

CHAPTER X

JOHN HEALY

JUSTICE FOR THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

Dr Tom Boland 4-8-98

‘A prophet is not without honour save in his own country’ (Matt. 13:17). John Edmund Healy was a prophet, one who spoke for God to an unhearing public, about the grave moral responsibility of Australia for the condition of the aboriginal people. He spoke and wrote in the immediate post-war years, when few white Australians could hear. He was a priest of the Archdiocese of Brisbane, but he was without honour in his own diocese. He had things to say which largely do not sound out of place today, but the ears of his contemporaries were blocked.

When he died in 1958, Archbishop Duhig preached his panegyric. He described Father Healy as ‘a most exemplary priest in whom the virtue of charity was highly developed.’⁽¹⁾ This was true, but it was little enough to say for a priest who gave much of his life to a great cause. The *Catholic Leader* at that time printed several obituaries in every issue, few of them of less than half a column. A priest could score a full page. In the number that recorded Father Healy’s death most of a page was devoted to the illness of another priest. The fact of his death and the date of his funeral were given in two very brief paragraphs on a page of minor news. He had made little apparent impact on the diocese. The fault lay with the diocese.

John Edmund Healy was born in Gympie 17 November 1873, just six years after the goldfield opened. His father, James, was a miner. He spent some time around Bauple, some thirty kilometres from Maryborough. In the 1870s the tribes were still so common around Gympie that a territorial dispute was fought out in the Deep Creek area. In Maryborough in 1867 a resident wrote to the *Queenslander* 23 February, complaining about the depredations on crops and lamenting that it was ‘impermissible’ to ‘disperse’ them. ‘Disperse’ was the current euphemism for massacre.⁽²⁾ Mrs Healy was friendly with the tribes, and young John grew up loving them and their way of life, resenting their ill-treatment.

His family were not well off, but he managed to receive a good enough education at Mr McGurk's Catholic school to get a clerical position with a mining company. He eventually rose to be secretary to the manager, Mr Lewis, and act as accountant. Poverty prevented him from following a desire to be a priest from an early age. His father was a parishioner in good standing, helping Fr Horan in the erection of the church and other buildings. When John was fourteen and an altar server, Fr Horan presented him to Archbishop Dunne as one suitable for the priesthood, but Dunne was not willing to help with the fees. It was not till he was forty years old that Fr Pat Murphy came to Gympie and recommended him to the archbishop - almost certainly the new coadjutor archbishop, James Duhig - that he was accepted.

He arrived at the new Springwood seminary in Blue Mountains in 1913. He spent only one year there before moving one to St Patrick's College, Manly. He spent five years there, mostly in poor health. His lack of preparation and his bad health made study difficult. He received much assistance from the future Archbishop Eris O'Brien and from Walter Ebsworth, later biographer of Daniel Mannix. Another contemporary was Joseph John McGovern, who was to share his interest in the aboriginal people and, in particular, in the people of the Kimberley.

Ordained in Sydney by the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Cattaneo, 30 November 1918, he returned to Brisbane and spent two and a half years on the staff of St Stephen's Cathedral. In 1921 he went to Chinchilla as curate to Father (later Monsignor) James Kelly, whom he replaced as parish priest in the following year. The appointment may not have been without significance. In his early years James Duhig built up a group of junior Australian priests on and around the Downs. He showed some preference for the area. Among them were Fathers Tom Nolan at Dalby, Pat Murphy at Pittsworth and James Kelly at Chinchilla.

