

Chapter Two: The Political, Educational and Social Context: Sydney 1850-1872

To the Very Reverend, the Superior of the Petits Freres de Marie.

Very Rev. Dear Sir,

I have the honour, by the direction of His Grace the Archbishop of Sydney, to address you on the subject of the Primary Education of our Catholic children in this Archdiocese, with the view of obtaining if possible the co-operation of some of the subjects of your congregation. The Very Rev. Pere Poupinel, Visitor General of the Society of Marists here, has given the Archbishop hopes that you will be disposed to afford us the assistance we require, and has promised to do what may be in his power to second our application.

Perhaps it will be expedient that I should give you a brief account of our position. Until the beginning of last year our primary schools were under the direction of the Boards, one called the National Board, and one the Denominational Board. The latter was of course the Board which dispensed the money annually voted by the Government for our Catholic schools. We had the appointment and dismissal of teachers; we had our own books; and the whole arrangement and discipline of the school were in our hands. Inspection on the part of Government was made by Catholic inspectors.

That state of things no longer exists. An Act called "The Public Schools Act" came into operation in January last year, establishing schools which we cannot allow our Catholic children to frequent. This Act does not directly abolish our Denominational Schools, but it withdraws the direct appointment and dismissal of teachers from us, and worse still, it restricts religious instruction to one fixed hour in the day, and compels four hours to be spent in secular instruction *through their own books*. These books are the books provided for the so-called National Education in Ireland, and are of course, heretical by their defects when they speak of religion, even when they are not directly offensive by sneer and implication. Moreover, every favour is shown to the Public schools and teachers, and disfavour is shown to Denominational Schools and teachers. It is clear that our Denominational schools will disappear unless they are supported in entire or partial independence of Government.

This then is what we have to do, to make ourselves as soon as possible independent of Government aid, and the first thing to be done is to establish a Catholic training school for teachers. Our teachers must of course compare advantageously with the Public school teachers who have all the assistance and encouragement that Government may choose to give them. It is clear that we cannot depend, as we have hitherto done, upon secular teachers, who are not always what is desirable in character and attainments, and who besides have their grand defect that they are following a career for profit, and not fulfilling a vocation. What the Archbishop would desire then is, to have from your congregation, say, three Brothers to establish a training school for Catholic teachers.

It may not be possible to commence such training school at once, but he would place in their hands at once a large school, St. Benedict's, in a populous part of the city, and, after the lapse of some little time, a training school might be successfully initiated. St. Benedict's school would furnish a sufficient income, there is a Government salary and there are some fees from the children; and even were it necessary to forfeit the Government salary, it would be replaced by the Catholic Association formed to support our schools in case of necessity. The present income from St. Benedict's school is from Government, in teachers' salaries £124 and, in weekly fees from the children, about £100.

All the expenses of the voyage from Europe for the three Brothers, if you should think fit to send them, should be paid, and on their arrival, the rent of a house shall be provided until a house of their own

can be built, or bought for them. If they receive the Government salaries, they will have to pass a certain examination, of which I enclose the Government programme. It will be well also that they should be familiar with the method of what is called, in England, the Privy Council system. I have only to add, that every possible freedom shall be left to the Brothers for the internal management of their own house and for the increase of their own numbers. May I beg then, very Reverend Sir, that you would kindly consider the proposal, and if you can decide in our favour, that you would take immediate steps in prosecution of the plan. I have the honour to be:

(Sgd.) S.J. SHEEHY.
February 28th ¹

This formal letter by which Archbishop Polding invited the Marist Brothers to Sydney, written in 1868 by his Vicar General, Archpriest Sheehy, and asking the brothers to staff a Catholic primary school and, perhaps later, a teacher training college in the Archdiocese is, from the historian's point of view, an interesting and useful document, but hardly unique. There must have been scores of such letters written by members of the Australian Catholic hierarchy and even parish priests to the superiors of religious teaching congregations in Europe, and especially in Ireland, in the second half of the nineteenth century. The facts that this particular invitation was addressed to the Superior General of a congregation which was French in origin and almost entirely French-speaking in personnel and that it was seconded by Fr Poupinel, the local Regional Superior of another French-speaking order, the Marist Fathers, do make it somewhat more remarkable. The Sydney Archdiocese, at that time, was governed by a determinedly English Benedictine Archbishop and populated, again almost entirely, by working-class, English-speaking, Irish laity. These last two features require some expansion and explanation; but before attempting that, it is worthwhile reflecting on the more conventional aspects of the request.

