

B. A. Santamaria: 'A True Believer'?

Brian Costar and Paul Strangio*

By revisiting the existing scholarship dealing with Santamaria's career and legacy, as well as his own writings, this article explores the apparent tension between the standard historical view that Santamaria attempted to impose an essentially 'alien philosophy' on the Labor Party, and the proposition articulated upon his death that he moved in a similar ideological orbit to the traditions of the Australian labour movement. It concludes that, while there were occasional points of ideological intersection between Santamaria and Australian laborism, his inability to transcend the particular religious imperatives which underpinned his thought and action rendered him incompatible with that movement. It is equally misleading to locate him in the Catholic tradition. Instead, the key to unlocking his motives and behaviour was that he was a Catholic anti-Modernist opposed not only to materialist atheism but also to religious and political liberalism. It is in this sense that he was 'alien' both to laborism, the majority of the Australian Catholic laity and much of the clergy.

It is now over six years since Bartholomew Augustine 'Bob' Santamaria died on Ash Wednesday 25 February 1998—enough time to allow for measured assessments of his legacy. This article begins by examining the initial reaction to his death, especially the eagerness of many typically associated with the political Left in Australia rushing to grant Santamaria a kind of posthumous pardon. Absolving him of his political sins may have been one thing; more surprising was the readiness to ideologically embrace the late Santamaria. The suggestion came from some quarters, and received tacit acceptance in others, that he had moved in a similar ideological orbit to the traditions of the Australian labour movement. Such a notion sits awkwardly with the standard historical view that Santamaria had attempted to impose an essentially 'alien philosophy'* on the Labor Party, thus explaining why his impact on labour politics proved so combustible. By revisiting the existing scholarship dealing with Santamaria's career and legacy, as well as his own writings, this article explores this apparent tension. It concludes that, while there were occasional points of ideological intersection between Santamaria and Australian laborism, notably in the 1940s, his inability to transcend the particular religious and cultural imperatives which underpinned his thought and action rendered him incompatible with that movement.

* Associate Professor Brian Costar teaches politics and Dr. Paul Strangio teaches Australian studies in the School of Political and Social Inquiry at Monash University. This paper has been peer-reviewed.

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While Santamaria was certainly not in a labour tradition, it is equally misleading to locate him in *the* Catholic tradition.¹ The key to unlocking his motives and behaviour from the early 1930s to his death was that he was a Catholic anti-Modernist (what is known in Catholicism as 'Integralism') opposed not only to materialist atheism, but also to religious and political liberalism. He drew these ideas from a selective reading of certain Papa! Encyclicals. For Santamaria, traditional Catholicism was the path to personal salvation and was inseparable from political action. It was in this sense that he was 'alien' both to laborism, the majority of the Australian Catholic laity and much of the clergy; not because he was an Italian Catholic with an exotic-sounding surname, as some of his ethnocentric Communist enemies suggested.

A Political Post-Mortem

The reaction to the passing of Bob Santamaria presented many paradoxes. They surfaced even before he had drawn his last breath. That Prime Minister John Howard flew from Canberra to visit Santamaria on his deathbed was, on the one hand, completely explicable. After all, for a man who claimed never to have voted for the Liberal Party, Santamaria had helped consolidate the Coalition in power during the second half of the 1950s and the 1960s. On the other hand, Howard's pilgrimage seemed anomalous given that Santamaria was, according to his one-time schoolmate, the former Labor Senator Jim McClelland, contemptuous of both the Prime Minister and his administration.² The federal governments' decision to grant Santamaria a state funeral and the presence at Melbourne's St Patrick's Cathedral of a host of Liberal and National Party luminaries further highlighted the debt of gratitude that political conservatives owed him.

The number of words expended in analysing Santamaria's life and legacy raised the question of why the recent passing of others of commensurate, if not greater, importance (for example H. C. 'Nugget' Coombs) failed to generate comparable interest. Not that Santamaria did not merit the attention. In his own unique way, he was a figure of significance in Australia's post-war political landscape, though some of the comments about that significance were excessive. Clyde Cameron was the worst offender, with his judgement that 'Santa will go down in history, as the most outstanding political figure of the 20th century in Australia, easily'.³

¹ That there exists more than one 'Catholic tradition', both theologically and politically is illustrated by Bruce Duncan's compendious *Crusade or Conspiracy? Catholics and the Anti-Communist Struggle in Australia*. Sydney; UNSW Press, 2001.