The parish was then a very large one, taking in Miles, Wandoan, Drillham, Condamine, Meandarra, Tara, Brigalow, Glemorgan and Dulacca. The old circuit system was till necessary to provide Mass and pastoral care for the vast area. The parish priest travelled the circuits on horseback or by sulky. Fr Healy drove a car before he left in 1929, though that was not always an advantage on the Downs roads. In the tradition of the circuit rider he called at every station and was received hospitably by Protestant and Catholic. He repaid the hospitality with assistance of the clerical kind, in both senses of the word. His bookkeeping ability was regarded as phenomenal and was much appreciated. He introduced the Sisters of St Joseph to Chinchilla in 1922 and to Miles in 1926.⁽³⁾

Much of the parish was in the Condamine Plain, where only a few decades before up to 400 Aborigines roved. There were few left of the Bungarram people in the 1920s, though there may well have been some Kabi people displaced from the areas of his childhood. He had every opportunity to hear on the circuits the story of their dispersal and to learn more of their ways and the degradation of their culture. ⁽⁴⁾

Certainly by 1929 he was ready to do something about their situation. In that year the diocese of Toowoomba was excised from the territory of Brisbane. Archbishop Duhig gradually called home many of the priests he was unwilling to lose. One of them was John Healy. However, he did not go straight back. He obtained permission from his archbishop to go to the remote vicariate of the Kimberley in the North West of Western Australia. Duhig was always ready to give a priest his head for any special work to which he felt called.

The Kimberley was true mission territory. Sparsely occupied by white settlers, and still effectively occupied by aboriginal people, it was the perfect field for study for one who wanted to serve but also to cultivate a certain accuracy of information - if not science - with which to serve the whole aboriginal people of Australia. In the Kimberley about 1930 there were still large numbers living tribally, others living in close contact with European life, whether on cattle stations, in the pearling industry or on missions. There were the de-tribalised and de-racinated on the fringes of the towns. As well there was the growing group of mixed race in Broome, very mixed in that half-Asian town. Still called 'Half-caste,' they lived between cultures, allowed to be at home in none.

The Kimberley had an unhappy history as a Catholic mission. It was a history of failure. Healy came to the conclusion that the failure was by the Church in Australia, not by the aboriginal people. Shuttled back and forth between the dioceses of Perth and Geraldton and the Abbey of New Norcia, it was entrusted to the French Trappists at Beagle Bay near Broome for ten years, 1890-1900, then to German Pallottines, who were pronounced undesirable by the Australian Government in 1916. An Irish Redemptorist replaced them till 1923, John Creagh. Rome then thought it discreet to create the Kimberley a Vicariate and appoint an Italian Salesian, Ernest Coppo, first Vicar. Coppo had a roving commission for Italian migrants and spent much time in Queensland in close co-operation with Archbishop Duhig. He finally resigned as Vicar in 1928, but not before he had accepted John Healy to work in the territory. Archbishop Duhig said in Healy's panegyric that he wanted to join a missionary congregation. His memory was not infallible. Fr Healy may have thought of it, but there is no evidence that he actually attempted it.

Instead he went to Beagle Bay in 1930, only to find Coppo gone and no new vicar appointed. The territory had de facto returned to the German Pallottines, and the Administrator was Fr Otto Raible, a Stuttgart man, later Vicar in 1935, but Teutonically in charge before that. In the same year as Fr Healy, another very different German priest arrived, Fr Ernest Aelred Worms. Already an anthropologist, he immediately plunged himself into aboriginal anthropology in the field. Despite great shyness, he entered into the tribal life of the remote areas. This was exactly what Healy had come for. I must leave to anthropologists to determine how well he learned, but he was enthusiastic and committed to the people he studied as well as served. Fr Worms became known internationally as well as in Australia for his writings and for his lectures on aboriginal affairs. He lectured at Banyo Seminary in the fifties, where one of his converts was Monsignor Con Roberts.

Fr Healy left no written account of his time at Beagle Bay expressly. However, we can confidently state what his experience was, because in the very next year, 1931, one of his fellow students at Manly, Fr McGovern, spent a year in the vicariate with the blessing, if not precisely the commission, of the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Cattaneo. Rome was concerned about the state of the Kimberley, and Cattaneo wanted the facts.⁽⁵⁾ On 11 February 1931 he wrote a letter to Archbishop Clune of Perth, in which he stated that McGovern, with his approval and the consent of Michael Kelly, Archbishop of Sydney, was going to the Kimberley 'for some work of exploration and enquiry about the possibility of extending and developing our activities among the Aborigines'.⁽⁶⁾ In an article in *Freeman's Journal* in Sydney McGovern described his task as getting 'as much information as possible of the present condition and future possibilities of Catholic apostolate amongst the blacks who lead a nomadic life in the Kimberley'.⁽⁷⁾ This, too, was exactly what Healy was interested in: 'the present condition and future possibilities.'

