 'careful inquiries', as it claimed, said that Gregory was leaving of his own accord, and that he had been granted twelve months' leave of absence by the government.⁹ Although the *Freeman's Journal* could truthfully print such a statement before Rome had finally spoken, Polding knew well that no one would really be deceived by such a move, and that his critics could rightly claim that Rome had acted in their favour.

As Rome gave Polding no explanation of the whole affair, he proceeded to give one himself in an effort to draw out the truth. He wrote to Barnabo:

that a small number of bad Catholics, about thirty in a population of 100,000, and represented by seven men, presented to the Holy See a petition for the removal of my Vicar-General. They were told that

⁵ Polding to unnamed recipient, n.d., probably 1860, S.A.A.

⁶ 19 Oct. 1861, D.A.

⁷ Polding to unnamed recipient, n.d., probably 1860, S.A.A.

⁸ 3 April 1860.

⁹ 7, 28 April 1860.

The Recall

their petition was not accepted. That is the truth. It was not granted, but its prayer has been fulfilled. The faction has triumphed . . . They have heard rightly that the ecclesiastical authority was not consulted and, whatever the motives of the Holy See, the world, which judges by externals, finds in the departure of Abbot Gregory a public disgrace for the local authority.¹⁰

Both Goold and Geoghegan shared these sentiments and expressed them in letters written to Polding, Gregory, and Heptonstall.¹¹ 'The Bishops need to take heed of this unhappy triumph—it will reach *themselves* if they are indifferent to Gregory's unmerited victimisation', wrote Geoghegan.¹² And Goold exclaimed: 'It does seem very strange to me that the authorities in Rome should have allowed themselves to be advised to so extraordinary a proceeding as to require the retirement of a Vic-Gen. irrespective of the wishes of his ordinary'.¹³

Polding had his suspicions as to the identity of these advisers of the Holy See. Willson had not concealed his dislike of Gregory's way of acting. 'I have every reason to believe that he is the powerful agent in this business of Dr. Gregory', Polding wrote of him to Heptonstall. 'He has never forgotten something which he alleges Dr. Gregory said, but which the latter has ever denied'.¹⁴ Willson had written to Polding in 1859, when the battle between the administration and the *Freeman's Journal* was at its height, that the return of Dr. Gregory to Europe 'would be the first step towards peace and an *indispensable one*'.¹⁵ He told Geoghegan that if Rome investigated matters freely and fully Gregory would not remain. He based this observation on Gregory's treatment of the Sisters of Charity. Geoghegan passed this on to Gregory, who told him, 'I cannot think the Bishop has seen one half the correspondence between me and the nuns . . . What I did, I was called upon to do by the Sisters themselves and that, too, in writing'.¹⁶ Willson had had personal experience of Gregory's

¹⁰ 14 April 1860, S.A.A., letter in French, translation mine. Polding underestimated the number present at the meeting which drew up the petition. There were 300 rather than 30.

¹¹ E.g. Goold to Polding, 27 March 1860; Geoghegan to Polding, 3 April 1860; Goold to Heptonstall, 25 Nov. 1861, D.A.

¹² To unnamed recipient, n.d., D.A.

¹³ Goold to Polding, 27 March 1860, D.A.

¹⁴ 21 December 1860, D.A.

¹⁵ Quoted in letter of Willson to Geoghegan, 13 July 1859, S.A.A.

¹⁶ 20 Sept. 1859, S.A.A.

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handling of people in the dispute with Therry, and it is improbable that he changed his opinion of him on the evidence Gregory gave to Geoghegan. Willson was a friend of Ullathorne, and his impressions would have been passed on to one who followed the affairs of the Australian Church closely. Polding had reason to blame Ullathorne as well. When Gregory wrote that Ullathorne had intimated to him that there were a 'variety of motives and reasons' behind it all, Polding snapped back: 'Just let him consider his own letters to me on the subject'.¹⁷ In these Ullathorne had stated to Polding that he had suggested the recall of Gregory as a means of bringing peace to the diocese, though he said later that Rome had already decided on this move before he went there. Though Gregory was convinced of his kind intentions towards him, Ullathorne kept him very much in the dark as to what was happening, telling him that he could not let him know the contents of the papers Propaganda had put in his hands. Polding was annoyed, rather than impressed, by such an attitude, which seemed to him to accentuate Ullathorne's part in the business. Ullathorne did admit that a number of Irish priests, McEncroe among them, wanted a delegate sent to the colony. He admitted, too, that he had thought of offering McEncroe a place in his diocese to prevent him from bothering Polding further, but feared the reaction of the Irish.¹⁸

