

# CARDINAL PATRICK MORAN AND SOCIAL WELFARE

*A Snapshot 1884 – 1911*

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**I**N ALL CULTURES in the history of humankind religion and government of the people have been intertwined in numerous ways. This is certainly true of the Christian Church throughout the world in the various cultural settings in which it was established. Historically Church and State have interacted particularly in the area of social welfare.

We know from the Book of Acts that very early in its history Christianity was involved in social welfare work, initially focusing on widows and orphans. This concern was central to the Jewish tradition out of which Christianity emerged and Jesus Christ developed it further with his basic commandment of ‘love of neighbour as one’s self’ as well as his strong personal identity with ‘the Other’ in his life, ‘inasmuch as you did it to one of these the least of my brethren, you did it to me.’ This was reinforced in the touching account of final judgment in the Gospel of Matthew (ch. 25 vv 31-40) which includes Jesus, the Son of Man, declaring:

Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world: For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me; sick and you visited me; in prison and you came to see me.

The narrative goes on: ‘Then the virtuous will say to him in reply: ‘Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and made you welcome; naked and clothe you; sick or imprison and go to see you?’” And the re-

sponse comes: ‘I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.’

This was the underpinning of the social welfare policies of the Church up to the Reformation and continued in the Catholic tradition as well as the other Christian denominations which emerged from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and was consequently basic to the founding social welfare history of Australia. Cardinal Patrick Francis Moran embraced this tradition strongly as is evident in his leadership as a newly appointed bishop in Ireland and later in Australia.

## *Irish Beginnings*

Moran was a brilliant student, educated at the Irish College in Rome and ordained priest in 1853. After serving at his Alma Mater in Rome he returned to Ireland in 1866 where he was secretary to Archbishop Cullen until appointed coadjutor-bishop of the Diocese of Ossory in March 1872.<sup>1</sup> During his first weeks in office as coadjutor-bishop Moran supervised in Kilkenny the foundation of a refuge for women being driven to prostitution through poverty, and established an industrial school for neglected children.<sup>2</sup>

After the death of the incumbent bishop of Ossory in August 1872, only five months after his appointment as a coadjutor, Moran succeeded to the See of Ossory. With enhanced authority, among many other things, he turned his attention to considering ways of improving the condition of the Kilkenny workhouse; particularly he was concerned for the welfare of the children there. Having heard that the

Limerick workhouse had been turned from a hell to a heaven by the introduction of nuns, he arranged for a group of nuns to take charge of the Kilkenny work house residing there as nurses and schoolteachers.<sup>3</sup>

By 1873 Moran had visited every parish in his diocese and in September of that year the new industrial school for poor and neglected children was ready for occupation. It offered basic education and training in work skills and was funded by local contributions which Moran had managed to solicit. Running costs for such schools were only partly offset by capitation grants from the government.<sup>4</sup>

This strong response to and ongoing concern for the social welfare needs of his diocese in Ireland was to inform Moran's leadership in Australia when he was appointed Archbishop of Sydney on 25 January 1884 arriving there on 8 September that year. In 1885 he was summoned to Rome with the expectation of being asked to take the See of Dublin, about which he was not enthusiastic, instead, however, he was appointed a Cardinal. According to Tony Cahill: 'Far from a consolation prize, this was both a confirmation of Moran's high standing in Rome and an affirmation of (Pope) Leo XIII's belief in the importance of the new worlds.'<sup>5</sup>

### *Australian Mission*

Moran was also appointed the Pope's representative in Australia. Rome had wanted a plenary council to be held in Australia since the 1870s in order to consolidate the widespread structure of the Church across the various states. Moran moved on this and before his death in 1911 had presided over three plenary councils. Cahill comments: 'Moran acted skillfully and decisively and the three councils in a period of economic development and vital political change laid the foundations of the national (Catholic) Church in the twentieth century.' This provided the foundation for the Australian Catholic Church's extensive social welfare service to Australian society.<sup>6</sup>

As is well known the Australian colonies



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had a long history of sectarian conflict before Moran's arrival. Moran's Irish experience of the proselytising of Catholic children by Protestant agencies made him deeply distrustful of the policies of other Christian denominations in the educational and welfare areas. In the 1880s he rejected offers from the Anglican Bishop Barry to cooperate for common Christian objectives, and he also resisted pressure from the governor Lord Carrington, who made similar suggestions. Both of these men had liberal leanings and Barry was strongly evangelical.<sup>7</sup>

The historian Stuart Piggin in his meticulously researched book *Spirit, Word and World, Evangelical Christianity in Australia*, commented that 'though the evangelicals were in possession of God's instrument to restore a broken world' it was not so much them as the liberals 'who were confident in the middle years of the nineteenth century that they would inherit the earth.' Piggin goes on to explain:

The liberal ideal was one of religious and political liberty for all, based on a capitalist economy and an educated population, united in a common citizenship with a representative government in a beneficent state. For the most part, evangelicals responded to this strategy to reform society by identifying with it. Evangelicals made good capitalists and liberals. Liberals, capitalists and evangelicals shared the same core values: frugality, moderation, sobriety and hard work. They tended to identify the same enemies: intemperance, sloth and Catholicism in both its Roman and Anglican forms.

