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**PAPAL POLICY TOWARDS CONFLICT
IN THE AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC MISSIONS:
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
JOHN BEDE POLDING, O.S.B.,
ARCHBISHOP OF SYDNEY,
AND THE
SACRED CONGREGATION
DE PROPAGANDA FIDE,
1842 - 1874.**

Christopher Paul Dowd, M.A.

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the Australian National University,
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This thesis is entirely my own original work.

Christopher Paul Dowd

Christopher Paul Dowd



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Any errors of fact or interpretation that might be found in this thesis are entirely my responsibility.

ABSTRACT

The centralizing trend in the government of the Catholic Church in the nineteenth century ensured that the deeply-divided Catholics of colonial Australia turned to Rome for a verdict on their many disagreements. At the centre of much of this conflict were the English Benedictine monk, the Archbishop of Sydney, John Bede Polding, and his ambitious scheme for a distinctively Australian, socially integrated Catholicism unified by a monastic administrative framework and elevated by monastic spiritual culture. This scheme collided with certain realities of Catholic life in the Australian colonies: rapid growth, a correspondingly urgent need for basic, flexible pastoral structures and a pronounced, increasingly self-conscious Irish complexion.

If Polding's vision were to be implemented, the approval of the arm of the papal bureaucracy responsible for the mission territories, the Sacred Congregation *de Propaganda Fide*, was vital. Polding came closest to this goal in 1842 when the Congregation accepted his proposals for a general re-organization of the Australian Church, including making St. Mary's cathedral, Sydney, a monastic cathedral. At this stage Polding enjoyed considerable prestige at Rome because of his pioneering work.

However, his doctrinaire pursuit of the total monastery-centred approach after his return to Australia generated continual friction. He alienated non-Benedictine religious orders and had to face rebellion among his own monks and fierce opposition to his policies from elements of the clergy and laity, often fired by a sense of Irish grievance.

As the Sydney Benedictine establishment disintegrated through insufficient recruiting, defections, squabbling and scandal and as complaints and alternative suggestions for the development of the Australian Church mounted up in the *Propaganda* Congregation, Roman officials became

increasingly sceptical about Polding's plans. Apart from occasional minor successes, all of the official decisions made by the Congregation about Australian affairs in the 1850s and 1860s went against Polding's recommendations. Most significantly, Rome rejected his submission that the Archdiocese of Sydney be committed permanently to Benedictine rule and assigned the new bishoprics carved out of the Archdiocese from 1859 onwards to assertive, independent Irishmen totally opposed to Polding's vision of the Australian Church and who, relying on the supreme influence at Rome of their mentor, Cardinal Cullen of Dublin, were able to prevail repeatedly over Polding in competition for Roman favour.

At the personal level, the difficulties that Polding encountered in his dealings with Rome were magnified by his strained relationship with Pope Pius IX and the head of the *Propaganda* Congregation, Cardinal Barnabò. Frustrated by continual, painful disappointments and upset by often unfair and rough *Propaganda* judgements, Polding steadily lost confidence in the Roman system and had become utterly embittered by the late 1860s.

Unexpectedly, by the time of his retirement in 1874 Polding won a notable final victory at Rome by securing the successor of his choice, his fellow English Benedictine, Roger Bede Vaughan. Motivated by an appreciation of the now septuagenarian Polding's pressing need for assistance and worried about domination of the Australian episcopate by the militant Cullenite Irish, Roman policy shifted towards a new balance.

ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	Archives of the Archdiocese of Adelaide
ACAP	Archives of the Archdiocese of Perth
ACR	<i>Australasian Catholic Record</i>
<i>Acta</i>	<i>Acta Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide</i> (CEPA fondo)
ADA	Archives of the Diocese of Armidale
ADB	<i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> . D.Pike <i>et al.</i> (gen. eds.), Melbourne, 13 Vols. 1966-1993
AHCA	Archives of All Hallows' College, Dublin
AHR	<i>American Historical Review</i>
APM	<i>Archivio dei Padri Maristi</i> , Rome (Archives of the Generalate of the Marist Fathers)
ASV	<i>Archivio Segreto Vaticano</i>
BAA	Archives of the Archdiocese of Brisbane
BDA	Archives of the Diocese of Bathurst
BirmAA	Archives of the Archdiocese of Birmingham
BL	Battye Library, Perth
CAA	Archives of the Archdiocese of Cardiff
CBA	Archives of the Generalate of the Christian Brothers, Rome
CEPA	Archives of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Rome
CC	Contemporary copy
CE	<i>Catholic Encyclopedia</i> . C.Herbertmann <i>et al.</i> (eds.), New York, 15 vols., 1907-1912
CGAA	Archives of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn
CH	<i>Church History</i>