Polding's letters to Barnabo drew an official statement of the reasons for Gregory's recall. 'Men prudent and worthy of trust have several times placed before this Holy Congregation the necessity of recalling home the praiseworthy and religious man', it ran. The document then explained why the President of the English Benedictine Congregation was brought into the matter. Fearing that Gregory would use his position as Prior of the monastic cathedral, which placed him more directly under his religious Superior, to appeal against the decision, Propaganda sought the President's consent to Gregory's recall. 'There is scarcely any sacrifice', said Barnabo, 'which seems too great for the salvation of souls.' 'And this', he concluded, 'is the truth of the matter'.¹⁹

Ullathorne had stated that Gregory was recalled because of his personal unfitness for the office of Vicar-General. Barnabo had

¹⁷ 19 Oct. 1861, D.A.

¹⁸ Gregory to Polding, 23 July 1861, S.A.A.

¹⁹ 17 April 1861, D.A.

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written in another letter to Polding that no one had higher qualities or had rendered greater service to the Church in Australia than Gregory; he admitted that Gregory had been recalled solely on account of the disturbance arising from the troublesome group in Sydney. If this were true, Polding observed to a brother bishop, 'surely a good deserving man ought not to be thus victimised'. He then returned to the point round which the whole issue revolved. 'I cannot but feel that a grievous blow has been struck at the independence of the Bishop.'²⁰ Why did not Rome consult Polding before taking such a step? Duncan had complained of Polding's method of censuring the *Freeman's Journal* and its contributors in the *Monitum Pastorale*, and expatiated on the universal practice of the Church in trying first to win gently, and condemning only in the last extreme. Gregory was not censured, was never even given by Rome an inkling of its displeasure. He was simply recalled. Rome knew that Polding and Gregory were well aware of the complaints that had been made against the administration in general, and against Gregory in particular. From 1859 they were public enough, and Polding had relayed a number of them to Propaganda. If Polding and Gregory had wished to defend their administration and themselves, they had had ample opportunity. But Gregory had written nothing, and Polding little. Goold, it has been noted, complained of their silence when he was in Rome on their behalf and his own, combating the assertions of the clique. On the other hand, Goold had claimed that the letters of the clique were just so much waste paper in the eyes of the Roman authorities, and that they had nothing to fear from these men. The Cardinal had handed him some of their documents, which he called 'impertinenza'. 'I returned them', Goold remarked drily, 'endorsed with their proper designation.'²¹ To Goold at least, Rome had committed itself thus far—the tales of these men carried no weight in their eyes. It did not ask Gregory to justify his conduct because its actions claimed that there was no cause for him to do so.

Gregory's recall was not an isolated case, and must be examined in the light of the increasing power of Rome in the nineteenth century and the consequent diminution of the power of the bishops. One of the main channels for the exercise of this power was the

²⁰ Polding to unnamed recipient, possibly Goold, 21 Aug. 1861, S.A.A.

²¹ Goold to Geoghegan, 25 Nov. 1858, S.A.A.

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Propaganda Congregation, 'an arbitrary, military power', Newman proclaimed after he had experienced the brunt of its workings. And to his question, 'who is Propaganda?' he answered, 'virtually one sharp man of business . . . a high dignitary indeed, perhaps an Archbishop, but after all little more than a clerk, or (according to his name) a secretary, and two or three clerks under him. In this age at least, *Quantula Sapientia regimur*.'²² Bishop T. O'Mahony in the New South Wales of the 1870s fell a victim, also, to this 'arbitrary, military power', because of charges brought against him, which appear unfounded. He was removed from his See.

Because of Ullathorne's influence, the Benedictines in England were ready to believe what they heard about Gregory. T. J. Brown admitted to Polding that he had shared in the prejudice against him until he had heard from Gregory himself his side of the story. The calumnies circulated, he said, because Gregory did nothing to deny and refute them. When questioned by Brown as to the reason, he said that he really did not know what reports were circulating, and also that he despised such tales. 'But no man can afford to despise injurious reports amongst those whose good opinion he values', Brown commented, 'still less among those who are his superiors, as are authorities at Rome in Gregory's case'.²³ Brown was the type of man whom Gregory needed to spur him on to action. Though Brown admitted that Gregory was suffering from poor health and had incessant headaches, a life-long suffering, but accentuated by his position, he considered he lacked the courage and the patience to act as he would have him do, which was to go to Rome, beg Barnabo to *favour* him with every charge against him that carried weight, and then, calmly and point by point, refute all of them.