Piggin points out that Liberals, however,

objected strongly to the factionalisation of the Christians. To the liberals sectarianism was the bane of progress and the liberals opposed its intrusion into the political and social realms, especially the realm of education. But, as Piggan observes, ‘even here the liberals were more opposed to Anglo Catholics and Roman Catholics than to Protestants.’ He also notes that ‘in the colonies, liberals who decried sectarianism were not above using it for political advantage.’<sup>8</sup>

### *Religion Bulwark of Civilisation*

Religion certainly played a significant part in Moran’s social welfare philosophy. Moran saw religion to be central to the welfare of the human person and the bulwark of civilization. This conviction is repeated again and again in various guises in his letters and diary as well as his public addresses. A powerful perception of the importance of religion in the humanising of a community of persons is evident in Moran’s homily on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of MM Clare Dunphy, a founding pioneer of the Sisters of Mercy, Parramatta, who had worked in the Killkenny Workhouse in Ireland. Moran recalled the horror of the workhouse before the Sisters moved in. He said: ‘I was struck with amazement and anguish at seeing the terrible conditions of the poor people huddled together without a single spark of religion to cheer, to console or to comfort.’<sup>9</sup>

For Moran the Catholic Christian religious tradition was warm, reassuring and encouraging, bringing with it, too, the supportive doctrine of the Communion of Saints, which taught that those who had died and those who were still pilgrims on earth are united in love and can support one another in prayer. From Moran’s perspective, for Catholic children to be deprived of their religious inheritance was to be deplored as much as their being deprived of food, drink and shelter. This attitude was found also in the wider Catholic community as shown by a Mrs Power who presented a paper on ‘Boarded-Out Children’ at the 1904

Australasian Catholic Congress in Melbourne. She deplored the case of a Protestant foster-parent adopting a Catholic baby and having the claim confirmed by a judge. Mrs Power protested: ‘The consideration of the few shillings saved by the Department would not justify the violation of a great principle. Nor should the affection of the person desirous of adopting the child be a reason for depriving the child of the only heritage left to it by its parents—the Catholic Faith.’<sup>10</sup>

### *Church and State*

Moran was strongly supportive of the separation of church and state. Although he had had first hand experience in Italy of democratic revolutions out of control and anti-clerical socialism in Europe, he was very much aware of the past tragedies resulting from the too close alliance between Church and State. In his inaugural discourse at the 1900 Australasian Catholic Congress, as he reflected upon the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he observed:

And now were you to ask what great things in this century of ours have been achieved by Holy Church in her dealings with the statesmen and civil powers of this world, I would without hesitation reply that in most countries the Catholic Church has been freed from the trammels and fetters by which she has been held captive under State control in a sort of honourable bondage and which could not fail to impede in a thousand ways the free and beneficial exercise of her divine mission. This of itself would suffice as a record of success and should be regarded as a happy achievement.....<sup>11</sup>

Also among the achievements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century he included ‘a most remarkable and widespread manifestation of true Catholic charity ...’<sup>12</sup> Indeed, as can be seen from the NSW Statistical Registers, there was an enormous increase in the establishment and development of Catholic welfare institutions during Moran’s time of leadership in Australia.<sup>13</sup> The final report of the 1900 Australasian Catholic Congress stated:

The Social work of the (Catholic) Church in Australia is shown by its benevolent and charitable institutions, providing for every form of human suffering and misery *e.g.* hospitals for the sick, the convalescent, the consumptive and the dying; asylums for the aged and the poor; asylums for the insane; maternity hospitals, founding hospitals, houses of refuge, orphanages; industrial training schools for girls and boys; reformatory schools; institutions for the deaf, dumb and blind; the relief of the poor in their own home by the St Vincent de Paul Society; the visiting and reforming of the criminal classes in the jail.<sup>14</sup>

### *State Aid*

While Moran regarded separation of Church and State as mutually beneficial he was acutely aware that, among other things, they had joint responsibilities in social welfare matters. At the 1900 Congress he proposed the resolution: 'That Charitable Institutions promoted by the Catholic Church are justly entitled to the recognition and aid of the State; and that it is untrue to assert that Catholics would be opposed to the inspection of the government of any charitable institutions so assisted.'<sup>15</sup> This was to continue as a constant mantra for Moran as he opened and blessed one charitable institution after another. The Catholic Church was doing its part without discrimination against other religions, what was the State doing?