He was not satisfied with what he found. Healy was an accountant, by occupation if not by profession. He was dissatisfied with the regime at Broome and Beagle Bay. Archbishop Duhig said that 'unforeseen circumstances' prevented his staying with the mission. He did have personal problems. His eyes were very weak, and for the rest of his life he could not endure strong light. This did not stop him later trying to go to Darwin in 1933 and to Palm Island in the 1940s to care for the most abandoned of the aboriginal people. Priests who lived with him at Bardon report that there were dimmers on all lights and sometimes he worked by candle light. So he could not have stayed at Beagle Bay.

However, there were other reasons for his dissatisfaction. A companion of Fr McGovern spoke of the 'Prussian' manner of the Administrator, Fr Raible, and its unsuitability for living with the life style of the Aborigines.⁽⁸⁾ Fr Healy, like Fr Worms, looked to the aboriginal people to set the parameters and the timing of mission action, not a regime dictated by the schedules of the missionaries. If he could not work actively on the mission field, he determined to work out a plan of action for Australians, secular and ecclesiastical, and try to get it implemented. On his way home from Beagle Bay to Brisbane at the end of 1930, he delivered a fiery address over Melbourne radio station 3LO. He denounced as sin, the slander, murder, theft and physical assault committed by colonial society; but he insisted these things were still continued. He challenged Australia, especially Catholic Australia, to do something about the situation. Photographs taken by Fr McGovern in the following year confirmed his charge.

Back in Brisbane, he was appointed parish priest of Childers in 1932. He stayed there till 1938. From that unlikely base he tried to influence the official Australian Church in the aboriginal interest. Of necessity, he relied on friends in the major cities to pursue his aims, particularly Fr Walter Ebsworth in Melbourne. Action centred round 1934 and the brief period in office of Archbishop Bernadini, Apostolic Delegate 1933-1935. Healy wrote an article for *Manly* magazine in 1930, which won him some Brisbane converts. Encouraged by this, he wrote again in 1932. He asked for fifteen copies, four of which he sent to Broome, the other eleven to places where they would do most good. One apparently went to Rome. He hoped it would move the new Secretary of Propaganda, Archbishop Constantini to 'appoint someone to the Perth Coadjutorship, whose first plank would be the Abos (sic)'. He wished that Walter Ebsworth had gone to Rome as a post-graduate student, so become, *episcopabile* ⁽⁹⁾. Within months Constantini had appointed Redmond Prendiville. He became one of Healy's heroes.

That year there was a meeting in Melbourne, perhaps in preparation for the National Eucharistic Congress of 1934. Healy very much wanted to attend, but he could not do so. This was partly because his eyes would not allow it, but also because the worst period of the Depression meant so many calls on his charity in Childers that he could not afford the fare. He wrote: 'what work there is to be done, if it will be attempted'.⁽¹⁰⁾

At the same time he was writing verse. Some of it was general religious poetry, like *The Rosary*, but much of it was on aboriginal themes. One at the time was *The Smoke Signal*, in which he imagined the traditional means of communication rising to Heaven in the aboriginal cause. He wrote to Ebsworth, who revised his work for him:

It would be a pretty good hint to the Patroness of the Missions, who never seems to do anything for me, though I have given her every chance,⁽¹¹⁾