Archpriest Sheehy makes it clear, in the early part of his letter, that Dr Polding's invitation arose out of his uneasiness about the implications of the recently implemented (1866) Public Schools Education Act. This Act, sponsored by Henry Parkes, had abolished the previous Dual Board system of elementary education in NSW and replaced it with a unified Council of Public Education, which was commissioned to extend and improve the network of non-Denominational or National Schools, and to increase the government's powers of supervision over the surviving Denominational Schools. As Fr Sheehy admits:

This Act does not directly abolish our Denominational Schools, but it withdraws the direct appointment and dismissal of teachers from us, and worse still, it restricts religious instruction to one fixed hour in the day, and compels four

¹ Scanned from the printed version of the letter published in Br Alban Doyle's *The Story of the Marist Brothers in Australia* (Sydney, 1972), Appendix 2, p. 626. In Br Alban's book this document and several others, cited in this chapter, are listed as being sourced in St Mary's Cathedral Archives which Br Alban had access to, with the permission of the, then, diocesan archivist, Monsignor McGovern. Despite the assistance of the present archivist, the writer has been unable to sight the originals and therefore quotes the Doyle reference, where appropriate. The version of Fr Sheehy's letter, printed here, is, of course, identical to the version in Br Alban's Appendix, except for the paragraphing and a very few minor changes in the capitalization and punctuation.

hours to be spent in secular instruction *through their own books*. These books are the books provided for the so-called National Education in Ireland and are, of course, heretical by their defects when they speak of religion, even when they are not directly offensive by sneer and implication. Moreover, every favour is shown to the Public schools and teachers and disfavour is shown to Denominational schools and teachers. It is clear that our Denominational schools will disappear unless they are supported in entire or partial independence of Government.

This extract summarises approximately the position that the Catholic hierarchy of NSW had reached vis-à-vis the developing National System of elementary education in that colony, by the end of the 1860s. How they had reached this position is a complex story, the full detail of which need not concern us here. It was amply and fairly recounted by Br Ronald Fogarty, long ago, in his definitive history of Catholic Education.² And the political ramifications of the division between the hierarchy's position and that of the leading Catholic laity, which is also relevant to our present concerns, has likewise been clearly narrated in two chapters of Professor Patrick O'Farrell's equally definitive work.³ All that is proposed here, is to summarise the attitudinal and political developments in these traditional accounts and to nuance them slightly by introducing some more recent Marist and revisionist material.⁴

In summary, therefore, if Fr Sheehy's letter sounds, to modern ears, sectarian, negative and reactionary, it must be remembered that when Australia was founded there was no concept, at least in England, of a state role in the provision of elementary education. This was regarded as the responsibility and, indeed, the prerogative of the Established Church, private venture schools, and such charitable institutions as might reach out to orphans or other neglected children. This was the pattern, then, which took root in Australia, with the earliest schools being founded by the colony's first chaplain, the Reverend Richard Johnson and Governor King's establishing of the female orphan school at Parramatta. In 1825, after the Bigge Commission's report, the Church and School Corporation was set up to finance the building of churches and schools and - especially after the English Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 - the Australian Catholic clergy had some access to these funds. However, education was still seen as a matter for private or church provision, not a responsibility of the state. It was not until the Church and Schools Corporation's charter was revoked in 1833 and Governor Bourke proposed

² Br Ronald Fogarty, *Catholic Education in Australia 1806-1950*. (Melbourne, 1959). This doctoral thesis, when published in book form, was widely accepted as being definitive. Dr K.J. Cable, in his review had some queries about Br Ronald's understanding of the Anglican position on education, prior to 1880. In the discussion which follows, however, Cable's views have been taken into account via secondary references such as the articles by P.D.Davis and D.Morris in C.Turney's *Pioneers of Australian Education* Vol. I. (Sydney, 1969).

³Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History* (Sydney,1992) pp. 151-152 &160-161.The two preceding paragraphs and, indeed, most of this chapter are heavily indebted to Professor O'Farrell's account in Chapter Three of his work. However, this established background has been adapted, and re-focussed, towards the Marist Brothers' arrival by other, and later accounts.

