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# Santamaria and the Legacy of the Split: Fifty Years On

*Bruce Duncan CSsR\**

Half a century on, the Split in the Australian Labor Party and the Catholic Church is still a painful memory. Yet the Santamaria Movement has left a distinctive impression on Australia's religious and political culture, and can be seen as a remarkable attempt to respond to contemporary social, political and cultural trends, that might be loosely identified as those of 'modernity', in the alien Antipodes.

The rancour of those years left some lasting legacies, yet the events were mired in controversy, and the issues remained unclarified for much too long. Partly this was because the bishops and the Church in general wanted to avoid further dissension and to heal the rift that tore through much of the Catholic community, including the bishops themselves. Partly also it was because some key participants refused to revise their views in line with Vatican directions. Moreover, the 1957 Vatican directives were not publicly available, or accessible even to priests. While attempts to dampen down the controversy gave time for passions to cool, resentment continued to fester between the Sydney and Melbourne alignments, and many if not most Catholics recoiled from the Movement claim to direct Catholic social action and thinking in the name of the Church.

Surprisingly, the Church produced few thinkers able to carry forward the public conversation with modernity in Australia. Instead, the polemic around the role of the Movement continued as a sub-text through the Second Vatican Council years, especially during the Vietnam War,<sup>1</sup> and later in efforts by the Church to redevelop its social and political views, notably through the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), founded by the Australian bishops in 1972 in response to the wishes of Pope Paul VI.

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1. See Val Noone, *Disturbing the War: Melbourne Catholics and Vietnam* (Melbourne: Spectrum, 1993).

What did endure from the Movement and the Split was a highly bipolar worldview of an historic conflict between the forces of good and evil, the Church and communism in particular. This way of seeing issues and events acted as a dominant filter in interpreting social and political developments, but later extended even to seeing the enemy as infiltrating the Church itself, first in the form of communism or Marxism, and later as Modernism. Even after the demise of Soviet communism, the filter continued to have a major influence on the views of many right-wing Catholics and admirers of Santamaria.

*The Great Labor Schism: a Retrospective*, edited by Brian Costar, Peter Love and Paul Strangio, is a valuable addition to the literature on the Split, shedding new light on many aspects of those troubled years, including on differences between States.<sup>2</sup> In his chapter on Catholic social ideas, Peter Heusler argues that some commentators have overlooked the complexity and subtlety about how religious ideals have influenced Australian culture and politics. He cautions that too much attention can be given to a figure like Santamaria.

One effect has been to diminish the significance and value of different outlooks and associated debates involving social justice, the role of the church in politics, and how Catholics struggled with their spirituality and the issue of engagement with the modern liberal democratic world.<sup>3</sup>

Quoting Katherine Massam's *Sacred Threads*, Heusler notes 'a wide diversity in lay spirituality, "characterised on the one hand by a passive and highly emotive piety centred on personal holiness for the next world and, on the other hand, by an active apostolic spirit which called for an analytical understanding of the world in order that it might be transformed".'<sup>4</sup>

One could well argue that this continues to indicate a major fault line in the Church's public involvements, and underlies many of the difficulties and debates about the role of the Church. However Heusler wants to broaden the focus to what was happening 'to Catholic social ideals and the associated debates about them'.<sup>5</sup> It is a point well made, though clearly Santamaria remains a key figure in this wider picture.

My book, *Crusade or Conspiracy? Catholics and the Anti-Communist Movement in Australia*, attempted to clarify the events around the Split and some key issues for the Church.<sup>6</sup> Some reviews of *Crusade and Conspiracy?*

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2. Brian Costar, Peter Love, and Paul Strangio, eds, *The Great Labor Schism: A Retrospective* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2005).

3. Peter Heusler, 'Living with Hope and Fear: Advancing Catholic Social Ideals Amid the Spectre of Communism', in *The Great Labor Schism*, 182.

4. *ibid.*, 184.

5. *ibid.*, 188.