He was still optimistic. He had another article in *Manly* in 1933. He hoped the new Delegate, Archbishop Bernadini, read it and 'got a good eyeful of the Abo (sic)'.⁽¹²⁾ Whether from this article or elsewhere, in 1934 Bernadini gently prodded the Australian Church in that direction. In May 1934 there was held in Sydney the first Catholic Church conference for 'any purpose connected with the Aborigines.' On 24 May, Bernadini spoke. He told the conference that he had been specially briefed in Rome on the situation. He hinted that there were problems the Church needed to overcome, but he could say that 'above all the Aboriginal Mission' was at the top of the list. He saw it as a duty of every priest to encourage the Mission and a strict obligation on himself. He said that 'not only as a Catholic but also as an Australian you have a national duty to help the Australian Mission.' He went on to say that it could be argued that since we had taken the Aborigines' property, we had the conscientious duty to return it. He did not entirely agree. He said that property in that sense was not part of the aboriginal culture, but he thought that civilisation had a right to expand; but Australia had a duty to compensate for the false civilisation it was forcing on the original occupants of the land. This was not a view that would be acceptable today, but it was welcome to Fr Healy. The highest church authority had called for justice for the aboriginal people. One participant had declared: *Roma locuta est; causa finita est.* (Rome has spoken; the question is closed.)

The question obviously was not closed, but neither was the year, the vital turning point in Church-aboriginal relations. As part of the National Eucharistic Congress in Melbourne there was a conference on missions. One paper was read by Fr Johnson S.J. He declared that we came as strangers into a land once theirs (Aborigines'). Instead of fair treatment, they had suffered injustice and hardship, 'often classed with kangaroos and dingoes to be driven out or exterminated.' Yet they were our mission. The universal Church has a perpetual vocation to mission. Yet the Church elsewhere might wonder if Australians were really Catholic. As a result he made suggestions which might not sound much but were a beginning:

- 1) establish a stronger Society for the Propagation of the Faith;
- 2) obtain an indulgence for prayer for the mission;
- 3) set aside space in Catholic periodicals for aboriginal mission news from a central bureau.

Healy was all in favour of prayer, indulgenced or otherwise; but the first and third suggestions he later took up in a big way.

About this time another speaker in Sydney, Fr Perkins MSC, addressed a festival meeting of the St Vincent de Paul Society stressing the point central to Healy's thinking. He attacked the current notion that nothing could be done for the aboriginal people, since they were degraded. Perkins said 'their morality and their possessions have been filched from them.' It was not their natural state. He called for a Christian effort to offer a proper human chance to them when European and Asian cultures impinged on theirs.

Healy had remarkable hopes in far Childers. Archbishop Bernadini, nephew of the organiser of the Code of Canon Law, Cardinal Gasparri, brought with him from Rome a plan for a Plenary Council of Australia and New Zealand to update local laws of the Church. Healy wrote to Walter Ebsworth:

Then if I can by some means get a paper into the Plenary Council , whatever that may be, I shall have done something 'Pro Deo et Australia'. (for God and Australia), the motto of the Manly Union and its magazine. ⁽¹³⁾

He was too optimistic. The Fourth Plenary Council of Australia and New Zealand met in Sydney in 1937. In canon 28 the Fathers 'heartily endorse that the missionary spirit be aroused in priests and laity, that the light of the Gospel may shine as soon as possible on the Aborigines of Australia and the Maoris of New Zealand and on others till now living wretchedly in the darkness of ignorance and infidelity.' In canon 29 they willingly praise the religious orders engaged in missions in Australia and New Zealand, including specifically the Pallottines of Beagle Bay. Healy wanted to relieve the wretchedness of aboriginal people, but he believed that their religion could not be properly described as 'the darkness of ignorance and infidelity'.⁽¹⁴⁾

The Australian Church was beginning to stir to Catholic Action and Social Justice. He endeavoured to spread his ideas in the various branches of Catholic Action. He was heartened by the attitude of Archbishop Mannix on Social Justice:

I believe in Social Justice, and I believe in Social Justice all round. I do know that the Aborigines of Australia would be able to furnish a strong indictment against the present rulers and inhabitants of Australia and those who have gone before us.