CHR	<i>Catholic Historical Review</i>
Compendio	<i>Compendio di Storia della Sacra Congregazione per l'Evangelizzazione dei Popoli o 'De Propaganda Fide' 1622-1972: 350 Anni al Servizio delle Missioni</i> , Rome, 1973
CPA	Archives of the Generalate of the Passionist Congregation, Rome
DAA	Archives of the Archdiocese of Dublin
DBI	<i>Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani</i> . Rome, 42 volumes thus far, 1960-1973
DC	<i>Dictionnaire des Cardinaux</i> . J.-P.Migne (ed.), Paris, 1857
DE	<i>Dizionario Ecclesiastico</i> . A.Mercati et al. (eds.), Turin, 3 vols., 1953-1958
DESE	<i>Dizionario di Erudizione Storico-Ecclesiastico</i> . S.Moroni, (comp.), Venice, 53 vols. 1840-1851
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i> . L.Stephen & S.Lee (eds.), London, 22 vols., 1908-1909
Documents	<i>Documents in Australian Catholic History</i> . P.O'Farrell (ed.), London, 2 vols., 1969
DownAA	Archives of Downside Abbey
EC	<i>Enciclopedia Cattolica</i> . G.Pizzardo et al. (eds.), Rome, 12 vols., 1949-1954
FJ	<i>Freeman's Journal</i>
GSSA	Archives of the Generalate of the Good Samaritan Sisters, Sydney
HS	<i>Historical Studies</i>
HSANZ	<i>Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand</i>
ICA	Archives of the Irish College, Rome
JACHS	<i>Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>

LDB	<i>Lettere e Decreti della Sacra Congregazione e Biglietti di Monsignor Segretario (CEPA fondo)</i>
LDJH	<i>Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman. S.Dessain et al., (eds.), London, 31 vols., 1961-1984</i>
MDA	Archives of the Diocese of Maitland
MDHC	Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission
<i>Memoria Rerum</i>	<i>Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum 1622-1972. J.Metzler (ed.), Rome, 3 vols. 1975</i>
MF	Microfilm
ML	Mitchell Library, Sydney
NCE	<i>New Catholic Encyclopedia. W.J.McDonald (ed.-in-chief), New York, 17 Vols., 1967-1979</i>
nd	no date
nf(f)	no folio number(s)
NLA	National Library of Australia, Canberra
NNA	Archives of New Norcia Abbey
np(p)	no page number(s)
ny	no year
PC	Photocopy
PRO	Public Record Office, London
RC	Religious Clergy (SAA section)
RSCDA	Archives of the Generalate of the Irish Religious Sisters of Charity, Dublin
SAA	Archives of the Archdiocese of Sydney
SAWA	State Archives of Western Australia
<i>SC-Oceania</i>	<i>Scritture originali riferite nei Congressi-Oceania (CEPA fondo)</i>

SOCG	<i>Scritture Originali riferite nelle Congregazioni Generali (CEPA fondo)</i>
SPFLMA	Archives of the Monastery of <i>San Paolo fuori le Mura</i> , Rome
SPM	Library of St. Patrick's College, Manly
SPM-DownAA/MF	Microfilm of material from the Archives of Downside Abbey in the library of St. Patrick's College, Manly
TC	Typescript copy
<i>Udienze</i>	<i>Udienze del Nostro Signore (CEPA fondo)</i>
WAA	Archives of the Archdiocese of Westminster

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to cast further light on the nineteenth-century origins of the Australian Catholic Church.

The factors which have shaped Catholicism in this country can be grouped into three categories. Firstly, the domestic category pertains to how Catholic migrants coped with the physical and cultural uncertainty of their adopted land and preserved and adapted their religious values. The second collection of causal factors is the British-Isles connection. Catholic Christianity in Australia was a direct import, mainly from Ireland and England, the people being largely Irish while the ecclesiastical leadership was English, at least in the upper echelons of the foundation church in Sydney for the first generation. The third category of influence revolves around the fact that the Catholic Church in Australia was the regional branch of an international religious organization with headquarters in Rome and presided over by the bishop of that city, the Pope.

This thesis is concerned with the third category. The first category, the domestic, has been well served by the upsurge of writing about Australian Catholic history over the last 30 years or so which has concentrated on national, regional, local and biographical issues, looking at more or less self-contained, internal themes. The second category, Ireland and England as the principal human and cultural sources for colonial Catholicism in this country, has been less adequately dealt with, although there has been useful work done on Irish migration and transplanted Irish culture and on the English Benedictines in Australia.

Our understanding of the Roman factor as the third level of influence on the Australian Church is slight. Because this factor was at least as important as the other two and because it has not attracted the attention of historians of religion it deserves, this thesis addresses itself to the deficiency and seeks to

contribute to filling in a gap in Australian historiography: the formulation of papal policy towards the Catholic missions in colonial times.