² *Age*, 26 February 1998; *Australian*, 27 February 1998.

³ *Age*, 26 February 1998.

While the volume of the coverage given to Santamaria's death was welcome, the standard of the analysis was less impressive; here an historical amnesia seemed to be at work. For such a polemical figure, one who had excited enormous passions and controversy while alive, the reactions to his passing were remarkably moderate, even tame. Even allowing for the generosity of spirit usually associated with eulogies, it was strange that many of the most glowing tributes to Santamaria originated, as James Griffin has pointed out, 'from commentators quite alienated not only from his religious and moral beliefs but from his socio-political opinions'.⁴ The general recollection was of an almost saintly figure who had stood by his ideals irrespective of fashionable opinion and in the face of overwhelming odds. Santamaria was painted, too, as a man of luminous intellect and rare political genius. Frank Devine, echoing Graham Freudenberg's characterisation of him two decades earlier, praised Santamaria as an 'intellectual'.⁵ Interestingly, not only had Santamaria rejected the tag when alive, but aligned himself with George Orwell's views on the political unreliability of the intellectual 'caste'.⁶ He was, however, a highly skilled polemicist in the Catholic Apologetics tradition which privileges advocacy over reflection.⁷ Santamaria was also lauded for fighting the good fight against communism within the labour movement and as a prolific commentator on Australia's foreign policy and strategic interests. In the last years of his life, he had also been an indefatigable critic of the excesses of free market capitalism.⁸ Most puzzling of all, was that Laborites, both past and present, seemed reluctant to say anything unkind about the one-time scourge of the party. There were a few exceptions: John Halfpenny branded Santamaria a 'modern day inquisitor', while Bob Hogg contributed a biting piece to the *Australian*.⁹ Their voices¹⁰ however, were more than offset by others associated with the labour movement who joined in the hagiographics. They ranged from Bob Hawke, who at least added the

⁴ James Griffin, 'The Santamaria legacy', *Eureka Street*, vol. 8, no. 3 (April 1998): 26.

⁵ *Australian*, 2 March 1998; Graham Freudenberg & A Certain Grandeur; *Quough Whitlam in Politics*, Melbourne: Sun Books, 1977, 12.

⁶ B. A. Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1981, 92.

⁷ Apologetics refers to the art of arguing in favour of the Catholic faith. As such it is a 'skill' that can be taught. Santamaria explains that '[Father] Sheehan's *Apologetics & Christian Doctrine* provided me, as a schoolboy at matriculation standard, with the rational justification for my act of faith in Catholic Christianity'; *ibid.*, 10.

⁸ Included among the disparate collection of commentators who paid generous tribute to Santamaria were Greg Sheridan, *Australian*, 27 February 1998; Robert Manne, *Age*, 28 February 1998; Clyde Cameron, *Weekend Australian*, 28 February-1 March 1998; Ken Davidson, *Age*, 5 March 1998; and Patrick Morgan, 'A Short Memoir of B.A. Santamaria', *Quadrant*, vol. 42, no. 4 (April 1998): 28-30.

⁹ For Halfpenny's remarks see the *Australian*, 26 February 1998. For Hogg's article, 'Zealot earned no sainthood', see *ibid.*, 4 March 1998.

qualifier that he had 'profound differences* with Santamaria, to the effusive Clyde Cameron.¹⁰

Inevitably, some of Santamaria's former adversaries within the Catholic community broke their silence and provided much less adulatory assessments of his life and work.¹¹ Despite their contributions, not all of the fictions perpetuated about Santamaria upon his passing have been adequately challenged. There has been no serious rebuttal, for instance, of the astonishing article written by the *Australian's* foreign editor, Greg Sheridan, in which he waxed lyrical about Santamaria's positive influence on post-war Australian foreign policy. According to Sheridan, that influence was 'decisive' and 'no other figure was as responsible for keeping Australian foreign policy anti-communist and committed to the American alliance'. If this seems an exaggeration, then Sheridan's evocation of Santamaria as a far-sighted strategic thinker who advanced the cause of the development of a positive relationship with Asia falls within the realm of fantasy.¹² The actual record shows that Santamaria over-simplified the debate on Australian foreign policy by persistently indulging in crude reductionism about the causes of the post-war upheavals to Australia's north. As Santamaria explained it, this instability was due to the march of monolithic international communism. It was an analysis that submerged indigenous factors and regional variations, and underestimated the legitimate aspirations of people for independence and social and economic reform. Thus, in 1949, in attacking the Chifley Labor Government's support for Indonesian independence as a 'sell-out to international Communism', Santamaria's mouthpiece *News Weekly* warned that it was 'against Australia's interests to have Asiatic (*sic*) countries at our front door'. It further demanded: 'How many people realise that when the Netherlands East Indies goes, Australia is next in line? The last barrier separating Australia from the Communistic Asiatic states will have fallen'.¹³ This unashamed preparedness to exploit and encourage the Australian public's historic anxieties about their location as a white outpost in