In 1933 Healy wrote to Walter Ebsworth that he had been a man of words, but he wanted to be a man of actions. This was when he wanted to be appointed to the leprosarium in Darwin. In his state of health, it was not a practical plan; so he was left with words. He began a propaganda campaign, especially to educate the clergy. He wrote several articles for *Manly* in the thirties and forties. In 1940 he commenced a series in *Catholic Missions*, the periodical of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in Australia. These he gathered into a book, entitled, *The Aboriginal People of Australia*, published by Pellegrini in 1948. By this time - 1938 -1958, the time of this death - he was parish priest of Bardonia. An examination of several years of book reviews in the *Australasian Catholic Record* shows that this organ of Manly seminary did not acknowledge this work by one of its own, on a subject so vital for God and Australia.

He stated the purpose of the work was to see the aboriginal people

- 1) in their original state.
- 2) as one race
- 3) as a problem awaiting a solution.

These themes give a unity to the book. In 1948 the view of Daisy Bates, that the aboriginal people were a dying race, was still current. Healy was outraged at the complacency of the people who were responsible for the dying and were doing nothing about it. He saw that if the attitude was not challenged, it would become a self-fulfilling prophecy. It was in his view, the eleventh hour. He put it bluntly in another context.: Now or Never, Blacks or Boomerangs, the race of the Relics. ⁽¹⁵⁾ He objected strongly to the attitude of those supposedly sympathetic who tut-tutted at their unhappy condition, and called them 'poor creatures'. He chose the sentimental term of Dr Baselow, 'the aristocrats of nature.'

His book described the daily life of the people, but he spent most time on the social and religious organisation of life. He recognised that it was a true religious culture, a shaping of, as well as an adaptation to, their environment. It had endured for an aeon and had a right to continuing existence. It was a religious culture, which the first Europeans could not recognise. As such, it deserves respect. One thing he had learned was the intimate, all-pervading relationship with land.

Some terms he used in this and later work are worth noting. Nearly half a century ago he challenged the term *terra nullius* (nobody's land). He put in inverted commas phrases like 'assumed dominion', 'discovery of Australia', 'primitive', in any but an anthropological sense. He corrected the use of the word 'civilisation' in contrast to the aboriginal society. He spoke of the 'invasion of Australia' without

comment. He called for a treaty and even, half a century ago, envisaged a world court to which Australia could be summoned. One word he had to explain. He spoke of 'blacks' because it was current usage; but he said it had no derogatory intent.

It is difficult to estimate how much influence the book had. The late forties were a period when Australians were much preoccupied with a vast new wave of migration. We were not really alert to the validity of the cultures entering from Europe. There was little appreciation of a culture so long ignored.

One problem that was not then faced about either New Australians or the oldest Australians was the question of assimilation, integration or parallel existence. Fr Healy's views were clearly assimilationist, though he was aware of inconsistencies in his assumptions. For him any solution the aboriginal/white problem must accept that there are two races in the land. The old had as good a right to preservation and self-existence as the new. Human rights are equal. Yet he thinks 'apartness' impractical. The technological strength is on the side of the newer occupiers. He does not accept that this meant the necessary extinction of the older, or the exclusion from the land. He insists that from the beginning colonial authorities and colonists had the obligation to train the Aborigines to use the land in such a way that they could exist on the land but in harmony with European settlement. At the same time he defends the right to a hunting, nomadic life style for those who desire it.

He accepts that the environment was changed de facto by the coming of the Europeans, in their favour. He may assume that it was also de jure; but he does not concede that this gives the Europeans the right to ignore the rights of the Aborigines.

There was a most serious violation of the rights of the aboriginal people. Later generations could not shrug this off and say: Someone has blundered, but we now have other concerns. There is a need for atonement, a word he took from Archibald Meston. In 1895 Meston reported to the Queensland Government on the condition of North Queensland Aborigines. He suggested that large reserves be made available in good farming or grazing country. There they could settle in camp or in village communities. There should be enough territory for hunting, but there should be education for the young to ensure the future of the race in the new environment.