6. *Crusade or Conspiracy? Catholics and the Anti-Communist Struggle in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2001). See also Paul Ormonde, ed., *Santamaria: The Politics of Fear* (Melbourne: Spectum, 2000) for assessments by some key long-standing critics of the Movement.

seemed not to realise the significance of the long standoff between Santamaria and the thinking of the French philosopher and political activist, Jacques Maritain, and how this dispute was part of the larger debate about how the Church should engage with the currents of modernity, and specifically how religious movements should relate to politics in modern democracies.

However the more recent period demands serious attention from some intrepid historians. Therese Woolfe has already opened up some of the themes in her 1988 doctoral thesis on the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately Ross Fitzgerald's *The Pope's Battalions: Santamaria, Catholicism and the Labor Split*, appeared woefully ignorant of the religious dimensions of the conflict.<sup>8</sup> Gerard Henderson has been working on a more general biography of Santamaria.

### *Santamaria against Modernity?*

Though Santamaria was not a philosopher and did not claim to be an intellectual, especially in his early years, his writings covered an enormous array of issues with considerable sophistication. He was not an economist, though I suspect more sustained study in economics would have greatly helped in developing his ideas. He was a political activist, who used ideas eclectically to serve his purpose, and sometimes articulated his views impressively. Yet one of his favourite comments, 'Intellectualism is a disease of the intellect', is a real teaser. Was he expressing a pragmatist's impatience with intellectual activity remote from contemporary social problems and challenges? Or does it go further and imply an underlying anti-intellectualism, or simply a rejection of thinking that could question his own projects?

There can be no doubting Santamaria's energy, commitment or capacity. Nor can one doubt the immensity of the task before him. As we know today, the cultural currents of modernity and so-called post-modernity have shaken the Church profoundly and it is struggling to respond adequately, even with all the academic, human and material resources available and the promising rearticulation of Catholic belief flowing from the Second Vatican Council.

By comparison, the resources available to the Campion Society and Santamaria from the 1930s were miniscule. The Church had basically adopted an apologetic approach to intellectual debate and theologians steered away from contentious areas. Despite efforts to maintain good will among the churches in a pre-ecumenical age, sectarianism remained a powerful undercurrent that could surge turbulently to the surface at any time, severely constraining open debate among people of different religious beliefs. The internal Catholic culture was strongly clerical and authoritarian. Catholics

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7. Therese Margaret Woolfe, 'Witness and Teacher – the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace 1968-1987: a Study of the Ideology of a Catholic Church Agency', PhD thesis, Department of Government, University of Sydney, 1988.

8. Ross Fitzgerald, *The Pope's Battalions: Santamaria, Catholicism and the Labor Split* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2003). See my review, 'The Enigmatic Santamaria: the Task after Ross Fitzgerald's *The Pope's Battalions*', in *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* 25, (2005): 62-74.

tended to channel their socio-political aspirations through the Labor Movement and the Australian Labor Party.

Hence, it was something of a novelty for the *Campion Society* and their supporters, especially through the *Catholic Worker*, and later for Santamaria through *Freedom* and *News-Weekly*, to attempt to develop an informed Catholic lay voice on socio-political matters. These efforts often suffered from inadequate financial resources and partly in consequence lacked top writers, and were forced to rely on voluntary contributors. To make matters more difficult for Santamaria, he was clearly identifiable as of Italian background, at a time when anti-Italian sentiment was common, particularly after Italy allied itself with Germany during the Second World War.

Overwhelmingly Santamaria took personal responsibility for the intellectual development of his anti-communist Movement and formulated its policies. Santamaria began his political career learning the techniques of political activism and mobilisation through his work to set up and spread the National Catholic Rural Movement. Though only in his early twenties, his credibility was buttressed by the authority of the bishops, and particularly of Melbourne's Archbishop Daniel Mannix. But Santamaria's own charm, personality and charisma were also significant factors, and he was able to achieve some significant organisational results.