I investigate how Catholicism in Australia fitted into the wider, international Catholic scene, how the evolution of the Australian Church was shaped by developments in its European heartland from where it sprang and was sustained during its infancy. Australian Catholicism grew up in a century that saw a shift in the polity of the Catholic Church generally, involving a new understanding of the exercise of authority. There was an increasing centralization on Rome. The Church in Australia was drawn centripetally into the ultramontane vortex and was totally dependent on Rome as the locus of power and decision-making in all but minor local matters (and sometimes even there, too). The earliest decisions about administrative arrangements for the pastoral care of Catholics transported to the penal colony of New South Wales were made by officials at the papal court and their successors throughout the nineteenth century retained control over all subsequent significant developments.

John Molony in his *The Roman Mould of the Australian Catholic Church* (1969) showed how the embryonic Australian Catholic consciousness was thoroughly Romanized by its sympathy for Pope Pius IX in his struggles with European liberalism and Italian nationalism and by the advance of the ultramontane mentality through the Church at large. He argued that, among the Irish Australian bishops, Romanism was more significant in the long run than the Hibernian factor. The question that this thesis examines is different from Molony's focus. I analyse the processes of decision-making that were carried on at Rome itself and their dynamic interplay with developments in Australia. To put the distinction between Molony's concern and mine simply: his concern was Australian attitudes towards Rome whereas I am interested in Roman attitudes towards Australia. Of course, there was a dynamic connection between these two levels in that the Romanization of the

outlook of Australian Catholics made them receptive to Roman direction. At the same time, I provide evidence to support the counter-thesis of Patrick O'Farrell in his *The Catholic Church and Community in Australia: A History* (1977) that the Hibernianism of Irish bishops in Australia was well to the foreground in their thinking and drew them into severe criticisms, at least in private, of Roman policy when it contradicted their goals.

The purpose of this work is to describe and explain how Roman centralism operated in the ecclesiastical government of Australia. Knowledge of this phenomenon is required if we are to better understand the historical development and social influence of the Australian branch of centralized and sometimes authoritarian institution like the modern Catholic Church with its concentration of decision-making operations in the topmost level of government.

Historians working in Australian Catholic studies are, of course, aware of the chain of command that existed within the Church but have tended to assume it as background rather than to examine it as an issue in its own right. Many previous studies have referred to Roman intervention in Australian affairs, but usually only in passing. A few have looked at particular episodes in some detail, such as Margaret Pawsey's *The Demon of Discord* (1982) on Patrick Dunne's appeal to Rome in 1858 against his bishop, James Goold of Melbourne, and Mary Shanahan's *Out of Time, Out of Place* (1970) on Rome's recall of Archbishop Polding's Vicar General, Henry Gregory, in 1860. We also have Ralph Wiltgen's magisterial *The Foundation of the Roman Catholic Church in Oceania 1825-1850* (1979) on the establishment of ecclesiastical structures in the South-west Pacific and Australia. My aim is to provide a systematic account of the formulation of Roman attitudes, policies and decisions towards the Catholic community in Australia over an extended period of time.

As a study in the relationship between the centre and the periphery in nineteenth-century Catholic history, my thesis will not be concerned with all types of Roman decisions about Australia in the same proportion in which they were actually made. Such an exercise would be tedious because the bulk of these decisions was about relatively routine and mundane matters. Instead, I elucidate my question by looking at the role papal authority played when *conflict* occurred among Australia's Catholics. Conflict throws authority into sharp relief and poses challenges to styles of government and the creation of policies. It makes people acutely conscious of where power is located and makes them desirous of acquiring the support of authority figures. It is important to keep in mind that a major role of the Roman Church within the Catholic community, then as now, was to function as a court of appeal. A remarkably disputatious people, Australian Catholics availed themselves freely of this court in the nineteenth century. In a frontier society there was wide scope for disagreement because the structures, character and identity of the national Church were still being formed.

This thesis investigates a number of disputes that broke out among colonial Catholics and were sufficiently serious to be appealed to Rome. Originally, I planned to deal with the entire Australian Church during practically the whole of the Benedictine period, from Archbishop Polding's appointment as Vicar Apostolic of New Holland in 1834 to the death of Archbishop Vaughan, in 1883. However, it proved impossible to press this immense topic into the confines of a doctoral thesis. A series of geographical and chronological modifications has reduced the scope to the relationship between Rome and the Archdiocese of Sydney from 1842 until 1874 although, since the Archbishop of Sydney was the leading churchman as Metropolitan of the Australian Province in that period, wider issues and other dioceses also enter the picture. The year 1842 is significant because it saw the foundation of the regular Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy in Australia. Before that year

Rome's role was largely one of establishing administrative structures, which topic has already been fully treated in Dr. Wiltgen's study referred to earlier and in Dr. Ian Burns' canon law thesis, 'The Foundation of the Hierarchy in Australia 1804-1854' (1954). 1874 provides a convenient cut-off point because it was the year both of Polding's retirement from public life and the termination of the metropolitan monopoly of Sydney with the creation of a new province centred on Melbourne. The focus of my study is the business dealings that conflict required Archbishop Polding to enter into with the Roman authorities. Several kinds of conflict were involved, but principally the titanic clash between, on the one hand, Polding's idealistic vision of a cosmopolitan Church formed by monastic culture and, on the other, Irish pragmatism and nationalism.