Brown was the first to give Gregory and Polding some idea of the charges that were made against the Abbot. He had, it was claimed, been harsh in his treatment of the clergy and unjust in his dealings with Bermingham and McAlroy. He had tried by cunning means to get the Pope's approval for some obnoxious portion he wanted inserted in the Constitutions that were being drawn up for the monastery, and had been smuggled into the Pope's presence by

²² Newman to Monsell, Jan. 1863, quoted in J. N. Figgis and R. V. Lawrence (eds.), *Selections from the Correspondence of the First Lord Acton*, Vol. I, p. 38.

²³ Brown to Polding, 19 Sept. 1861, S.A.A.

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Polding for this purpose. When Pius IX had shown his indignation, Polding had embraced Gregory and taken his part. He had blatantly asked Barnabo to give him the reasons why he had not been made a bishop.²⁴ 'These details are trifling enough in themselves', Brown wrote to Polding, 'but they are held to warrant the general charge of his being an intemperate, overbearing, harsh character.'²⁵ When Polding made these charges known, Goold was of the opinion that nothing need be done about them. The addresses presented to Gregory at his departure should be sufficient refutation of all these calumnies. Polding had learned not to be so trusting. He wrote to Monsignor Talbot a detailed account of that fatal audience which had made Pius IX and the Roman authorities unfavourable to Gregory and ready to listen to reports against him. Polding explained that both had received separate billets to an audience but, knowing little of the Vatican protocol, did not realise this meant that each must go privately. Polding took Gregory to the audience as his Vicar-General, relying, as he told Talbot, on Gregory's memory and practical knowledge to help him render an accurate account of his mission. The Pope expressed surprise and displeasure at Gregory's presence, and said he had been a cause of trouble to the Church in New South Wales. The kneeling Gregory began to protest his innocence, but did so in such an excited voice that Polding went to him, put his hands on his shoulders to calm him down, then addressed himself to the Pope, saying that the mistake about the audience had been his and that he wished to take the blame. Pius misinterpreted his action to mean that he approved and seconded Gregory's words and manner—something, Polding added in passing, that Gregory had never ceased to lament.²⁶

Gregory, too, wrote to Talbot, and his letter shows that he was learning the language of diplomacy. He began by thanking him for

²⁴ When Gregory heard that McEncroe was proclaiming in England that Barnabo had stated to him that Gregory would never be made a bishop, Gregory wrote to Barnabo, pointing out that McEncroe had been condemned by Rome for his association with the *Freeman's Journal*, while he had suffered so much in upholding the authority of the Church against that paper. He objected to being disgraced before such a priest, and asked Barnabo to give him the reasons for his remark. Gregory's letter was that of a man wounded by the one whose citadel he was defending (13 June 1859, Propaganda Archives).

²⁵ 19 Sept. 1861, S.A.A.

²⁶ Polding to Talbot, n.d., D.A.

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giving Bishop Brown an opportunity to say a kind word to the Pope on his behalf. 'I am made to feel', he went on, 'that I have been the victim of both [misrepresentations and misapprehensions] but you have [en]couraged me to seek relief through your influence and sympathy.'²⁷ Gregory had at last disciplined his Saxon tongue! But feelings at Rome were still against him. Polding wrote in February 1863 that Talbot had said that the Holy Father had forgotten the events of years ago,²⁸ but in April, when Gregory wanted him to write again to Rome, Polding was not so sure of success. 'Talbot is against, Barnabo is against—the Pope has personal feelings.'²⁹ In his letter to Talbot, Gregory had sent copies of the Addresses presented to him at his departure. Of these he remarked that 'they were the spontaneous expression of their convictions, in as much as they were drawn up by themselves unsolicited by me, and without any intervention whatever on the part of the Archbishop or of myself'.³⁰ He could have added that the Address of the clergy was read by Therry, a tribute from a true Irishman to an Englishman he respected. They did not pass over the trials he had endured, but used them to highlight his patient forbearance.