Santamaria's early social and political activities can be seen as an attempt to particularise a vision of the common good and to devise means to achieve this. Though he endorsed the main lines of papal social teaching and began to adapt them to the Australian situation, curiously he later said his underlying vision of life values and society came not from the Church but from his Italian culture, 'a kind of peasant view of life'.<sup>9</sup> Here Santamaria developed a highly idiosyncratic program composed of elements derived from

- widespread rural aspirations at the time, which sometimes overlapped with State Labor government programs,
- distributist currents of thought, particularly from the United States, and
- what seem to be his own somewhat romanticised mental construction of Italian peasant farming and family values.

This agrarian vision was not an incidental aspect of Santamaria's proposals for Australia, as shown by his negotiations with State governments into the early 1950s to settle large numbers of immigrant farmers, especially Catholics, on the land. However, this vision became subordinate to his anti-communist activities to which he gave strategic priority, and even the National Catholic Rural Movement was pressed into the anti-communist struggle.

Though Santamaria's early *Catholic Worker* described itself as a 'Catholic Communist' publication, it revealed a strongly conspiratorial view of the world, with both communist and capitalist forces arraigned against the Church. The mentality behind the paper at this stage was one not uncommon

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9. Duncan, *Crusade or Conspiracy?* 402-03.

at the time and which is termed 'integralist', believing that the Church possessed ready answers to contemporary social questions.

Santamaria's anti-communist organisation was approved as a national organisation by the Australian bishops and was named the Catholic Social Studies Movement (the 'Movement'). It had taken shape in 1941-42 as a militant, defensive mobilisation based on religious allegiance, but not against all aspects of modernity, about which it was somewhat ambivalent. The powerful sectarian currents in Australian culture helped keep Catholics united with a clear sense of identity, particularly in relation to the grievance over State Aid. Catholic thought and culture were essentially reactive to aspects of political, and especially European, versions of liberalism, though Catholics were grateful for the liberties they enjoyed in Australia. Before the Spanish Civil War, not communism but big 'L' Liberalism was seen by some key social activists like Kevin Kelly to be the major enemy of the Church. However, for Santamaria the Spanish Civil War was a defining trauma which seared into his mind the perception of a titanic struggle between the Church and communism, expressed in quasi-Manichean terms of good versus evil.

The social encyclicals provided the general parameters for Catholic socio-political thought, opposing communism certainly but also urging the reform of capitalism. The encyclicals were necessarily rather general, and were explained and developed by a small number of Catholic commentators, mainly from overseas. The Movement drew on the religious and social cohesion of the Catholic sub-culture, but as a secret organisation it was unable to give explicit direction openly to the wider Catholic community, except as coded through the cumbersome communications of the Australian National Secretariat for Catholic Action (ANSCA) of which Santamaria was director from 1945, and the social justice statements, most of which he wrote between 1941 and 1955. Though the Movement depended on the legitimation of religious authorities, its leadership was in lay hands, with power tightly concentrated, on the pattern of the Leninist Party itself.

When Santamaria tried to extend his authority over non-Movement Catholics, he met considerable resistance from the Champions, members of the Australian Labor Party, clergy, bishops and even Roman authorities eventually. The Movement invocation of the authority of the Church and bishops to push the Catholic community into a militantly political option rebounded harshly against it and severely fragmented the Catholic community. The failure of capable episcopal and clerical guidance had proved a fatal handicap, and revealed how naïve were sections of the Church for so uncritically endorsing the Movement enterprise.

Much of the official thinking on the relationship between religious and political activity had been authoritatively articulated by Mgr Pietro Pavan and the international secretariat of Catholic Action. But Santamaria resolutely resisted such thinking despite efforts by Pavan's Australian assistant, Rosemary Goldie, and others to talk him around.<sup>10</sup> Santamaria also largely

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10. See Rosemary Goldie, *From a Roman Window* (Melbourne: HarperCollins Religious, 1998).

ignored the views of key thinkers like Maritain, John Courtney Murray and Yves Simon presumably because they did not support the type of political mobilisation of Catholics in which he was engaged.