Healy had recognised the significance of land for the aboriginal people. He even saw the spiritual associations. In his chapter on land in his book he wrote movingly of the association in a way which combined anthropological science

with romantic empathy. ⁽¹⁶⁾ However he seems not to have appreciated fully that the association was with *this* piece of land, *this* place where such and such a life event occurred, where meaning to life was revealed. He recognised that there were sacred sites, but he not appreciate how wide-reaching the term was. He admired Meston and adopted his ideas. He admired the first attempt of the Queensland Government to preserve the aboriginal people on the reserves and missions set up. He had admiration for the first government Protectors. However, he came to see that protection brought dependence and a helot existence. The proper implementation of the Meston scheme should have brought a sturdy, peasant independence, but protection brought about a paternalist servitude. ⁽¹⁷⁾ He even came to see that the Meston plan had evolved from study of, not consultation with, the aboriginal people.

However, in his view, the Church was the vital factor in the salvation, secular as well as religious, of the race. After his 1948 book appeared he began to gather his *Manly* articles and expand them into a book. He completed and revised a manuscript, but it was never published. He called it *Aboriginal People of Australia with Church and State*. In it he traced the history of contact, marking out periods of half a century each. What amazed him was the almost unchallenged assumption that Aborigines were inferior, and that they must necessarily give way to European civilisation, even to the point of extinction. He finds the Church not guiltless in this regard, but he sees its role as vital.

Healy was not ecumenical. His experience in the Kimberley, perhaps filtered through Irish-Australian prejudice, made him critical of Anglican and Presbyterian missions. ⁽¹⁸⁾ In *Manly* he conceded a certain charity in the North Queensland missions of other Churches, but he stated that they were not working for the preservation of aboriginal society. So most of the work is devoted to the efforts, failures and elements of success of Catholic missions. In writing for publication the charity of which Archbishop Duhig spoke is evident, but he does not hesitate to attach blame where he things it belongs.

He speaks kindly of the work of the first priests, including the Men of '38, but he concedes that their first interest was the pastoral of the Irish settlers. He deals with the Passionists on Stradbroke Island and the intentions of the Augustinians of the Assumption in James Quinn's time. To these he adds Bishop Brady's grand schemes and the first work of New Norcia. One might think that he did scant justice to the latter in view of his own ideas of what a mission should be.

The next period, the second half of the nineteenth century he finds practically empty of effort until the close. He recognises Fr Duncan McNab, but seems to

know his work only superficially, and he sees its most notable feature as its frustration. At the end of the century he records a flurry of activity, especially in the North and the West. He devoted much space to the Kimberley story, the French Trappists, the German Pallottines, the Irish Redemptorist and the Italian Salesian.

His favourite project is the Jesuit mission on the Daly River in the Northern Territory. Like most of activity at different times, it was the result of the intervention of Rome. Duncan McNab had been in Rome and, shortly after, Leo XIII persuaded to take on a mission. In 1882 three Jesuits left Sevenhill in South Australia and took up a large block of territory, a couple of thousand square miles. It had a long coast line and included several rivers. It seemed like a territory suitable for self-support and the establishment of native rural and marine industries. The area was relatively free from European contact. Fr Donald MacKillop, Blessed Mary's brother, believed that they had a chance to establish a culture like that of the Jesuit Reductions of Paraguay. This was Healy's ideal. The mission closed after seventeen years in 1899. Floods wiped out the plant, and a visitation from Rome recommended its closure. However, Healy believed there was a further reason, the apathy of the Australian Catholics, including the Australian bishops. Fr MacKillop toured the country in 1893-4 questing for funds with little result. In 1895 the Second Plenary council called for support, with even less success. The Archbishop of Brisbane said he saw no more reason to support missions on the Daly River than on the Hoang-Ho.⁽¹⁹⁾

In the twentieth century Healy saw more serious attempts, particularly by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. However, the general story has been of failure. He insists that this has not been the fault of the aboriginal people. Further, the failures were an added injustice to them. The continual collapse gave the impression that they were unsuitable for religion, for Christianity. This discouraged further effort. In addition, the work of twenty years or more of mission, had caused cultural changes in the people. When the mission closed they were no longer so suited to their original life style.