⁴ e.g. John Hosie, *Challenge: The Marists in Colonial Australia*. (Sydney, 1987); Donal Kerr, *Jean Claude Colin: Marist* (Dublin, 2000) and Bruce Smith's article on W. Wilkins in Theobald & Selleck (eds.) *Family, School & State in Australian History*. (Sydney, 1990).

the Irish National System, in its place, that the words ‘national’ and ‘education’ were linked in Australia.

Although it won tentative acceptance from the Catholic clergy – Bishop Polding, his Vicar General, Dr Ullathorne, and his eventual ‘Director of Schools,’⁵ Fr McEncroe all gave their initial support – and even more enthusiastic acceptance from some of the leading Catholic laymen in Sydney, Bourke’s National System was blocked by an alliance between the Anglican, Bishop Broughton, and some of the Non-conformist clergy. The government therefore continued to fund the Church-sponsored, or Denominational schools, despite their increasingly obvious inadequacies, until 1848. Then Governor Fitzroy set up two Boards: one to establish and control National Schools; the other, on which the various churches were represented, to supervise the continuing Denominational Schools. An earlier, second, attempt to introduce the Irish National System under Governor Gipps, in 1844, had failed, again due to clerical opposition and, on that occasion, the Catholic clergy were part of the opposition. Some leading Catholic laymen, however, with many of whom Fr McEncroe remained on good terms, were unhappy about the poor condition of the Denominational Schools and continued to publicly favour the National School concept.

Fr McEncroe’s change of heart as regards the Irish National system was based on the experience in the working of the system of the Irish Bishops, with whom he was in contact and, from the mid eighteen-forties onwards, he campaigned for a denominational system which the government would fund, but the churches could control. Yet neither he nor Polding were ignorant of the crucial weakness in the denominational schools – the scarcity of well-trained and reliable teachers. As early as 1840, Polding was openly admitting ‘Our schools are in a very low state’⁶ and by 1861 he would be asking the Legislative Council to increase the grants to the Denominational Schools Board for the establishment of a Catholic Model and Training School for Masters:

It is comparatively easy to obtain men possessed of sufficient knowledge. The grand difficulty lies in finding them endowed with desirable manner, and practised in successful methods of teaching ... The only remedy is obviously a systematic and lengthened training of teachers in their special work. This training, intended to form the Teachers to the requisite habits and enable them to apply intelligently the sound theories they are taught can only be given in such establishments as that for which I now solicit your support.⁷

To overcome this weakness, Polding had earlier tried to import from Britain, suitable lay teachers, like W.A. Duncan, who taught for less than a year (1839) at the Catholic school in Parramatta, later taken over by the Marist Brothers; but the government subsidies were too low and the Catholic community too poor, to pay salaries that would retain people of Duncan’s calibre. At the urging of Ullathorne and McEncroe the Archbishop had also

⁵ Delia Birchley, *John McEncroe: Colonial Democrat*. (Melbourne, 1986) p. 119.

⁶ O’Farrell, *op.cit* p. 139.

⁷ DSB Report (for 1860). Appendix C. p. 6. *Journal of the Legislative Council of NSW*. Vol.VIII 1861-62. p. 198.

invited the founder of the Irish Christian Brothers, Edmund Rice, to send some of his teachers to Sydney. His first invitation was refused by the superiors in Ireland; but with Vatican support, a second application was more successful and in 1843 three Irish brothers arrived and were installed in three separate city schools.

Unfortunately Polding, who was a saintly, zealous and compassionate pastor, but a woeful administrator, quickly managed to alienate the Christian Brothers by his clumsy attempts to incorporate them in his vision of a fully Benedictine-controlled, New South Wales diocese. The three pioneer Irish brothers returned home in 1847 and their Superiors in Ireland refused all further invitations to Sydney, so long as Dr Polding was in charge. Both Fogarty and O'Farrell were well aware of Archbishop Polding's Benedictine dream and its impact on Catholic boys' education in Sydney. As Br Ronald remarked:

The Irish Christian Brothers, who should have been the logical educators of Australian Catholics, the vast majority of whom were of Irish stock, did not return to Australia until 1868; even then they would not return to Sydney, while a Benedictine occupied the see.⁸

Both historians were also aware, to some extent, of the roles of Fr McEncroe and the Marist Fathers, respectively, in securing the services of the Marist Brothers for Sydney; but John Hosie's later publication of the early history of the Marist Fathers in Australia⁹ and the even more recent biography of the Marist Fathers' founder, Jean Claude Colin have shed further light on this anomalous invitation to the French brothers.¹⁰