Within the papal curia decision-making about Australia was located in a bureau known as the Sacred Congregation *de Propaganda Fide*, one of a series of congregations whose function it was to advise the Pope on the various areas of the life of the Church, more or less equivalent to the ministries in a modern secular government. The Congregation was responsible for co-ordinating the Catholic missionary effort and for supervising the churches in those countries where ordinary ecclesiastical structures were not yet in existence or only in their infancy. Officially classified as a mission territory, Australia was under the jurisdiction of this organization throughout the period covered by this thesis. The Congregation was equipped with extensive powers. All Australian Catholics were literally at the mercy of this organization, from the meanest Irish convict to His Grace the Archbishop Metropolitan himself, as the latter was to be reminded repeatedly to his chagrin. This thesis is basically an investigation into decision-making about the Australian Church within the Congregation *de Propaganda Fide*.

Because the Congregation was essentially a bureaucratic institution, a sub-theme will be how bureaucracies behave in concrete historical contexts. On the

ecclesiastical plane, Australia's Catholics were in a kind of metropolitan-colonial relationship with Rome parallel to that of Australian colonial societies generally on the civil plane with London. At the ecclesiastical no less than at the civil levels, that relationship was expressed through subordination to administrative machinery and control.

I have also tried to throw light on the men who comprised the staff of the Congregation and who were responsible for making decisions about the shape and future of the Australian Church. The *Propaganda* cardinals during the period covered by this study were all Europeans, most of them Italians, and many of them members of aristocratic families, such as the Altieri, Barberini, Patrizi and Riario-Sforza. The officials, all of them Italians, are often shadowy figures (in true bureaucratic fashion), the more so the lower the position they occupied on the administrative ladder. The most important of them was Cardinal Alessandro Barnabò, the head of the Congregation for most of the period covered by this thesis. His death in 1874 is another reason for making that year the terminus of this study. Unfortunately there is no biography of this influential nineteenth-century churchman who was a member of Pope Pius IX's inner circle of friends and confidants, second in favour only to the Secretary of State, Cardinal Giacomo Antonelli. Barnabò was probably the single most significant individual determiner of papal policy towards the Australian missions and Polding's tortured relationship with him is a major connecting theme in my thesis. I also show how Pius IX himself was involved directly in the affairs of Australia.

The raw material for this study is correspondence between the Congregation *de Propaganda Fide* and Polding and other Australian bishops, priests, religious and lay people and others in England, Ireland and Europe who were concerned with Australian matters. The key repository is the vast but as yet virtually unquarried archive in Rome of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, as the Congregation *de Propaganda Fide* is now

called. Part of this collection, the incoming letters up to 1878, is on microfilm in the National Library of Australia in Canberra and the Mitchell Library in Sydney.

The Irish and English parties in Australia and their supporters in Ireland and England lobbied the Congregation through the Irish and English Colleges in Rome. The archive of the Irish College contains a large collection of material, mainly letters from Cullenite Australian bishops to the Rector, Tobias Kirby. The Benedictine monastery of San Paolo fuori le Mura has the papers of Bernard Smith who was Polding's main Roman agent. The archives of the Roman generalates of religious orders active in Australia in the nineteenth century have also supplied useful information, the Benedictines, Augustinians, Passionists, Marists and Christian Brothers. The Secret Vatican Archive holds official documentation relating to the establishment of dioceses and the appointment of bishops in Australia.

English and Irish ecclesiastics also participated in debates about Australia and there are important records in dioceses, seminaries and religious houses in Britain and Ireland, the dioceses of Westminster, Birmingham, Cardiff, Dublin and Cashel, Downside Abbey near Bath and All Hallows' College and the Religious Sisters of Charity and the Franciscan Friars in Dublin. There is a small quantity of material in the Public Record Office, London.

In Australia the richest sources are the archives of dioceses founded before 1874, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Perth, Maitland, Bathurst and Armidale. Other useful collections are the archives of the Benedictine Abbey of New Norcia and of the Good Samaritan Sisters and Sisters of Charity in Sydney, the Mitchell Library, Sydney, the library of St. Patrick's College, Manly, and the manuscript collection at the National Library, Canberra.