The gross and inconsistent misrepresentations of your character and acts [Therry proclaimed in the name of all but three of his fellow-clergy] that have been with such perverse industry circulated in these colonies, and in Europe, have excited within us feelings of reprobation. In silence and in patience you have borne these misrepresentations, to the edification of all who are conscious of the unjust artifices by which you were assailed. To defend yourself it would have been necessary to subject, in your person, ecclesiastical authority, to the discussion of a tribunal of anonymous writers, and you have suffered without remonstrance your own wrong, rather than right yourself by enslaving the action of Holy Church to criticism, rude and unauthorised. And again, you have borne slanders, uncontradicted, rather than violate the sacred reserve of fraternal charity.³¹

Richard Walsh and J. Kenny, priests of the archdiocese who were in Europe in the following year, both added their personal testimony of Gregory's worth. The Protestants of the colony had presented him with an Address, and in it had spoken of his 'manly energy,

²⁷ Gregory to Talbot, holograph draft, n.d., D.A.

²⁸ To Gregory, 20 Feb. 1863, D.A.

²⁹ Polding to Gregory, 21 April 1863, D.A.

³⁰ N.d., D.A.

³¹ *F.J.*, 6 Feb. 1861.

charitable forbearance, and respect for the feelings of others', marks of a true Christian and of a gentleman.³² Roger Therry, who had been asked by Rome to give a report on the mission, as he was in Europe, but who declined on Ullathorne's advice, wrote as evidence for Gregory a defence of his appointment of Bassett to the Board of the Orphanage.³³ Goold and Geoghegan had both written to Gregory letters intended for Rome, in which they regretted his departure and the reason for it—the triumph of the faction.

Members of the faction were in Rome at this time with very powerful support. Brown informed Polding that Cullen, 'perhaps influenced by Gregory's not calling upon him during a visit to Dublin, & setting him right', had gone to Rome 'full of belief in the representations of Bermingham and McAlroy'.³⁴ Unknown to Brown and Polding, Cullen had been influenced by McEncroe's letter of two years before, asking him to do all he could to remove Gregory from his position of Vicar-General. Cullen had no love for the clique—he had suffered similar troubles in his own diocese—but their complaints were good starting points from which to work for Gregory's removal. Polding was aware of his interference in the affairs of New South Wales, though this did not necessarily imply interference in the affairs of Gregory. When Polding was called upon to refute the charges of Sister de Lacy, submitted to Rome by Cullen, he wrote to Father Bernard Smith, his agent in Rome: 'There are in Ireland or England persons who really think it their duty to meddle with our affairs'.³⁵

According to Ullathorne, Polding had greatly weakened his case at Rome by writing letters which were too full of personal feeling. 'All writing on business matters should be free from feeling and very concise', Gregory wrote to Polding on Ullathorne's advice. Then he proceeded to tell him, again on Ullathorne's prompting, that he had varied his sentiments when writing to different persons on the same subjects.³⁶ Polding had no love for such letters—'cold disquisitional style which leaves the mind and feelings alike discomforted', he said of them.³⁷ It was very hard for a man like

³² Ibid.

³³ Therry to Gregory, 1 Nov. 1861, D.A., copy in Italian.

³⁴ 19 Sept. 1861, S.A.A.

³⁵ 16 April 1860, D.A.

³⁶ 23 July 1861, S.A.A.

³⁷ Polding to Gregory, 23 Feb. 1863, D.A.

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Polding to be cold and disquisitional about a subject which touched him so deeply. 'All brought against Dr. Gregory is in reality intended for me', he wrote to Bernard Smith in 1860.³⁸ He felt keenly the injustice of the whole affair. Gregory and he had been the victims of faction, and his diocese had been subjected to unwonted interference from without. Brown had observed after his visit to Rome that 'the allegations against Dr. P[olding] and Dr. G[regory] . . . & the causes of Dr. G's removal can be no other than the efforts of the faction in Sydney'. Charges had been made against the two, but Barnabo assured Brown that these were not entertained by Propaganda.

Separation may or may not mean punishment [Brown further commented], but if not, yet it involves in the actual instance great affliction to the parties chiefly affected by it, and passes in the estimation of their opponents who have triumphed by it, as punishment.³⁹

Polding had struggled against this through his episcopate, and he would not sit down now under a decision which touched him more closely than any other had ever done. Polding wanted Rome to commit itself; he wanted it to admit the real reasons for Gregory's recall, and not hide behind the words of the President of the English Benedictine Congregation who, in any case, refused to take responsibility for his action. He was recalled by his Superiors—'a very ordinary proceeding in the Church which did not presuppose any blameable thing', Barnabo had written in response to Polding's demands for a reason.⁴⁰ Rome professed itself averse to Gregory's return to Australia because the same feelings against him might be excited again. Polding imagined them saying at Rome, in England, and Ireland, 'Well, and were we not right? Did not things settle down into quiet when Gregory left?' 'Not so', answered Polding. 'Nine months before. And why. The *Freeman* passed into other hands . . . It was purchased by Dolman and Birrell and thus was peace brought about.'⁴¹ Rome, however, had no interest in such arguments. They had taken their stand. Gregory's recall was 'an economical act for the sake of peace'. They had no other feelings on the matter. Let him be content to stay in England, they argued.