Hawke's statement was reported in the *Herald Sun*, 27 February 1998. For Cameron's comments see *ibid* and the *Age*, 26 February 1998.

¹⁰ The best example of this is Paul Ormonde ed., *Santamaria: The Politics of* *fiw/y* Melbourne: Spectrum, 2000. Ormonde, and most other contributors to this collection, belonged to a group of Catholic intellectuals who in the 1960s took charge of the *Catholic Worker* and used the journal to contest the conservative Catholic orthodoxy articulated by the National Civic Council (NCC). For further details refer to Max Charlesworth, 'Australian Catholic Intellectuals: The *Catholic Worker* and the "Movement"', in Brian Head and James Walter eds, *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988, 274-88; and Paul Ormonde, *The Movement*, Melbourne: Nelson, 1972, 77.

¹¹ *Australian*, 27 February 1998.

¹³ Quoted in Ormonde, *The Movement*, 24-5.

Asia was typical of Santamaria's commentaries on international affairs. Indeed, 'five-minute-to-midnight' alarmism about Australia being swamped by a 'Red Asiatic Flood', as a 1950 *News Weekly* headline declared, was a constant theme of those commentaries, including when Santamaria was one of the most vociferous advocates of Australia's military involvement in Vietnam.¹⁴ Less well understood, but even more remarkable, is that Santamaria seriously entertained the Eurocentric and imperialist delusion that it might be part of Australia's divine mission to serve as 'the "mirror of Christianity to Asia"'.¹⁵

Another of the myths that came to surround Santamaria in his final years, as well as being reinforced by some of the tributes which followed his death, was that of an enduring opponent of the excesses of capitalism. It was a self-image encouraged by Santamaria's frequent denunciations of global markets in his regular column in the *Weekend Australian* (1976-97) and in his 1981 autobiography, revised and updated in 1997. Several high profile media appearances around the time of the publication of those memoirs further cultivated this view.¹⁶ True, he

¹⁴ See Vai Noone, *Disturbing the War: Melbourne Catholics and Vietnam*, Melbourne: Spectrum, 1993, especially 37-41, 78-83, 116-24, 189 and 305; and Val Noone, 'Santamaria, War and Christianity' in Ormonde, *Santamaria: The Politics of Fear*, In the 1997 edition of his memoirs Santamaria was still sounding alarm bells about Australia's vulnerability to Asian expansionism: 'The de facto removal of American and British power from the South Pacific brings obvious security problems in its train for all South-East Asian powers. But perhaps especially for Australia—an almost empty continent with vast natural resources, mineral and agricultural, whose economy is a shambles, while the borders of the others are under pressure of already vast and expanding populations.' B.A. Santamaria, *Santamaria: A Memoir*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997, 279-80. The *News Weekly* headline 'Red Asiatic Flood May Engulf Australia' of 4 January 1950 is cited in Ormonde, *The Movement*, 25.

¹⁵ B.A., Santamaria, *The Price of Freedom: The Movement - After Ten Years*, Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 1966, 235-6. Apologists for Santamaria such as Sheridan, perhaps trying to extenuate the racialist overtones immanent in so much of his foreign policy commentary, have highlighted his early calls for an end to the White Australia policy. Noone dates the NCC's support for immigration policy reform to the end of the 1950s. While this put Santamaria ahead of the mainstream political parties, some of his most ardent Left-wing opponents had long beaten him to the punch. Most notably, the Communist Party of Australia had been critical of the White Australia policy for several decades, as well as having taken up the cause of discrimination against Aborigines. See *tix Australian*, 27 February 1998; Noone, *Disturbing the War*, 38; and Stuart Macintyre, *The Reds: The Communist Party of Australia from Origins to Illegality*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1998, 131-2 and 265-6,