The Irish Christian Brothers were not the only congregation whose first attempt at a foundation in Australia was de-railed by the Archbishop's romantic, but anachronistic, Benedictine 'dream'. A group of four Italian Passionist priests who attempted a mission to the Aborigines on Stradbroke Island also gave up, partly because of the sheer difficulty of the work; but partly, also, due also to Polding's lack of sympathy and support. Similarly, a group of Irish Sisters of Charity de-camped to Bishop Willson's jurisdiction in Tasmania when the Archbishop's deputy, Abbot Gregory, started maneuvering their local recruits in the direction of a more Benedictine-style congregational life. In fact, the only non-Benedictine Religious Order to survive, in its own right, in Sydney, prior to 1872 was the Marist Fathers and their survival was due only to firm support from their Superior General, in Rome, and to the transient purpose of their local establishment.

The Marist Fathers were unofficially founded in the French dioceses of Lyon and Belley in 1830, somewhat in imitation of the Jesuits - who had been suppressed in Western Europe prior to the Revolution - with a view to undertaking parish missions and running secondary schools in Restoration France. The original intention of the group of seminarians who committed themselves to the project in 1816 had been to found a combined order which would have priests, brothers, nuns and lay associates, under the one Superior General; and in 1817 the brothers' group was established, followed by the

⁸ Fogarty, *op.cit.* Vol. I p. 246.

⁹ Hosie, J. *Challenge: The Marists in Colonial Australia* (Sydney, 1987).

¹⁰ Donal Kerr, *Jean Claude Colin: Marist* (Dublin, 2000).

sisters' group in 1823. However, when the principal founder and first Superior General of the fathers, Jean Claude Colin, finalised the Rules and went to Rome for approval in 1833, the Vatican refused point blank to countenance such an 'extraordinary idea.'¹¹ The Pope, Gregory XVI, did eventually, in 1836, approve the priests' group alone – leaving the brothers and sisters, for the time being, as simple and separate diocesan organizations - and only then on condition that the priests accept a missionary vicariate in Oceania. Rome, at that time, was concerned about the spread of Protestant missionary activity in the Pacific, and the traditional Catholic missionary orders were already fully committed.

It was this mission which brought the Marist Fathers to Sydney in 1845, where they sought Archbishop Polding's permission to set up a forward communications and supply base - known as a 'procure house' - to support their developing mission stations in the islands.¹² Initially, Dr Polding made them very welcome and gave the first arrivals accommodation in his monastery at St Mary's; but he soon set about trying to bring them under his direct control and actively resisted their first efforts to acquire a property of their own, on which to establish the proposed procure house. A meeting between the Archbishop and Fr Colin SM in Rome, in early 1847, failed to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of either; but by the time Dr Polding returned to Sydney in 1848, the Marists had established their base, which they called Villa Maria, on the banks of Tarban Creek, at Hunter's Hill. Relations between the Archbishop and the Marists remained cool, and it was not until after a second, equally unsuccessful meeting in Rome in 1854 that Polding's attitude softened and he entrusted them with the care of the Ryde parish, to which Villa Maria was adjacent, in 1856.

Through all the turmoil of their relations with the Archbishop, the Marists' 'sole protector'¹³ in Sydney, had been the leading figure among the non-Benedictine and largely Irish 'secular' priests of the diocese, Archdeacon McEncroe.¹⁴ The latter, though Irish by birth, was one of that first generation of priests educated at Maynooth seminary, when the faculty was still French-trained, so his spiritual formation was probably at least sympathetic, if not similar, to that of the Marists. At any rate, he had acted as trustee for the Marists, when they acquired the property at Hunter's Hill and he regularly recommended any of the Irish-Australian secular clergy,¹⁵ who were in need of it, to visit Villa Maria for confession, retreats and religious counselling. In 1859, after he was commissioned – without Polding's consent - by the newly elected fellows of St John's College at Sydney University to visit Europe, to find a suitable rector, McEncroe took the opportunity to approach the Marist Fathers' General House, in Rome, for some teaching priests who could start a secondary school in Sydney and,

¹¹ Kerr, *op.cit.* pp. 259-290.

¹² Hosie, *op.cit.* pp. 34ff.

¹³ *ibid.* p. 70.