³⁸ 16 April, D.A.

³⁹ Brown to Geoghegan, 20 Nov. 1862, S.A.A.

⁴⁰ Polding to Gregory, 20 Feb. 1863, D.A.

⁴¹ Polding to Gregory, 19 July 1861, D.A.

The Recall

There was a great movement afoot, and men were needed to carry it forward.

Oh that officials had hearts as well as heads [Polding moaned]! I wonder how Talbot or Barnabo would like to be banished from Rome and sent to country parishes in Piedmont and take the thing kindly for there was plenty of good to be done there and they were the men to do it.⁴²

Gregory was not blameless, but he did not, as Roe stated, crave pomp and power.⁴³ 'Whatever difference of opinion exists upon the wisdom of some of his official acts,' the new editors of the *Freeman's Journal* wrote of him before his departure, 'there is none upon his motives—his sincerity—his earnest piety—his stainless honor.'⁴⁴ He was a strong man, and had gained the enmity of some prominent laymen and some less prominent clergy in carrying out the duties of his office and in upholding Polding's ideal of an abbey-diocese. Their complaints to Rome and to the Irish bishops, directed in reality against the administration of the diocese, were centred around him as he was more vulnerable than Polding. Rome could not touch Polding—it had no reason for doing so—but it had been driven to the decision that the Irish were best governed by the Irish, a decision which Ullathorne—and Cullen—endorsed. It had put out feelers in 1854 when Polding and Gregory were in Europe. The time had come for more drastic measures. After Gregory's outburst at the audience of 1854, Pius had no respect for him, and was ready to believe any tales told against him. Barnabo and Ullathorne thought better of him, but knew that someone had to be sacrificed. Rome showed by its later actions that its recall of Gregory was meant to sound the death knell to Benedictinism in New South Wales.

Polding, however, kept at the authorities, writing very blunt letters, complaining about the way he, as an ecclesiastical authority, had been treated.⁴⁵ He wrote to Talbot, in gentler tone, that if the Holy See still felt that Gregory's presence in the diocese was a danger, then he would be happy to have him back under any capacity, but he must come back. His return was the only thing that could 'effectively confute the reports' which were spread abroad to the

⁴² Polding to Gregory, 20 Feb. 1863, D.A.

⁴³ *Quest for Authority in Eastern Australia, 1835-1851*, p. 115.

⁴⁴ 30 Jan. 1861.

⁴⁵ Polding to Gregory, 20 Feb. 1863, D.A.

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detriment of Polding and of religion.⁴⁶ Rome effected a compromise. It withheld permission until 1866. On 5 October of that year the President of the Benedictine Congregation was able to write to Gregory that he had received from Propaganda 'a document authorising your return to Australia'.⁴⁷ Polding, then in Rome, suggested he go to Wollongong or Monaro—far from Sydney and its wickedness.⁴⁸ By this time Gregory was well settled in England, 'doing a great deal of good among the Protestants',⁴⁹ and he was not anxious to uproot himself again. The time for an effective return to the diocese of Sydney had passed. His opponents had had their triumph. McEncroe and Cullen had had their way. New dioceses had been created and were all being filled by Irish bishops. Irish influence at Rome had been too strong to combat; it continued to rule the Church in Australia.

I am charged with having appointed *two* Englishmen as Administrators of Armidale and Goulburn—i.e. Hanly and Fr. Austin Sheehy [Polding complained to Gregory in 1863], [and] with thereby having caused great discontent among the faithful who are reluctant to be ruled by Angli . . . Can the Cardinal be serious in urging these charges and in reproving me?⁵⁰

But the Cardinal was serious; serious in underlining his point—that Australian affairs henceforth were to be ruled by an Irish hierarchy. Gregory saw no need to become involved in such a situation. After his arrival in England, he went as chaplain to Stanbrook Abbey and stayed there for a year, edifying all, in the words of the Abbess, 'by his unfeigned charity for his enemies, his patience with the cold neglect of his brethren, and his exemplary and priestly conduct'.⁵¹ He left in 1862 to spend time at Princethorpe and London before going to Rome, where Bishop Brown represented his case to the authorities. The next year he spent in England and Rome, trying to establish the real cause of his recall. No mention is made of any of his family, but it is probable that a younger sister, at least, would still have been living. In 1864 he was made a Canon of Newport and

⁴⁶ Polding to Talbot, n.d., D.A.