¹⁶ For example, in 1996 he appeared on the ABC Television current affairs program, *Lateline*, in which he and the ex-Labor Senator Jim McClelland

acknowledged, that for many years he had been forced by the more compelling and urgent dangers of communism to suspend the fight against unfettered capitalism. However, once communism was slain he had rejoined the struggle. This commitment was contrasted to the new breed of Laborites who had capitulated to the juggernaut of global economic forces. What is omitted from this account is that while it was true, for a long time, Santamaria saw totalitarian Communism as a more immediate threat to Christian civilisation than capitalism, he remained forever relentless and vigilant in his opposition to liberal tendencies within the Catholic Church. Yet upon Santamaria's death, the political ramifications of his preoccupation were ignored. Clyde Cameron claimed that he had been closer to Labor philosophy than the former ALP Prime Ministers, Bob Hawke and Paul Keating, ever were.¹⁷ Tom Uren, Jim McClelland and ex-communist Bernie Taft were others who suggested that Santamaria and the broad political Left had, in the final analysis, stood for many of the same things.¹⁸

Catholicism v. Socialism and Liberalism

To support his claim of having been a consistent opponent of *laissez-faire* capitalism Santamaria pointed to the contents of the newspaper the *Catholic Worker* of which he was foundation editor when it was launched in February 1936. When the *Catholic Worker* was established, Santamaria was studying Arts-Law at the University of Melbourne and, along with other young Catholic students, was a member of the Melbourne-based study group, the *Campion Society*.¹⁹ It was also a time when many Australians were still feeling the devastating social and economic effects of the Great Depression. The inaugural issues of the *Catholic Worker*, which Santamaria largely wrote, were characterised by an unambiguous anti-capitalist sentiment. An editorial in the first issue condemned both capitalism and communism; they were

concluded a rather sentimental peace. The following year Santamaria was interviewed at length by Phillip Adams on the ABC Radio National program, *Late Night Live*, and by Jon Faine and Terry Lane during the *Conversation Hour**, ABC Radio, 3L0. Significantly, all of these programs were replayed in the days immediately following Santamaria's death.

¹⁷ *Herald Sun*, 27 February 1998. Also refer to Cameron's article headlined 'True Believer' in the *Weekend Australian*, 28 February-1 March 1998.

¹⁸ For the statements by Uren and McClelland see the *Australian*, 26 and 27 February 1998, respectively. Meanwhile, Taft wrote a piece for the *Age*, 26 February 1998, 'Crossing the great divide to build friendship with the foe'.

¹⁹ Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, 11-14. A discussion of the origins of the *Campion Society* can be found in Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1985, 378-83 and Colin Jory, *The Campion Society and Catholic Social Militancy*. Sydney: Harpham, 1986.

the illegitimate offspring of the same diseased materialism; bom insult Man by regarding him as a labor unit rather than as God's noblest creation; both regulate their behaviour by economic expediency rather than by considerations of justice ..²⁰

The second issue, however, identified capitalism as 'Public Enemy number one', not because as a social system it was 'intrinsically more evil than Communism—they are both equally false, and equally fatal to the human personality—but because today it dominates the world*'.²¹

But, for Santamaria, capitalism's status as 'Public Enemy number one' was shortlived. When the third issue of the *Catholic Worker* appeared in April 1936, its emphasis had shifted again. By then reports had reached Australia of the sackings of churches and atrocities against Catholic clergy in Spain, where the civil war was to shortly erupt. It was an epiphanous moment for Santamaria and was to lead to his estrangement from most of his fellow activists in the Campion Society. The beginning for him of a Manichean dichotomy between Good and Evil, henceforth there could be no truce with atheistic communism. In his memoirs he explains that the result was a reshaping of priorities; suddenly the most pressing issue was 'freedom of religion*. By November 1936 the *Catholic Worker* was talking about a war 'between the faith and paganism', a war in which 'there can be no compromise'.²² As Stuart Macintyre records, the Spanish Civil War brought a more 'popular and systematic character' to the Australian Catholic community's resistance to communism. This was to be crucial to the mobilisation of anti-communist forces in the trade unions and ALP due to the historical alignment of Catholics and the labour movement. Santamaria concurs:

Without the passionate commitment derived from the issues fought over during the Spanish Civil war, the long fight against Communist influences within Australian labour, and the fbnnation of the Movement and, later, of the Industrial Groups, are alike incomprehensible.²³

Pope Pius XI's 1937 encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* provided Papal affirmation of the evils of 'bolshévistic and atheistic communism, which aims at upsetting the social order and at undermining the very foundations of Christian civilization'²⁴ The *Catholic Worker* commenting on the encyclical described the fight against

²⁰ Quoted in Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, 18.