Instead Santamaria saw his growing influence in the ALP as a mechanism which could be used not only to eliminate the communists but to implement his idiosyncratic vision for Australia. As John Douglas Pringle warned, it was a fatal mistake for Santamaria to try to get the numbers and force through his plans without public support. The proper course was to debate such policies openly and persuade public opinion. Ignoring this was one of the most critical mistakes of the Movement enterprise.

Yet this is not the whole story. For Santamaria did take part in a significant conversation or debate with Lloyd Ross and others about the meaning of socialism and socialisation. This debate has been somewhat overlooked by some authors, but in my view may have had the potential, if successful, to reorientate ALP policy and ensure wider public support. If the Split and the anti-communist militancy had not overwhelmed the agenda, ALP social and industrial policies may have developed in quite a different pattern. This possibility highlights the inherent contradiction between some of Santamaria's own efforts to shape social policies by open negotiation, and his activist goals pursued through the clandestine Movement.

### *Santamaria on Capitalism*

Santamaria's efforts to critique capitalism and the Australian economic system, especially through the social justice statements, were not trivial, but represented a sustained effort over nearly fifteen years to sketch a direction for economic and social policy.<sup>11</sup> They deserve careful consideration.

The early social justice statements basically summarised official Church teaching on socio-economic matters, before developing through the war years more innovative proposals for rural and industrial reconstruction. The statements urged a major reform of capitalism by redistributing property more widely, running industry on cooperative principles, paying a family wage and child endowments, and supporting home ownership. While suspicious of the power of the state, the 1943 statement, *Pattern for Peace*, paradoxically called for expanded government powers to control credit and to settle very large numbers of people in rural areas, especially immigrants with high birth rates. In 1945, Santamaria wrote *The Land is YOUR Business*, reiterating his rural vision, but it met with a cool reception, and though he continued to promote his agrarian views, this concern was increasingly overshadowed by the struggle against communism.

The statements *Peace in Industry* (1947) and *Nationalisation* (1948) reflect the sense of urgency of the industrial struggle at this time.

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11. Michael Hogan provided a valuable commentary and collection of these statements in *Justice Now! Social Justice Statements of the Australian Catholic Bishops 1940-1966* (Department of Government, University of Sydney, 1990). See also his *Australian Catholics: the Social Justice Tradition* (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1993).

*Nationalisation* was one of Santamaria's most skilful pieces of writing, reflecting his attempt to interpret socialisation in a way acceptable to Catholics and forge an alliance with non-communist socialist movements within the Labor Movement. The 1950 statement, *Morality in Public Life*, highlighted the internal threat to Australia from communism, and in 1951, *The Future of Australia* dramatised the external threat. Its famous cover depicted a map with a huge arrow pointing down from communist China to Australia.

### ***'Religious Apostolate and Political Action'***

Santamaria developed his radical ambitions for Church-controlled political activity in his paper 'Religious Apostolate and Political Action'. He believed that this proposal would provide a new model of Church action for social reform, whereby he hoped to implement his plans for rural and industrial change. It is curious that he took this direction just after the World Congress for the Apostolate of the Laity in Rome in 1951 explicitly rejected direct Church intervention in detailed political programs.<sup>12</sup>

Santamaria later appealed to Luigi Gedda's use of the Civic Committees to mobilise Catholic voters in Italy as validating a mode of Church-based political activism that he thought he had in fact developed in the Movement, and legitimating the expanded political aims of the Movement as articulated in 'Religious Apostolate and Political Action'. He certainly saw his new theory of Church direction of political reform as a decisive shift of historic proportions.

Santamaria's confidence that the Sydney bishops would lose their 1956 appeal to Rome suggests that he was not being disingenuous in claiming Vatican support, but that he had badly misinterpreted the direction of Church thinking. It is difficult to explain how he became so convinced about what was essentially wishful thinking on his part that he risked the entire Movement enterprise. Perhaps the Italian link provides some sort of a key to this puzzle, along with the partisan advice of the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Romolo Carboni.