¹⁴ While Fr McEncroe lived in the monastery and was on the Cathedral 'staff' he held this title of Archdeacon, but it was already becoming obsolete in Catholic circles. When he moved to St Patrick's presbytery, he was almost always referred to as Fr McEncroe.

¹⁵ Secular clergy are priests who do not belong to a Religious Order such as the Jesuits, Marists, Benedictines, or Franciscans and who are directly answerable to their diocesan bishop. Religious Order priests, while they need the permission of the local bishop to work in his diocese, answer principally to their Provincial Superior, who can move them freely from one diocese to another.

perhaps,¹⁶ also for a community of Marist Brothers, for the primary schools. In both attempts he was unsuccessful. The Marist Fathers were agreeable; but Archbishop Polding refused permission for a college - which would have been in competition with his own, Benedictine-controlled, Lyndhurst Academy. The Marist Brothers had no suitable personnel then available. He did, however, bring back some Irish Sisters of Mercy from Liverpool, in England, who soon opened Catholic girls' schools in Sydney.

When Fr McEncroe returned to Sydney in 1860, his own relationship with the archbishop had sunk to rather a low ebb and he moved out of the monastery at St Mary's and into the presbytery of St Patrick's, Church Hill. During his absence overseas, Abbot Gregory, Dr Polding's Vicar General and confidant, had been recalled to Europe and the Archbishop held both McEncroe and the outspoken lay critics who rallied around the paper that McEncroe had founded – *The Freeman's Journal* – at least partly responsible for the loss of his close friend and protégé. After a few months, however, the archbishop rallied and as the debate over National, versus Denominational, Schools heated up, during the mid-sixties, McEncroe, in his capacity as Director of Schools, was summoned once more to the fray, despite his advancing years. He led several deputations to Parkes, with whom he was on quite good personal terms, and in the immediate lead up to the 1866 Bill, when Archbishop Polding was again overseas, he addressed protest meetings of clergy and laity at St Mary's Cathedral and at St Patrick's. Being a man of quite liberal principles and balanced judgement, however, when the Bill became law, he announced in *The Freeman's Journal*, that the Catholic population would give Parkes' measure a year's grace before declaring a verdict.¹⁷

In this Catholic anti-Bill campaign one of the leading, more conservative Catholic supporters of National Education, J.H. Plunkett, had changed sides and joined McEncroe in opposing Parkes' measure, as did Roger Therry, although the latter was, by then, retired and living in England. A number of the more liberal lay-Catholic leaders and politicians, however, people such as Duncan, Dalley and Hawksley remained hostile to Denominational Schools. Moreover, the largely lay Association for the Promotion of Religion and Education, which had been set up after McEncroe's 'year of grace' expired, in November 1867, failed to attract sufficient financial support for the Catholic Denominational Schools and folded within a few years. The search for teaching Religious was redoubled and Fr Sheehy's letter to the Marist Brothers' Superior General, with which this chapter began, was dispatched in February 1868 and seconded, perhaps at Fr McEncroe's suggestion, by the local Superior of the Marist Fathers, Fr Poupinel. The old Archdeacon's health was, by then, failing and he died in August of that year; but before passing away, he took two further steps which reinforced the invitation to the Marist Brothers. He secured a promise from Archbishop Polding that St Patrick's church and presbytery would be entrusted to the Marist Fathers and, in his will, he left a bequest to pay the passage money and first year's stipend of a group of 'Marist Brothers or any

¹⁶ The evidence for this is confused and confusing, based on references in letters by (contemporary) third parties rather than on anything from McEncroe or in the Marist Brothers' archives.

¹⁷ Birchley, *op.cit.* p. 240.

other religious teachers who will undertake the care and direction of boys' schools and a preparatory school for teachers.'¹⁸

It is worth drawing attention to the fact that in Fr Sheehy's invitation, in Fr McEncroe's will and, indeed, in the Rules and Regulations of the 1867 Catholic Education Association, the function for which the brothers were invited was the running of a teachers' college as much as for running simply elementary schools. There seemed to be no concept, yet, of refusing the government subsidy and of running the schools entirely with Religious, bound by the vow of poverty. The challenge, as Polding and McEncroe saw it, was to improve the quality of the teachers in the Denominational Schools and to re-establish the clergy's control over both the teachers, and the curriculum which the 1866 Act had, in their eyes, usurped. In an earlier part of the letter quoted, Fr Sheehy reports:

We had the appointment and dismissal of teachers; we had our own books; and the whole arrangement and discipline of the school were in our hands.