⁴⁷ In D.A.

⁴⁸ Polding to Gregory, 2 Oct. 1866, D.A.

⁴⁹ Unnamed woman to Polding, 9 Aug. 1868, S.A.A.

⁵⁰ 20 Dec. 1863, D.A. 'As for Hanly and Sheehy being Angli—the very names indicate the origin', he commented to Gregory.

⁵¹ Birt, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 263.

The Recall

Menevia, the diocese of Bishop Brown. He lived at Broxwood in Herefordshire, and died there on 19 July 1877, just four months after Polding. He left very little in the way of earthly goods.⁵² He had spent himself and been spent in the service of men, particularly in the colony of New South Wales.

In the colony Gregory was called upon to fill two difficult roles—those of Abbot to a monastery and of Vicar-General to an archdiocese composed of an English minority and an Irish majority, with the English in command. His task was not an easy one. After the minimum years of training as a Benedictine he was called on to be foundation stone and co-builder of the monastery that Polding envisaged as the power-house of the mission and the cultural centre of the colony. The worth of a monastery is judged finally not on its civilising influence, but on the sanctity of its individual members. 'Monasticism', says Van Zeller, 'represents a search for the ideal within the setting of the actual.'⁵³ Polding, in his ideal, was inspired by St Augustine and his forty monks, who established a monastery at Canterbury as a centre for the conversion of England. But the Australia of the 1830s, which welcomed Polding and his four young men, was very different from the England of 600. The apostolate was not to pagans, but to men already Catholic, many living in degradation as convicts, others fighting against grievances, real or supposed, taking an active share in the life of the colony and in its struggles towards self-government. In this setting Polding planted his monastery, to do the twofold work of bringing men to God and God to men. The circumstances were special, and called for a special adaptation of the life of the Benedictine monk to meet them. Polding was too caught up with his ideal to perceive its practical difficulties; Gregory was too inexperienced, too legalistic in his concept of the Benedictine ideal, to be able to transplant it successfully to other soil. The one man who could, Bishop Charles Davis, died when his work had hardly begun. The monastery was a failure because it had been built on sand. 'The fault in every age of monastic history', Van Zeller claims, 'is that of specialising in the enterprise of

⁵² His will states he left under £300 (transcript by Mrs Egerton, research officer in England for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, an Australian National University project).

⁵³ *The Benedictine Idea*, p. 53.

Out of Time, Out of Place

the moment and forgetting the primaries.'⁵⁴ The conception of St Mary's was not sufficiently realistic to face the enterprise of the moment and relate to it the 'primaries', the essentials of monastic living.

Gregory was made Vicar-General at the age of thirty-one. He was, as it were, the gauntlet which Polding threw down to the Irish, and to their threatening encroachment on his authority as ruler of the Church in New South Wales. He stood between Polding and the people—priests and laity and religious. He became Polding's willing co-operator in his work of establishing the Church on a Catholic and not a national basis. This was a delicate and even dangerous work, and called for a diplomacy, a skill in handling people, that Gregory did not possess. Sydney in 1850 was very different from the Sydney of 1835—society was more sophisticated, men were more liberal in their ideas. Polding could not keep pace with the rapid change. Gregory's upbringing and training had placed him among the conservatives, and he did not see reason to change. As a conservative, an imprudent Vicar-General, he became the target for all the discontent of the archdiocese and the butt of all the Irish antagonism to English rule.

Through all he had to endure—both from the monks, who rebelled against a life that did not seem to them to be answering the needs of their times, and from the Irish, who fought for greater independence in the Church—he kept before him the ideal, as he saw it, of a son of St Benedict. His whole life is best summed up in his own words, already quoted. 'The spirit of our Holy Rule is the spirit of self-sacrifice—to act and suffer for God's sake whatever He may allow to happen to us.'

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

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MOTHER MARY SHANAHAN is a member of the Society of the Sacred Heart. She graduated Master of Arts from the University of Sydney, where she was Vice-Principal of Sancta Sophia College for eight years.

She is now Principal of Duchesne College, University of Queensland.

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