### ***Legacy of the Split***

The legacy of the Movement and the Split has been an ambiguous one. On the one hand, the Movement – from 1957 the independent National Civic Council (NCC) – encouraged many Catholics to take a keen interest in political and social affairs. The Movement experience served as a training house for political or union careers, though not a few Movement activists and supporters broke ranks with the views of Santamaria and his newspaper, *News Weekly*, to chart their own courses.

On the other hand, the Split left much of the Church deeply factionalised. The aggrieved Melbourne alignment accepted Santamaria's view of events, interpreting its defeats as confirming its conspiratorial view of the world.

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12. Duncan, *Crusade or Conspiracy?*, 174 ff.

Deeply embittered by the Vatican intervention against his Movement, but without mentioning Pius XII by name, Santamaria regarded the shift from intransigent opposition to communism disgraceful.<sup>13</sup>

For those inclined to the preconception of an apocalyptic struggle between the Church and communism, the Vietnam War readily appeared like a new religious crusade against the enemies of the Church. Not only were events seen too exclusively through this anti-communist lens, but Santamaria tended to adopt a worst-case scenario, in a pattern of enduring crisis.

The Movement/NCC was unable to produce or hold people of exceptional intelligence. Santamaria left no comparable successor, and his supporters made surprisingly little contribution to scholarship. But then, the Australian Church as a whole failed to pursue the serious issues of philosophy and critical thinking that the Split affair might have been expected to stimulate. Apart from a few scholars like Max Charlesworth and John Molony, there was little investigation of European Catholic social traditions, or even of the emerging writers in the USA, notably of Maritain himself. The Church produced some outstanding historians, Patrick O'Farrell, Fr Tom Boland, Fr Ed Campion and Michael Hogan among others, some theologians and biblical scholars of international standing, but few innovative thinkers in political or social philosophy. Such a striking lacuna is deeply puzzling, especially given the resurgence of interest in social justice movements after the Second Vatican Council.

### *Disputes over the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and Australian Catholic Relief*

Santamaria repeatedly attacked the national Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, alleging its statements were based on 'Marxist or quasi-Marxist' propositions.<sup>14</sup> He campaigned against its views on US policies of nuclear deterrence, its opposition to US policies in Latin America, its interest in liberation theology, its criticism of the Smith regime in Rhodesia, of apartheid in South Africa, of the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, of the Marcos regime and social oppression in the Philippines, among other issues. He even supported the Singapore government's arresting young church social action workers on the pretext they were planning to overthrow the government.<sup>15</sup> These workers, who were tortured, were deeply shocked to feel so abandoned by the Church.

For years Santamaria also accused Australian Catholic Relief (ACR) of funding communist organisations in the Philippines, despite repeated denials from Church leaders in the Philippines and Australia. In the late 1980s he organised a boycott of the bishops' aid campaign, Project Compassion. These constant attacks greatly hampered efforts to redevelop Catholic social

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13. B. A. Santamaria, *Against the Tide* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1981), 341.

14. B. A. Santamaria, 'CCJP – not merely the statements, but the philosophy', *News Weekly*, 8 January 1987, 10.

15. *News Weekly*, 13 January 1988, 15.

initiatives and thinking, and partly explain why the bishops decided in 1987 to restructure the CCJP as the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council and adopt a more consultative process in the preparation of social justice statements. The ACSJC and Australian Catholic Relief were both to operate under a new Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development and Peace.

How do we explain this shift in Santamaria's preoccupations from industrial/political issues to inner-Church debates? He was deeply disturbed by the pervasive cultural changes in the Church and society after the Second Vatican Council, and in several of his books repeated accusations that communists had infiltrated every commission of the Vatican Council. But especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, anti-communism quickly faded as a critical cause. Yet Santamaria believed that the enemy had infiltrated the Church, in the form of Marxism or communism in some areas, in the form of materialism and secularism in others.