After the passing of the Act, however, all that had changed and, in a later part of the letter, he adds:

It is clear that we cannot depend, as we have hitherto done, upon secular teachers, who are not always desirable in character and attainments and who, besides, have their grand defect that they are following a career for profit, and not fulfilling a vocation. What the Archbishop would desire, then, is to have from your congregation, say, three Brothers to establish a training school for Catholic teachers.¹⁹

Archbishop Polding, the suffragan Irish Bishops of NSW and, later, Archbishop Vaughan were much criticised for this urge to control things, and this illiberal lack of confidence in the state system, in the Catholic lay teachers and, indeed, in the Catholic lay people themselves, especially the parents. They were criticised by their non-Catholic contemporaries, like Henry Parkes,²⁰ by the whole later generation of quasi-whig historians of Australian nineteenth century education, and even, in recent times, by revisionist or post-modernist Catholic historians such as Sr Naomi Turner.²¹ Her chapter on the education issue up till 1888, is full of implied criticism of the hierarchy's presumption of 'divine right' and, more overtly, of their use of coercive powers to bring non-compliant parents 'into line' as regards sending their children to Denominational Schools, rather than the National system. However, recent, post-modernist, critiques of the nineteenth century heroes of public education have been no less frank in de-constructing the idealism, and ideology, of such a central figure, in New South Wales, as William Wilkins.

¹⁸ Doyle, *op.cit.* p. 12.

¹⁹ quoted in Doyle, *op.cit.* p. 626.

²⁰ quoted in D. Morris, 'Henry Parkes – Publicist and Legislator.' in Turney, C. *op.cit.* p. 174.

²¹ Turner, *Catholics in Australia* (Melbourne, 1992) Ch. 9.

In a relatively recent article on Wilkins' achievement,²² Bruce Smith has pointed out that almost the first act of the National Board of Education in 1848 was to call for the establishment of a Model School for teacher training which William Wilkins was quickly recruited, from England, to lead. He then progressed from being head of the Model School to become Chief Inspector of National Schools under the Dual Board, i.e. head of the team which supervised teaching standards. Under the 1866 Act he became secretary to the, now unified, Council of Education and - under the 1880 Act - he was established as Under-Secretary to the Department of Public Instruction, in effect, the first New South Wales Director of Education. Earlier accounts of his career²³ have stressed the influence of the English educational reformer, Kaye-Shuttleworth, and of the pedagogical principles of Pestalozzi, making him sound very much like the typical nineteenth century liberal reformer of the Whig tradition.

Smith, however, using Foucault's description of the 'liberal classroom', quoted earlier,²⁴ shows that William Wilkins and the other liberal reformers were every bit as intent upon control and management, as the autocratic and obstructionist clerics whom they and later historians, criticized.²⁵ In fact, by comparing playground supervision systems and toilet access protocols, in the National and Denominational Schools, he demonstrates that the two were remarkably similar in aspiration. He goes on to point out that the National Schools' Inspectorate was much more effective, in monitoring and controlling teacher behaviour, than its Denominational equivalent. And if Sr Naomi is critical of the bishops' use of their coercive powers, against non-compliant parents, Smith's article lets Wilkins' directions, to local patrons of the National Schools of New South Wales, speak for themselves:

The wishes of parents ought undoubtedly to be consulted as to the education of their children (but) no deviation from the routine of the School can be permitted in the case of any particular child ... all must conform to the rules laid down.²⁶

More, perhaps, will be said, in a later chapter, about this similarity of aspiration and, even, of control regimes between the National and the Catholic schools; but enough has now been said to put the expectations that lay behind Archbishop Polding's invitation to the Marist Brothers into its appropriate social context. As we shall see, in the next chapter, the French brothers came from an educational situation in which much the same expectations were entertained by both the French bishops and the French national authorities. Almost all that remains, in this chapter, is to recount the qualified acceptance of the invitation by the brothers' Superior General, the delay in actually sending the first group of brothers and the developments in the social context which occurred in the interim.

²² Marjorie Theobald & Dick Selleck, *Family School and State* (Melbourne, 1990). pp. 66-90.

²³ e.g. C. Turney's in *Pioneers of Australian Education* Vol. I (Sydney, 1969).