²¹ Quoted in Ormonde, *The Movement*, 5.

²² Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, 26. Also refer to Ormonde, *The Movement** 5-6 and Gerard Henderson, *Mr Santamaria and the Bishops*, Sydney: Hale & Remonger, 1983, 15.

²³ Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, 28. Also see Macintyre, *The Reds*, 302-3.

²⁴ Pius IX, *Divini Redemptoris*, www.vatican.va, I.

Communism as 'a battle to the death'.²⁵ The strength of Santamaria's militant Catholicism was evident at the public debate on the Spanish Civil War at Melbourne University in March 1937 when he caused uproar by declaring that

When the bullets of the atheists struck the statue of Christ outside the cathedral in Madrid, for some that was just lead striking brass, but for me those bullets were piercing the heart of Christ my King.

This is not to say that Santamaria did not remain a voice for reform of Australia's social order during his crusade against 'godless' communism. This remained so until the end of the 1940s—a point at which his growing preoccupation with international affairs, or more specifically the 'march of communism' in Asia, virtually subsumed his interest in domestic policy issues (but not interna! church politics). Yet it was never die case that Santamaria was situated in the mainstream of Labor philosophy. The bedrock of his social thinking was his religious-inspired ideology. He was hostile to the eighteenth century Enlightenment and the secular ideological currents of liberalism and socialism that flowed from it and which shaped social democratic ideology and strategy both in Europe and Australia In a revealing passage in his memoirs, Santamaria explicitly addresses the philosophical conflict separating him from what he described as 'the confused complex of liberal-Marxist ideas that have been dominant in the West since the days of the French Enlightenment, with their implicit belief in the perfectibility of people and society on this Earth'. Santamaria's social philosophy rested on a different assumption:

a less Utopian view of people, with a profound belief in the Fall and in Original Sin, imposing the necessity of the search for justice, but knowing that the quest for human perfectibility on earth was ultimately unreachsable and would be used to justify the most appalling tyrannies. The perfection of people, if it could be achieved, was not for this life, and, as far as concerned the next, it depended on the maintenance of the intimate link with God ...²⁷

In short, Santamaria's preferred social system was one that would best prepare people for the Kingdom of God by creating the conditions in which religious and spiritual life would flourish in the temporal world.

²⁵ Quoted in Henderson, 15.

²⁶ Quoted by Archbishop George Pell in Santamaria's panegyric, *News Weekly*, 21 March 1998. Pell then reportedly departed from his script, commenting 'Strong stuff, and it's great stuff. *Herald Sun*, 4 March 1998.

²⁷ Santamaria, *Santamaria*, 30.

Distributism and Anti-Modernism

In large part, Santamaria's social ideas were those he absorbed within the collective intellectual environment of the Campion Society during the 1930s. A primary theoretical inspiration of the Campion Society was the English distributist tradition, whose best known exponents were the Catholic writers Hilaire Belloc and Gilbert Chesterton.²⁸ Fundamentally, distributism was a version of communitarianism which opposed both capitalism and state collectivism, regarding them as materialistic, a distortion of human society and incompatible with individual freedom. Capitalism, the distributists argued, inevitably led to growing concentrations of ownership and wage slavery for the masses. State collectivism was no better, placing, as it did, the economic power in the hands of a political elite and a centralised bureaucracy. At the core of distributist thought lay the idea that individual and social liberty could only be guaranteed through the widest possible dispersal of property, that is, the encouragement of individual or small-scale ownership of property. Indeed, the distributists held that the private ownership and equitable distribution of the means of production were integral to the maintenance of the Christian ideal of freedom and human dignity, as well as providing an antidote to the de-humanising effects of industrial society. Consistent with its anti-modernist temper, distributism harked back to an idealised vision of the European middle ages for its 'organic' model of society. It advocated the revival of medieval-type guilds in commerce, agriculture and industry. Particular stress was given to nurturing rural communities, or the restoration of a 'peasant state'²⁹