For a time it even seemed possible that Santamaria was so disillusioned with the effects of the Council that he might have followed the French Archbishop Lefebvre into schism. Santamaria deeply resented the abolition by Pope Paul VI of the Latin Mass of Pius V, a 'display of authoritarianism' which had 'disastrous' results.<sup>16</sup> In 1998, he wrote:

The methods whereby the Tridentine Mass was ruthlessly suppressed until it was partially, hesitatingly, and incompletely restored by John Paul II's Indult, is the most evident example of the mishandling which made the schism possible, and of the power of the Modernist coterie within the Church.<sup>17</sup>

Santamaria had drawn fresh heart from the election of Pope John Paul II in 1978, but even this pope was not above criticism.

### *Champion of 'Orthodoxy'*

Santamaria gradually effected an amazing transformation in his relationship with the Church, though in 1989 he considered that the Australian bishops regarded the Movement or NCC as 'their enemy', and that only a few bishops would talk with him.<sup>18</sup> From what he considered a stinging betrayal in 1957 by the Vatican of his anti-communist crusade, Santamaria positioned himself as the foremost champion of what he considered religious orthodoxy, drawing on the rhetoric of the anti-Modernist campaign early in the century. He founded a new monthly magazine in April 1988, *AD2000*, to mobilise disaffected conservative Catholics. 'AD2000 will describe what is orthodox as orthodox, what is modernist as modernism. It will support the former and oppose the latter.'<sup>19</sup>

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16. *ibid.*

17. B. A. Santamaria, 'Putting the essence of the Faith in doubt (Jean Guittou)', *AD2000*, September 1988.

18. Quoted in John Lyons, 'Against the Tide', *Age Good Weekend*, 17 March 1990, 52.

19. B. A. Santamaria, 'The establishment of AD2000', *AD2000*, April 1988, 2.

In late 1989, he stated his intention to draw a line in the sand to determine who was orthodox and who not.

If there is a strategy which may regain the lost ground – which I frankly doubt – the first step is to separate the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the chaff. Within the Catholic communion – and one presumes that it is the same with others – it is to clear the decks by establishing with precision the outer parameters of belief beyond which no layman, a priest, religious, theologian or Bishop is entitled to call himself a Catholic; and having done so to remove those who are not Catholics or doctrinal Christians from the positions through which they continue to destroy the integrity of the religious beliefs mandatory on Catholics.

It may be that it will be the orthodox who will be ‘defined out’, as by skilful manoeuvring, on the part of the ‘progressives’ Lefebvre was forced out. But unless the line of division between those who are, and those who are not, Catholic, or doctrinally Christian, especially in Catholic universities, seminaries and other policy-making positions within the Church is rigidly drawn by those endowed with the authority to do so, the disintegration of Catholicism will continue.<sup>20</sup>

This was a most astonishing statement from a man who had been decisively disciplined by Pope Pius XII and had led the Australian Church into a social and political disaster, to claim the right to sit in judgment on the religious orthodoxy of others, including even bishops. Despite his lack of competence in contemporary theology and Scriptural studies, he began a campaign to remove those he considered unorthodox. In an instance of his poor understanding of contemporary Scriptural studies, Santamaria objected to Fr Bill O’Shea writing in the Brisbane *Catholic Leader* that some words attributed to Jesus in the Gospel may have been post-resurrection in origin, and attacked O’Shea’s orthodoxy. A distinguished academic and writer, O’Shea replied courteously but firmly that Santamaria’s ‘approach to Scripture is a very fundamentalist one’, unaware of the findings of modern scholarship.<sup>21</sup>

Presumably Santamaria employed the Movement methods of letter writing campaigns and denunciations, particularly to officials in Rome and friendly bishops, and began to cultivate assets in the Vatican itself. This aspect of the Santamaria story still awaits its historians.

Santamaria and his colleagues in *AD2000* waged a campaign against Church policies and programs they disagreed with, particularly against Melbourne’s religious education and liturgical practices. In April 1993, Archbishop Sir Frank Little in Melbourne denounced this campaign that

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20. B. A. Santamaria, *Newsweekly*, 20 January, 1990, 17. Reprinted from *AD2000* of December 1989-January 1990.

