

The Influence of Ecclesiastical and Community Cultures on the
Development of Catholic Education in Western Australia, 1846-1890.

by

Eugene McKenna B.A. (Honours)

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Murdoch University, 2005.

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not been previously submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

E. McKenna.....

Eugene McKenna

Use of Thesis

This copy is the property of Murdoch University. However, the literary rights of the author must also be respected. If any passage from this thesis is quoted or closely paraphrased in a paper or written work prepared by the user, the source of the passage must be acknowledged in the work. If the user desires to publish a paper or written work containing passages copied or closely paraphrased from this thesis, which passages would in total constitute an infringing copy for the purpose of the Copyright Act, he or she must first obtain the written permission of the author to do so.

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abbreviations.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: Colonial Catholic Education: Historical Background 1829–C.1890.....	10
Chapter Two: Historiography	34
Chapter Three: The Birth of the Catholic Education System: A Multicultural Ecclesiastical Genesis.....	56
Chapter Four: 1852-1859: An Abbey Diocese: Joseph Mary Benedict Serra: Benedictine Priest and Spanish Bishop	130
Chapter Five: 1860-1890: ‘The Faith of Ireland and the Gospel of Erin’: Matthew Gibney, an Ultramontane’s Ultramontane.....	189
Conclusion	275
Bibliography.....	284

ABSTRACT

Historians have generally tended to represent the pioneering Catholic mission in Western Australia as an homogenous ecclesiastical entity with little cultural diversity. With a few notable exceptions the nature of the Western Australian colonial Catholic mission is portrayed as a 'hibernised' form of Catholicism with an Irish clergy taking care of the pastoral needs of a predominantly working class Irish Catholic constituency. This thesis challenges the traditional paradigm as restrictive, and argues that it ignores significant contextual influences and veils the wider cultural tapestry in which the Western Australian pioneering Catholic mission proceeded.

The traditional analysis of the internal dynamics of the Catholic mission implies that there was a beneficial, almost symbiotic relationship between sympathetic bishops and their 'valiant helpers.' Internal conflicts concerning administrative issues have been represented as little more than mere personality clashes.

The thesis takes a more critical contextual approach and argues that the manifestation of internal dissension during this period can only be fully explained by taking account of external influences rather than local conditions. These influences include both Gallican and Ultramontane ecclesiastical perspectives as well as the individual community cultures that were transported from Europe to the Perth diocese by missionary personnel

This new perspective corrects the more traditional approach which overlooked the different ecclesiastical approaches, orientations and community cultures that were represented within the colonial Catholic mission. This expansion of the existing interpretative paradigm through which historians view the West Australian Catholic mission in general and the development of the school system in particular marks a significant shift in the existing historiography. As a consequence, scholars will in future take a more critical approach to the study of not only the Catholic education system but also the Western Australian Catholic mission in general. Rather than representing the definitive closing chapter it is intended that this work will invigorate renewed historical interest in the development of the Australian Catholic mission.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Rowan Strong, Senior Lecturer in Church History, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Murdoch University for his patient supervision and guidance throughout the preparation of this thesis.

Thanks also to a number of archivists and librarians who facilitated my research, including staff at the Batty Library and the Western Australian State Archives in Perth, Sr Frances Stibi Catholic Archdiocesan Archives in Perth and David Sheehy in the Dublin Archdiocesan archives. Unfortunately I was refused access to the archives at All Hallows because no curator was employed by the college.

I express my gratitude for their support and advice to Professor Tom O' Donoghue, Graduate School of Education, University of Western Australia, Professor John Maguire, Curtin University, Professor Bob Reece, Murdoch University, Dr Patrick Bertola, Curtin University, and to my colleague Dr Ian Chambers for his invaluable technical assistance in putting the end product together. To Noelene and Padraigh for their generous hospitality and assistance during my research in Ireland. Finally to my wife, Nuala, and sons Conor, (who repeatedly dropped all and came to my assistance when I thought everything was literally lost) Eoghan, Emmett and Sean thank you for your assistance and forbearance.

Abbreviations

W.A.C.R.

West Australian Catholic Record.

The Inquirer

The Inquirer: A Western Australian Journal of Politics and Literature, and from 1855, The Inquirer and Commercial News.

Blue Book

Blue Books compiled from official returns in the Colonial Secretary's Office.