While distributism offered a strong critique of 'liberalismo' and 'socialismo'³⁰, it was less successful in providing an effective model of government for modern states. Anti-modernist papal theory always contained a disturbing anti-democratic temper, as evidenced in Leo XIII's 1885 Encyclical *Immortale Dei* (On the Christian Constitution of States), which declared:

In political affairs, and all matters civil, the laws aim at securing the common good, and are not framed according to the delusive caprices and

²⁸ See, for example, Henderson, 11; Robert Murray, *The Split: Australian Labor in the Fifties*, Melbourne: Cheshire, 1972, 44; and O'Farrell, 381. Also refer to Santamaria, *Santamaria*, 13.

²⁹ This summary of distributist thought largely draws on Jay P. Corrin, *O.K. Chesterton & Hilaire Belloc: The Battle Against Modernity*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1981, especially xii-iv, and ch. 7.

³⁰ Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*. It is important to remember that Pius denounced socialism and liberalism, not communism and capitalism as is often cited.

opinions of the mass of the people, but by truth and by justice; the ruling powers are invested with a sacredness more than human ...³¹

Regrettably, such views provided a theological buttress for authoritarian regimes such as in Spain under Franco (1937-75) and Portugal under Salazar (1932-68) which, although respecting the rights of the Catholic Church, seriously violated the rights of ordinary citizens. While Santamaria later condemned Franco for his 'barbarities'³², in neither edition of his memoirs does he as much as mention Salazar. Santamaria was well acquainted with anti-modernist papal political theory and took it seriously, which explains his ambivalence to democracy and his open hostility to social libertarianism. Locating Santamaria's 'ideal state' is problematic because he trimmed his public utterances in order to remain relevant in an increasingly secular society. Yet, there can be little doubt that he would have preferred a less urban and more rural Australia in which his view of Christianity exercised a substantial influence over state institutions. Santamaria always preferred to operate in hierarchical organisations such as the Church, the Catholic Social Studies Movement (the Movement) or the National Civic Council (NCC) where collective decision-making was discouraged.³³ In that regard, his remark that 'nothing was more alien to me than membership of a political party. I disliked the necessary compromises of politics,'³⁴ reveals much more than he intended.

In the pages of the *Catholic Worker*, then *Freedom* (subsequently renamed *News Weekly*), the organ of the Movement, which commenced publication in 1943, and in the annual social justice statements issued by the Catholic bishops (most of which Santamaria wrote) from 1940 to 1956, he promoted a broadly distributist social philosophy. His social views were also influenced by the papal social encyclicals, especially Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) as reflected in, among other things, his advocacy of corporatist forms of industrial organisation.³⁵ Gerard Henderson has closely analysed the social teachings of the Australian Catholic Church in the 1940s. He concludes that it was largely unsystematic and short on detail. More damning, Henderson argues that many of the Church's proposals exhibited a marked 'utopian' flavour and were highly derivative, with little attempt made to adapt the teachings to the realities of Australian economic and social conditions, nor indeed

³¹ Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei*, 1885, www.vatican.va 5.

³² Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, 30.

³³ See, for example, Mark Considine, 'The National Civic Council: Politics Inside Out', *Politics*, vol. 20, no. 1 (May 1985): 48-58.

³⁴ Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, 83.

³⁵ Henderson, ch. 5; and Murray, 44-8.

reconcile them with the broad ideological traditions of Australian society.³⁶ In other words, the social philosophy of the Catholic Church at that time, much of which Santamaria generated, bore little relevance to the lives and experiences of ordinary Australians, nor was it of any theoretical or practical value to the labour movement's ongoing struggle to represent and further the interests of Australian workers.