21. Fr Bill O’Shea, ‘Dialogue can solve differences’, *Catholic Leader*, 18 August 1993, 4.

lauded 'orthodox Catholics' who oppose so-called Modernists; these critics 'seek to set themselves up as the sole or the true and final arbiters of orthodoxy'.<sup>22</sup> Finally Archbishop Little banned *AD2000* from sale on Church property. However, Santamaria and his enterprises enjoyed a vigorous rehabilitation when his close friend, Archbishop George Pell, became Archbishop of Melbourne in 1996.

In his 1997 book, *Santamaria: a Memoir*, Santamaria outlined his later agenda, focusing on the effects of 'economic rationalism', the defence of traditional family values, but predominantly on the battle within the Church. He deeply regretted Pope John XXIII calling the Council, quoting one priest that 'there seemed to be no compelling reason to call it at all'.<sup>23</sup>

Another area of great concern to Santamaria was that of private conscience in relation to the Church's teaching authority, affecting views on contraception, divorce, clerical celibacy and ordination of women. 'The revolt has now been publicly extended in advanced form to the ranks of the American Catholic bishops. The "progressive" bishops are headed by Cardinal Berardin and Archbishop Weakland...'.<sup>24</sup>

In the final paragraphs of *Santamaria: a Memoir*, he wrote that 'the NCC felt it had little alternative but to throw in a little added weight through the establishment of the Thomas More Centre and the publication of *AD2000*.' He adduced the writing of John Henry Newman to justify a lay organisation attempting to rescue the Church from heresy. In the conflict with Arianism in the fourth century, for long periods most 'bishops were in schism, and there were even doubts about the beliefs of one pope.'

Arianism, wrote Newman, was defeated by the popular resistance of ordinary people and of ordinary parish priests, by the 'Church taught' rather than the 'Church teaching'. That was not a popular thesis in high places within the Church. Nevertheless, the popular resistance was critical. Today's position is identical.<sup>25</sup>

The irony seemed to escape Santamaria that his defence of Church authority even against bishops rested on his private conscience judgment about what constituted orthodoxy.

### ***Vatican Betrayal of Catholic Anti-Communists?***

Santamaria repeatedly accused the Vatican of "doing a deal" with the Communist leadership', so that representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church could attend the Council as observers, but at the price of the Council issuing no condemnations of communism. He accused Vatican officials of a conspiracy to keep communism off the Council agenda:

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22. See *Catholic Leader*, 4 August 1993, 24.

23. B. A. Santamaria, *Santamaria: a Memoir* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997), 294.

24. *ibid.*, 296.

25. *ibid.*, 304.

The picture of John XXIII welcoming the Russian Orthodox representatives, together with the refusal to place Communism on the council agenda, persuaded many Catholics that the Church was no longer greatly concerned with the Communist problem. This effectively pulled the rug from under the feet of Catholics fighting Communism...'.<sup>26</sup>

Santamaria seemed unaware that the young Joseph Ratzinger had decisively rejected this conspiracy argument. In the authoritative *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Ratzinger wrote that 'the weapon of condemnation had been tried to the limit of possibility by the decree of 1 July 1948, and that it is no longer possible to deal with the problem in that way now.'

It is clear that the Church cannot but reject atheism and must oppose quite universally not only the persecution of the faithful but also the attack on human freedom generally. It is no less clear, however, that in addition it must reflect on its own share in the whole question of Marxism and the defectiveness of its own 'humanism', and so accept the comprehensive question represented by Marxism as also concerning the Church itself... this examination of conscience will provide more guidance in coming discussions than any elaborate presentation of communism and new condemnation could have offered.

The Council Fathers overwhelmingly approved these sections of the documents in November 1964.<sup>27</sup>

Yet Santamaria continued to denounce bitterly any modification of the policy of intransigent opposition to communists in any circumstances. In a reply to an article by Tony Kelly CSsR, currently a member of the International Theological Commission, Santamaria argued that 'the policy of the "open hand" of Communist collaboration, repudiated by every Pope during the last hundred years, is widely propagated within the Catholic educational system'.<sup>28</sup>

Leaving aside the sweeping allegation against Catholic education, the quote illustrates how for Santamaria opposition to communism was a governing principle in his activism. Yet he was overlooking Pope Pius XI in December 1937 speaking to the bishops of France to be careful with the communists but not reject the 'proffered hand':

This hand which is held out to us, are we in a position to grasp it? I would it were so: a proffered hand is not to be refused, but it must not be accepted to the prejudice of truth. But those who speak of a

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26. *ibid.*, 295.

