

No Enemies on the Homintern Left

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John Hepworth, Head of TAC

"When they feel the heat,
they'll see the light."

- Attributed to Illinois politician
Everett Dirksen

I had to happen. The public shaming which occurred with American Catholicism in 2002, and with Irish Catholicism in 2010, has occurred – notwithstanding draconian libel statutes – with Australian Catholicism in 2011. This phenomenon has derived from an unexpected source: the revelations of John Hepworth, leader of the T.A.C. (Traditional Anglican Communion).

Some of my fellow Australian Catholics, unlike myself, have spent years awaiting the T.A.C.'s promised full communion with Rome. The T.A.C., generally estimated to have approximately 400,000 members worldwide – over half of whom live in India, and another quarter in southern Africa – has been led by Hepworth since 2002. I myself have never met, or corresponded with, Hepworth; my limited knowledge of his career had been confined mostly to those official Catholic pronouncements which mention him.

All this abruptly changed with the September 10, 2011 front page of a broadsheet newspaper, *The Weekend Australian*. There Hepworth described in detail a catalogue of sex-abuse experienced when he was still a Catholic seminarian.

The detail he supplied, uniformly nauseating, was not an inherent surprise, after the way Catholics have needed to "sup full with horrors" on similar accounts from Boston, Milwaukee, Dublin, Vienna, Bruges, and elsewhere. What distinguishes it from nightmare stories elsewhere is the date when the abuse started. 1990? 1980? 1970? No, 1960. In other words, during the years *before* the Council, when Australian Catholicism could boast such serious leaders – now unimaginable – as Melbourne's Archbishop Daniel Mannix, Adelaide's Archbishop Matthew Beovich, and Sydney's Cardinal-Archbishop Sir Norman Gilroy.

By now, Catholic literature swarms

with documentation (not least in *The Remnant*) concerning how Melbourne's Archdiocese kept the "hands-on therapist" Ronald Conway, between 1969 and 1996, as assessor of priestly candidates. In practice, this meant cramming seminaries with as many erotic degenerates as possible. (I have in my hand – to quote a famous Wisconsin senator – a letter from Peter Westmore, leader of the National Civic Council for whose *News Weekly* magazine Conway regularly wrote, conceding the printed Conway revelations' absolute accuracy.) But Conway operated only after Archbishop Mannix's demise, amid the Age of Aquarius, the early political springtime of Prime Ministerial *enfant terrible* Gough Whitlam, the ubiquitous "spirit of Vatican II", and the L.S.D. culture which Conway himself so eloquently – not to mention insanely – championed. The three malignant grubs fastening onto Hepworth from 1960 had none of these Zeitgeist excuses. (Two of them, Fr. Ronald Pickering and Fr. John Stockdale, have since died; the former peacefully in self-imposed English exile, the latter on New Year's Eve 1995 during an otherwise lackluster session in a Melbourne male brothel.)

It says much for Hepworth's endurance and faith that he still wishes to become Catholic at all. Many of us, if we (like him) had been subjected to years of sacerdotal debauching, might well gravely consider Rastafarianism or something instead.

Readers who either are not Australian or are not Catholic might be unaware of what the average Catholic in this country thinks about the Church's sex-abuse scandals *per se*. Such thought varies, of course, according to which persons are questioned. Mainstream Trailer-Park Australian Catholicism continues to be blissfully unaware that the scandals ever took place. It indulges in the same practices which have marked it for years: its deification of football; its liturgical lurches between *Sesame Street* and *Animal House*; and its sermons devoid of any phrasing or moral code beyond Kim Kardashian's grasp. About its other routine spectacle – that of Communion being administered in the hand, and received with all the visible veneration to be expected from elephants consuming peanuts at the zoo – the less said the better. Outside the Trailer-Park apparat, though, resides an obstinate Australian Catholic minority which remains literate. We literates echo, rather, the New South Wales Labor parliamentarian who was asked if Kristina Keneally's uniformly dreadful recent premiership of his state made him feel embarrassment. His response: "I would say deep and abiding shame, revulsion, disgust. But, no, I wouldn't say embarrassment."

Mercifully, such concepts as the Internet have now been invented, much to the dismay of conventional media operatives within AustChurch. The trouble (maybe we should say "one of the most obvious troubles") with these folk is that they have not only failed to profit from the

Internet's advent, but mostly failed even to detect it. Time was – as recently as the 1980s – when, if Australia's episcopate wanted a story suppressed, it *stayed* suppressed. The nearest to official remorse would be some diocesan bureaucrat anticipating Bart Simpson's immortal situation-ethics: "We didn't do it. Nobody saw us. You can't prove a thing."

Ahem. To quote a largely-forgotten teenage novel's title: "that was then, this is now." Once the South Australian government's leading theologian, *soi-disant* Catholic, and (if you please) Acting Police Minister Bernard Finnigan was arrested during April 2011 on child porn charges, not one libertine or neocon dog barked in his defense. When you can't persuade even Rembert Weakland to make an international Skype call on your behalf as a character witness, you really are doomed. Meanwhile, Melbourne Archbishop Denis Hart – better known for telling a female complainant "Go to hell, b***h" (*The Age*, August 11, 2009) than for any more legitimate contributions to moral leadership – will stay in his diocese for as long as his pitiless journalistic enemy Alan Howe (of the city's *Herald Sun* tabloid) permits him,

and not one nanosecond more.

Of course, a miracle could happen. The present Holy Father might dare do what his predecessor signally failed to do in 2002: demand that every prelate in the world, guilty or innocent, offer his resignation. At least Pope Benedict XVI genuinely deplores allowing the priesthood to become a combination of San Francisco bath-house and Alcatraz shower-recess.

Meanwhile, let Australian bishops remember the central worldly task ahead of them. The nation's flourishing Islamist and Green ideologies, however objectionable, thrive primarily in the moral vacuum of local Catholicism's explicit turpitude. For decades Australian Catholic administration has operated according to the *de facto* principle (supposing "principle" to be the right word) of "no enemies on the Homintern Left." It now has two choices. Either it eliminates immediately all traces of this mythomania. Or else it will become as irreparably humiliated as is its Hibernian counterpart, which might yet acquire the crank cult privileges appertaining to (say) Jehovah's Witness membership, but which is otherwise, humanly speaking, finished. ■