There was no better illustration of tin's than Santamaria's obsession with rural settlement, which formed a cornerstone of his social theorising in the 1940s. In 1939, in his capacity as assistant Director of the Australian National Secretariat of Catholic Action, Santamaria became the foundation secretary of the National Catholic Rural Movement (NCRM). The objectives of the NCRM, as articulated by Santamaria in the organisation's newspaper, *Rural Life*, and other publications, was the encouragement of agricultural development through the proliferation of small, 'independent' or semi-subsistence family farms.³⁷ In his 1942 pamphlet, *The Fight for the Land*, Santamaria, in defending the concept of 'independent farming', conceded that 'imported in our attitude to the land [is] that Catholic and European tradition which has founded a permanent agriculture in the Old World'.³⁸ In short, as one of his critics has noted, Santamaria's aim was to build a rural Catholic peasantry in Australia.³⁹ Indeed, Santamaria urged that the families to be settled on the land should preferably be drawn from the rural areas of Europe. His ideas for rural settlement were partly based on practical considerations. He believed, and he was far from alone in holding this view, that Australia's national survival was contingent on a dramatic increase in population. He further reasoned that population growth depended on economic security which, in turn, demanded agricultural expansion. Santamaria believed that rural folk, particularly Catholic rural folk, could be relied upon to be more fecund than their city cousins. In addition, influenced by the writings of the Queensland government economist, Colin Clark, Santamaria predicted that the changing patterns of world trade would in the long term favour rural production. He warned that, without significant land settlement and increased rural output, Australia risked the development of an 'unbalanced', 'over-industrialised economy', and even faced the future prospect of famine.⁴⁰

³⁶ Henderson, ch. 5. Michael Hogan supplies a more positive account of the social justice statements published by the Catholic bishops in the 1940s. Michael Hogan, 'Australian Catholic Corporatism: Proposals for Industrial Councils in the 1940s', *Labour History*, no. 62 (May 1992): 91-105.

³⁷ Henderson, 22, and Murray, 106-7.

³⁸ Quoted in Murray, 107.

³⁹ See LR Humphreys *Wadham: Scientist for Land and People*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001, 123f. Santamaria always denied the charge; Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, 52.

⁴⁰ Henderson, 51-9 and 79-80; Murray, 109-16; and Santamaria, *Santamaria*, 42-7.

Ultimately, though, Santamaria's commitment to rural communities of semi-autonomous family farms sprang from religious motives. It was a vision entirely congruent with distributist philosophy and was informed by a particular religious imperative at the heart of his social theories. In an address to the NORM'S (which he called 'a Movement with a predominately spiritual mission'⁴¹) annual conference in April 1951, he explained the organisation's *raison d'être* thus:

All the observation and experience, all the reading that one could do, showed that the fervour and the regularity of religious spirit, the fervour and very life of Catholics depended upon the strength of rural life in this country. I think it is a general rule, to which there are very few exceptions, that whenever your society becomes urbanised and your Catholics become urbanised, it becomes almost physically impossible to keep up the level of Catholic life among them.

That was the first reason why the Rural Movement was begun. It was the vital reason, the fundamental reason; because with rural life there went the strength of religious practices. If you destroyed rural life, no matter how many Churches you built in the cities, you could not keep Christian life going at the proper level.⁴²

Thus, rural life was to be encouraged because it was conducive to Catholic spirituality, whereas industrial, urbanised life was to be discouraged because it was destructive of that religious impulse.

Santamaria's dream of creating a European-style peasantry in Australia blithely disregarded the lessons of earlier attempts to establish an independent yeomanry on Australian soil. Some of those lessons were painfully fresh; the unsuitability of Australia's geography to small rural holdings had been amply demonstrated by the dismal record of the post-World War I soldier settlement schemes and the failure of the Bruce-Page (1923-29) Government's closer land settlement experiments involving British migrants. It is incongruous that Santamaria should have been advocating such **Utopian** rural schemes at a time when the Curtin and Chifley Labor Governments were laying the groundwork for the rapid industrialisation of the Australian economy. A principal motivating force for those plans was to make the economy less vulnerable to the vagaries of international commodity markets, a problem that had plagued the nation during the inter-war years⁴³. Santamaria's rural communitarianism had **little** to contribute to the refurbishment of Labor

⁴¹ Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, 51

⁴² Quoted in Murray, 110.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 108-9. For a discussion of the post-World War I land settlement schemes see Stuart Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia, Volume 4, 1910-142: The Succeeding Age*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986, 207-10.

philosophy in the post-war reconstruction era, which involved support for a mixed industrialised economy, Keynesian macro-economic management principles and an enhanced social welfare system. As Bob Hogg argued, Santamaria had stood squarely against those who in the post-war years were 'struggling to assert an indigenous brand of democratic socialism within the [Labor] party.'