What did Healy want to do? He spoke of New Missions. Their objective was still assimilation, 'civilise and Christianise'. For this purpose missions should be very large on good land. Too many in the past were on tracts suitable for a family station but not a tribal settlement. There had to be trained personnel and more of them. Many missionaries had been generous and well-intentioned, but they had little understanding of the people. Money was vital. Missions were run on a shoestring, fragile from the start, unable to meet the shocks of pioneering. The Jesuits had spent £14,000 in seventeen years on Daly River and still could not survive. A sound and constant source of funds was essential. Information was

indispensable. He had spent twenty years trying to educate the clergy, but a large, organised campaign from a central bureau was needed to tell Australian Catholics the facts.

To achieve all these objectives there was a need of an Organised Force (Healy always put it in capitals). He took a while to work out what it should be. In 1934 he thought the Society for the Propagation of the Faith was the answer. It did achieve a lot, though its efforts were directed to foreign as well as local missions. A more precisely based instrument was necessary.

In 1930 he had raised the possibility of a special ecclesiastical jurisdiction for the aboriginal missions. ⁽²⁰⁾ He returned to the idea in 1938. ⁽²¹⁾ He envisaged a Society like that of St. Peter Claver for Africa with fund-raising, special missionary congregations and training for Africa. At the head of this organisation should be a Vicar Apostolic for the Aborigines. In fact, there had been such an appointment in Queensland. There were at the same time the dioceses of Brisbane and Rockhampton and the Vicariate Apostolic of Queensland. It eventually became identified with North Queensland, and even Propaganda documents did not always distinguish it from the Vicariate of Cooktown; but its jurisdiction covered the aboriginal mission over the whole colony. Archbishop Dunne objected strenuously to the conflict of jurisdiction, but it achieved little. Healy, however, saw that a special responsibility was needed.

It was not achieved, but he might have been happy to have seen the seed he planted flourish in the responsibility taken by the whole Australian hierarchy in 1988. ⁽²²⁾ Especially he would have appreciated the Pope's endorsement of aboriginal culture and spirituality in Alice Springs 29 November 1986. When he died in 1958 his voice was weak, but now his voice resounded throughout Australia. It is time the prophet received his honour.

ENDNOTES

1. *Catholic Leader* 24 July 1958.
2. J. G. Steele, *Aboriginal Pathways in Southeast Queensland and the Richmond River*, University of Queensland Press 1986, pp 223-234; 227-231.
3. *Memories, Chinchilla Catholic Parish 1919-1994*, pp. 12-15.
4. Maurice French, *Conflict on the Condamine, Aborigines and the European Invasion*. Darling Downs Institute Press 1989, pp. 17; 113.
5. Pius XI was keenly interested in the missions. In 1926 he wrote an encyclical, *Rerum Ecclesiae* (Of Church Affairs) in which he outlined policy on vicariates.

- Bishops and Apostolic Delegates learned to learn when Pius XI gave directions.
6. Copy in the diary of Fr J.J. McGovern, courtesy of Miss M. Kennedy, Sydney.
 7. *Freeman's Journal*, 19 October 1931.
 8. Interview Mr Tom McDonough, Sydney 7 July 1998.
 9. Healy to Walter Ebsworth 28 September 1932. Miss Healy papers.
 10. *Ibid.*
 11. *Ibid.*
 12. Healy to Walter Ebsworth 23 November 1933. Miss Healy papers.
 13. *Ibid.*
 14. Fourth Plenary council of Australia and New Zealand cc 28 & 29.
 15. Title of Chapter XXVII of Typescript, Brisbane Archdiocesan Archives.
 16. *The Aboriginal People of Australia*, Chapter XXI
 17. *Manly*, 1945.
 18. cf. Fr McGovern's diary; also interview with Mr T. McDonough, though their experience of the Presbyterians was happy enough.
 19. Neil J. Byrne, *Robert Dunne, Archbishop of Brisbane*, University of Queensland Press 1991, p. 200.
 20. *Manly*, 1930.
 21. *Manly*, 1936.
 22. Pastoral Letter, 'The Church and the Aborigines in the Bicentenary', 25 January 1988.

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