27. Joseph Ratzinger, 'The dignity of the human person', in H. Vorgrimler, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (London: Burns & Oates, 1969), 150-51.

28. B. A. Santamaria, 'A Catholic debt to Marxism? – II' *Social Survey* 34:6 (July 1985), 173.

proffered hand do not make themselves clear on this score. Their speech contains confusion and obscurity which must be dispelled. Let us therefore grasp their proffered hand, but in order that we may draw them to Christ's divine doctrine.<sup>29</sup>

For Pius XI, the ban on collaboration with communists was not an absolute prohibition, but depended on careful judgments about circumstances, so that the Church was not instrumentalised in achieving morally justified goals.

Santamaria was anxious not to concede anything good in Marxism, and rejected the view that Marxism, despite its defects and even 'evil', had 'brought the Church face-to-face [sic] with its responsibilities in the field of social justice.'<sup>30</sup> He insisted moreover: 'There is no evidence whatsoever for any Marxist influence on the thought of John Paul II.'<sup>31</sup>

Against Santamaria's view, leading Catholic commentators readily concede that Marxist thought has had a great influence on Catholic thinking and on the social encyclicals. Especially is this the case for Pope John Paul II, who at times adopted words or concepts from Marxist thinking, such as 'alienation'.

Recently it has emerged that Karol Wojtyla in the early 1950s wrote a detailed critique of Marxism in a 511-page work, *Catholic Social Ethics*. According to Luxmoore and Babiuch, Wojtyla attempted 'not a "total criticism" of Marxist philosophy, but an analysis of how it has used or misused "ethical categories".' Wojtyla wrote: 'Pius XI has written that criticism of capitalism, and protest against the system of human exploitation of human work, is [sic] undoubtedly "the part of the truth" which Marxism contains.' In another place, Wojtyla wrote that even the 'evil that is class struggle' is justifiable to ensure a 'just distribution of goods'.<sup>32</sup> In contrast to Santamaria's total rejection of any element in Marxism, recent popes, like Maritain himself, have sought to preserve good and true aspects in Marxist thought and reconcile them with Catholic social philosophy.

### **Conclusion**

On his death in February 1998, Santamaria was accorded a state funeral by the Commonwealth government at a crowded St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne. Prime Minister Howard attended, with many other leading members and supporters of the Liberal Party, along with many bishops, clergy and NCC supporters. Archbishop Pell lauded Santamaria as an outstanding Catholic champion, in the anti-communist struggle especially. It was a remarkable testimony to Santamaria's tenacity and skill in the public forum.

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29. Quoted in Jacques Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940/50), 56. For Santamaria's rejection of Maritain's thought, see my 'The Puzzle of Santamaria's politicisation of Catholic Movements', in Costar *et al.*, *The Great Labor Schism*, 220-32.

30. B. A. Santamaria, 'A Catholic debt to Marxism – I', *Social Survey* 34:5 (June 1985), 141.

31. *ibid.*, 148.

32. Jonathan Luxmoore and Jolanta Babiuch, 'John Paul's debt to Marxism', *The Tablet*, 14 January 2006, 4.

Yet what perdured in Santamaria's worldview, despite all the changes in circumstance, was his mental filter which tended to see key social and political issues in terms of polar opposites engaged in a life-or-death struggle, in terms of good and evil, and often expressed in the language of moral absolutes. It was a damaging flaw that ran through so much of his advocacy and thinking. As the European churches learnt after centuries of bloodshed, and the US Bush Administration is now learning to its cost in Iraq, the crusade mentality, resting on a quasi-Manichaeian view of good versus evil, is a treacherous mindset that results in dangerous misconceptions and disastrous consequences.

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