²⁴ Ch 1 p. 15.

²⁵ Theobald & Selleck, *op.cit.* p. 71.

²⁶ *ibid.* p. 84.

It has been mentioned that the Archbishop's invitation, of February 1868, was seconded by the Marist Fathers' Regional Superior and, when the brothers' Superior General, Br Louis Marie, did eventually answer, he acknowledged that Fr Poupinel's intervention had given the Sydney application priority over the many other requests for foundations which the General Council of the Brothers had received.²⁷ In the meantime, however, the delay in the brothers' reply caused Fr Poupinel some embarrassment and, in July, he had to explain to Fr Luckie, secretary of the Catholic Education Association, that the brothers were an entirely separate organisation from the priests, with their own rules and superiors and that while he and his own Superior General, Fr Favre, had urged the brothers' Superior General, Br Louis Marie to accept, they could in no way order him to comply. He may also have been embarrassed when the Br Louis Marie's reply did arrive, in August, because it offered to start only an ordinary elementary school, not a teachers' college, and asked for a delay of two years, within which to find and train enough suitable personnel for the mission.

Adding, perhaps, to Fr Poupinel's discomfiture was the initial reaction by some of the Irish parishioners of St Patrick's, Church Hill, to the proposal that the French Marist priests should become administrators of their parish, in succession to the late and much-loved Fr McEncroe. A small group of men sent a petition to the Archbishop, saying that 'most of the parishioners are of Irish extraction (and) they want priests of their own language and customs.'²⁸ Another letter, of the same date, but written by a more prominent parishioner, dismissed the signatories as unrepresentative and Fr Monnier, the first Marist Parish Priest, being quite fluent in English, quickly won the acceptance and respect of the parish.²⁹ Nevertheless, this Irish nationalist sensitivity was to cause considerable trouble to the pioneer Marist Brothers, even though two of the original four were actually Irish by birth, and it was an expectation which their leader, Br Ludovic, was not entirely prepared for or qualified to deal with.

At least in Archbishop Polding's declining years, the diocese was more aware of the issue and, when news spread that the French Marist Brothers had been invited to the diocese in February 1868, Fr Luckie felt compelled to write a letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* assuring the Catholic laity of the competence of the brothers and of their familiarity with the English language and its literature.³⁰ He even went so far as to nominate a mooted selection committee for the first staff of brothers, consisting of the Archbishop Primate of Ireland, plus Dr Ullathorne, the Bishop of Birmingham, together with Dr John Henry Newman of the Birmingham Oratory, and the Superior General of the Marist Brothers of Lyons. It is quite unlikely that such a high-powered committee was ever actually empanelled. The selection of brothers was simply the best that Br Louis Marie could scrape together; but the letter seemed particularly aimed at allaying these Irish sensibilities and, in this, it appears to have succeeded. Ullathorne and Newman were not Irish; but they were both well known, by reputation, to the Irish-oriented readers of

²⁷ Doyle, *op.cit.* p. 16.

²⁸ Doyle, *op.cit.* p. 25.

²⁹ Hosie, *op.cit.* p. 212.

³⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald* 11 February 1868.

The Freeman's Journal and Fr McEncroe had consulted them in 1859, in his quest for a rector for St John's College.

It was this readership which had backed Archbishop Polding and Fr McEncroe in their rejection of the Irish National System in the late 1840s and Henry Parkes' National Schools in 1866. By this later date the Irish National system had been shown, by the publication of the Anglican Archbishop Whately's memoirs, to have been a Trojan Horse designed to undermine the pupils' Catholic faith and Irish loyalty.³¹ Professor O'Farrell was convinced that the impetus behind the rejection of the Irish National and later National systems of education by the *Freeman's* readers was as much 'belligerent Irish National feeling'³² as religious conviction. Irish sensibilities had to be treated gently, therefore, and as the two-year delay that Br Louis Marie had requested dragged on into three, and financial support for the Catholic Education Association dwindled, Archbishop Polding sent Dean Rigney to Ireland, to see if the Christian Brothers would relent. They would not. Fr Rigney returned to Sydney empty-handed and after the 'French' Marist Brothers had actually arrived. According to Br Ludovic, the Dean congratulated the parishioners of St Patrick's on their good fortune, in securing brothers for their school; but he also let it be known, publicly, that the welcome to the French Brothers was only offered because:

his wishes, like those of the clergy in general and of the Archbishop in particular had not been able to be satisfied at the place (ie. at the General House) of the Irish Brothers.³³

Resented, or at best grudgingly accepted, by both the Benedictines and the Irish secular clergy, the Marist Brothers, had not had an auspicious start to implanting their teaching tradition in Australia.