Stuart Piggan points out in his history of evangelicalism in Australia that the factionalism, which absorbed so much of the evangelical's attention, distracted them from giving adequate attention to the problems of 'the world'. In fact, this greatly bothered conscientious evangelicals such as the Rev. J. Kemp Bruce who made the following comments in his inaugural address as moderator at the forty-first Annual Session of the Presbyterian Assembly in 1906:

To me it is a very sad and very humbling thing that practically the whole of distinctively Church work done for the relief of poverty, helplessness and suffering should be in the hands of one Church. Verily she is wise in her genera-

tion. The appeal she makes to the age, wisely perhaps, is not to the intellectual, but to the sympathetic side of human nature. Her orphanages, her rescue work and her hospitals are at once her glory and her strength. So long as we leave to her a duty laid upon us by our Lord, so long must we expect to see her ranks recruited from Protestant men and women; to whose cries in childhood's helplessness and in mankind's suffering and degradation we, as a Church, have turned a deaf ear ... We are the losers because we have so largely forgotten the words: 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, even the least, ye did it to Me.'<sup>16</sup>

The Rev. J. Kemp Bruce's assertion that the Catholic Church was the main religious denominational provider of social welfare was supported by the statistical data published in the Freeman's Journal on 27 October 1910 concerning the growth of the Catholic Church in the Sydney Archdiocese from 1884 to 1910 during Moran's watch. From this it can be seen that the 100% increase in growth of schools and charitable institutions was enabled by an increase in religious sisters from 199 to 1300 and religious brothers from 78 to 220. These significantly provided the personnel for the many large Catholic orphanages which were established at this time when there was increasing criticism of the inadequacies of such large institutions and the trend was for the 'boarding-out' system. Moran, however, saw the religious congregations as ideally placed to provide for children in need, especially for their religious education.

The historian Patrick O'Farrell was not impressed with Moran's record and judged that 'lucid looking back on what had been done was rare indeed in Moran's days.' According to O'Farrell 'the tenor of the Australian church, as Moran left it in 1911 was one of mindless pragmatism.'<sup>17</sup> Philip Ayers in his study of Moran disagrees with this, pointing to the intellectual scope of the three Australasian Congresses of 1900, 1904 and 1909.<sup>18</sup>

### *The Congresses and Social Issues*

Certainly the very idea and projected intellec-

tual scope of the Australasian Catholic Congresses was daring and impressive, even if the end product was of uneven quality. It is also significant that the Congresses did not continue after the passing of Moran, whose original idea it was and who hosted the 1900 and 1909 ones, and of Archbishop Carr of Melbourne, who enthusiastically hosted the 1904 Congress. Indeed, Moran observed at the opening of the 1909 Congress in Sydney:

Nine years ago, the First Congress was held here. It was an untried and, perhaps, hazardous experiment, for our Australian Church was young, and had few of those resources to rely upon which are the strength of the Catholic Congresses in Germany and other countries. Nevertheless, it was pre-eminently successful. His Grace the Archbishop of Melbourne ... was pleased at a later period to declare that 'the results of that first Congress were manifest, prompt and far-reaching.'

Each of the Congresses highlighted social issues. The Social Questions section of the 1900 Congress ranged across such topics as intemperance, divorce, treatment of prisoners, benefit guilds, conditions of town life, and the tension between capital and labour. There is generally evident a sympathetic attitude rather than a judgmental one to those falling into a category needing the support of the wider society. An exemplary case is Judge Heydon in his paper titled 'How to deal with Our Criminals', where, after giving a detailed, insightful account of the various methods of dealing with criminals around the world, he finishes his paper:

The essence of Christianity is Charity, and the broad Christian answer (apparently vague, sentimental and unpractical, and yet really and truly going to the very root of the matter, and fruitful to the highest degree) which a Christian will make to the question 'How should we treat our criminals?' will be 'We must learn to love them.'<sup>19</sup>

The 1904 Congress had a separate section from that titled Social Questions which was headed 'Charitable Organisations'. While in this there was a specific paper titled 'Work of the

Good Shepherd Sisters in Australia' most of the papers focused on preventive measures to combat known social problems. Apart from the usual attention given to the matter of temperance, the accent was on preventive activities such as the care of seamen and the development young men's societies as well as boys' clubs and benefit societies. The St Vincent de Paul Society's many activities were also reported upon with special highlighting of the importance of libraries as a work of the Society.<sup>20</sup>