The delay, on Brother Louis Marie's part, was not due to any sense of being regarded as a second choice; but simply to the difficulty of finding enough trained and English-speaking personnel. Fr Luckie, in his letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, had explained that although the Marist Brothers were a French Order and only recently founded, they had already spread to Britain, Belgium and Ireland, but despite his confident boast about their qualifications and the expert selection panel, the requests that the Brothers' Superior General was receiving from English-speaking countries and colonies were very hard to fulfil. The brothers had, indeed, started a number of schools in Belgium and Britain; but only one, at Sligo, in Ireland, in 1862. They would therefore have been unknown to all but a very few, very recent, Irish migrants to Australia. In his first response to Archbishop Polding's invitation, Br Louis Marie had spoken of expanding an English-speaking group at the *Nord* Province's novitiate at Beaucamps, near Lille, where the British Marist novices did their initial training. This had proved more difficult to accomplish than to promise, however. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 complicated matters and the first leader chosen for the mission, a Br Ezechiel, died prematurely. All that the Superior General could eventually provide was a twenty-eight year-old Frenchman, Br Ludovic, who was an experienced infant-class teacher and

³¹ O'Farrell, *op.cit.* p. 142.

³² *ibid.* p. 141.

³³ *Annales de la Mission d'Australie.* p. 12.

spoke passable, but hardly fluent, English; a younger Scotsman, Br Augustine, who had some senior primary experience, and two young Irishmen, who had very little teacher training at all. Little wonder that Br Louis Marie had declined the invitation to start a teacher' training college.

The Marist Fathers, however, in a move which would further complicate the brothers' initial relations with the Archbishop and the Irish parishioners of St Patrick's, made use of the delay to prepare for their arrival, by purchasing for their use the shell of the old St Phillip's Anglican school, which was adjacent to St Patrick's Church and presbytery. St Patrick's, itself, had been built directly opposite St Phillip's Anglican Church – one of the oldest, and ugliest church buildings in the colony - in 1840, but the older Anglican parish, probably embarrassed by the contrast between their convict-built brick edifice and the sandstone Gothic façade of St Patrick's, had demolished the old one and built a new, and much handsomer, church higher up Church Hill, in 1856. In 1869, the St Phillip's school building was also replaced by a newer building, on a different location, and it was early in 1870 that Fr Monnier, the Parish Priest, encouraged a trustee of the parish to purchase the old building. As the Marist Fathers well knew, the Archbishop's invitation had been for the brothers to take charge of St Benedict's School, in Broadway, perhaps 2.5 kilometres away; but by this purchase, and from other references in Fr Monnier's correspondence, it is clear that they hoped the brothers would be settled in their parish at Church Hill.³⁴

The ecclesiastical, educational and political context into which the Marist Brothers were stepping was, therefore, quite complex. Before ever the revisionist critique had started to bite in Australia, the much-maligned Manning Clark had summed up the situation thus:

In the National schools, the children were taught to venerate Her Majesty Queen Victoria; in the Catholic schools ... to venerate the Holy Father, and to adore the Holy Mother of God. In the National schools, the children learned of the glories of British civilization over the whole world ... in the Catholic schools, Ireland was presented as the centre of the universe, and England as the place from which had come the men who had reduced the loveliest island on earth to a land of skulls. In the National schools, the day often began with a ceremony designed to plant a dual patriotism in the minds of children ... in Catholic schools, the day began with the recitation of the Hail Mary ... Yet they had much in common. Both systems enforced a strict segregation of the sexes; both urged their pupils to mortify the flesh; both taught a morality pleasing to the ears of ... the colonial parliaments.³⁵

If the qualifications of the first Marist Brothers for the Australian mission were, as we have noted, somewhat limited, it was as well that the Order's previous experience, over its short history to that time, had inured it to such complexity and competition, and it is to this experience that we shall now turn.

³⁴ Doyle, *op.cit.* pp. 33-34.

³⁵ Manning Clark, *A History of Australia* Vol. IV (Melbourne, 1978) pp. 289-290.