The 1909 Congress again featured two sections, one on Social Questions and the other on Religious and Charitable Organisations containing a paper titled 'Our Duty to the Catholic Deaf and Dumb' by the Dominican Sisters.<sup>21</sup> The Social Questions section addressed, among those issues usually considered such as temperance, two significant new ones: 'The problem of the Immigrant in Australia' and 'The Industrial and Social Condition of women in the Australian Commonwealth' which was discovered by the women historians Kay Daniels and Mary Murnane in the 1970s and included in a book of documents on women's history across the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup>

### *The Wider Church*

Moran was very conscious of the universal nature of the Catholic Church and took enormous interest in its activities throughout the world including its social welfare projects and particularly State and Church relations in various countries. He was eager to benefit from the experience of others. Apart from this broadness of vision, through his huge extended family (both his parents had had previous marriages) he had strong personal relations with many religious congregations, who would, if possible, cooperate in his missionary efforts in the New World. An important case was the Dominican Sisters from Cabra in Ireland whom he asked to take responsibility for the education of the blind, deaf and dumb Catholic children in Australia, encouraging them in their efforts to acquire the best professional training.<sup>23</sup>

It is clear that Moran presided over the development of many, diverse social welfare services that required leadership, personnel, infrastructure and ongoing support from the wider community. To this end Moran worked tirelessly for unity in the Church. He exhorted clergy and laity:

The title *Servus servorum Dei* assumed by the Sovereign Pontiff is not a mere empty name. The whole purpose of every rank of the sacred ministry from the highest to the lowest is one of service, to give Glory to God by bringing the blessings of Redemption within the reach of men. Thus as a matter of duty, the Priest must be united to his people. And the faithful should be united to their Priest ... He is their leader in the pilgrimage of life. The whole career of the Priest is inspired and quickened by the heroism of devoted charity in self-sacrifice for the people: it becomes their duty to make a return of devotedness and affection in his regard.<sup>24</sup>

Indeed the implementation of Moran's social welfare policies would have been impos-

sible without this unity. The leadership of Moran supported by that of the religious congregations could have achieved little without the generous cooperation of the Catholic laity and, indeed, numerous non-Catholics. The three elements of bishop, religious and laity provided the infrastructure, personnel and funding for the implementation of Moran's social welfare policies. Alas, however, without State support they proved inadequate to cope with the pressing demands on the Catholic welfare system. Throughout Moran's leadership the State stubbornly resisted even his most reasonable requests. Sectarianism and various conflicting views on both institutional child care and religious education muddied the discourse. Whatever their inadequacies in practice, however, there is no doubt that Moran's policies in the area of social welfare were wide ranging and pro-active and a challenge to the State and other Christian denominations.

## NOTES

1 'Patrick Francis Moran, 1830-1911', A.E. Cahill, *Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB)*, [Online], 1.

2 Philip Ayres, *Prince of the Church, Patrick Francis Moran, 1830-1911* (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2007), 66.

3 Ayres, *Moran*, 72.

4 Ayres, *Moran*, 79.

5 Cahill, *Moran, ADB*, 2.

6 Cahill, *Moran, ADB*, 2.

7 Cahill, *Moran, ADB*, 2.

8 Stuart Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World, Evangelical Christianity in Australia*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), 24.

9 Homily on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of M.M. Clare Dunphy, 24 September, 1901. (Archives, Convent of Mercy, Parramatta)

10 *Proceedings of the Australasian Catholic Congress*, Melbourne, 1904, 627.

11 *Proceedings of the First Australasian Catholic Congress*, Sydney, 1900, 9.

12 *Catholic Congress*, 1900, 11.

13 See NSW Statistical Registers 1889, 1894, 1899, 1905. Mitchell Library.

14 *Catholic Congress*, 1900, vi.

15 *Catholic Congress*, 1900, 10.

16 Philip Ayres, *Moran*, 254. The full text of Rev. J. Kemp Bruce's address was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 May, 1906 (NSW State Library).

17 Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community in Australian History*, (Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1985), 296.

18 Philip Ayres, *Moran*, 273.

19 *Congress*, 1900, 227.

20 *Congress*, 1904, 291.

21 *Congress*, 1909, 406.

22 *Congress*, 1909, 287, 295. Annie Golding's paper on 'The Industrial and Social Condition of Women in the Australian Commonwealth' was published in Kay Daniels and Mary Murnane, *Uphill All the Way, A Documentary History of Women in Australia* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1980).

23 M.R. MacGinley, *Ancient Tradition, New World: Dominican Sisters in Eastern Australia 1867-1958*, (Sydney: St Pauls Publications, 2009), 288.

24 Cardinal Moran, 'Inaugural Address', *Proceedings of the Australasian Catholic Congress*, 1909, Sydney.