Santamaria, Laborism and Catholic Traditionalism

Santamaria's social philosophy was largely peripheral to the Australian labour movement, even when his political influence over that movement was seemingly at its strongest. This was because, for Santamaria, religion was more important than secular social and economic advancement. He waged a crusade within the Australian labour movement against what he and many others saw as the doctrinaire creed of Stalinist communism, yet was himself the bearer of an equally dogmatic 'Catholic' code; both proved incompatible with Laborism.

Why then, at least for a time, did Santamaria exert influence over a significant section of the labour movement? First, that influence has been exaggerated and owed much to the clandestine tactics employed by Santamaria and his supporters in the Movement. Mirroring the manipulative tactics of their Leninist opponents (for many years a portrait of Lenin adorned the mantelpiece of the Santamaria home), the Movement's primary strategy was that of 'permeation'. The word, which was a sanitised synonym for 'infiltration', first appeared publicly in the accidentally published article 'Religious apostolate and civic action' in the *Bombay Examiner* in 1955. Santamaria, fearing political embarrassment, later argued unconvincingly that what he meant was akin to the British Fabian Society's relationship with the Labour Party. He never denied, however, that he adopted the tactics of Bolshevism: 'my thought was that the battles to defeat Communist power in the labour movement... should be essentially one of cadre against cadre, cell against cell, fraction against fraction'.⁴⁵ In the short term this strategy was successful and the fact that it was clandestine also allowed Santamaria and his supporters to claim an influence disproportionate to their actual support. Ironically Santamaria's enemies, especially the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), contributed to his status by overstating his power in such propaganda leaflets as *The Black Hand of Santamaria*, with its ethnically snide title and lurid cover.

Second, support for the Movement and Santamaria was an expression of socio-economic changes taking place in the Australian Catholic community by the late 1930s. Max Charlesworth writes:

⁴⁴ *Australian*, 4 March 1998,

⁴⁵ Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, 66 and 161-2.

Australian Catholics were no longer a minority of inferior status—working-class 'Micks'—but people who had moved up the social ladder ... [they] became increasingly conscious of their potential political power and many of them were attracted to the idea of involving the Church in politics... Indeed, it is tempting to suggest that even if Mr Santamaria had never existed, it would have been necessary to invent him and his Movement to satisfy the social, psychological and quasi-religious needs of the new lower middle class Catholics.⁴⁶

Thus, Santamaria and the Movement were the manifestations of a newly assertive and upwardly mobile Catholic minority who were determined to exert an increased influence on the affairs of the labour movement and the wider society.

Thirdly, and more mundanely, Santamaria's influence—as distinct from that of the Democratic Labor Party (DLP)—throughout his religious and political career was confined mostly to the state of Victoria, and even that waned after the death of his patron Archbishop Mannix in 1963. One of the first acts of Mannix's successor, Archbishop Justin Simonds, was to remove Santamaria from the weekly Catholic television program.⁴⁷ A later successor of Simonds, Archbishop Sir Frank Little, was no more sympathetic to Santamaria, who had to await the 1996 appointment of the 'traditionalist' George Pell to regain something of the relationship he had enjoyed with his patron, Archbishop Daniel Mannix.⁴⁸

That Santamaria sought to proselytise amongst the Catholic/labour community reflected the Australian social structure of the time in which there existed a strong link amongst a unionised, Catholic, Irish, working-class and the ALP—strengthened as it had been by the conscription controversies of 1916/17. In Santamaria's eyes the anti-socialism of the non-Labor parties offered few opportunities because they were permeated with Masonic Protestantism and hostile to Catholics.⁴⁹ By contrast, Santamaria regarded the infiltration of the Movement into the labour movement as involving 'not the interposition of an

⁴⁶Charlesworth, 279.

⁴⁷ Duncan, 382-3. Sir Frank Packer then offered Santamaria a five-minute slot on Channel 9, which became *Point of View* and ran for over thirty years.

⁴⁸ Little was seen by Santamaria as a 'progressive'. The Archbishop was attacked by anti-modernists in his diocese such as the Australian Marian Academy, which accused him of 'grave abuse of Episcopal power' for 'enforcing' a modernist education program on Catholic schools in 1981, www.members.iinetnet.au.

⁴⁹ In correspondence with Mannix in 1957, Santamaria also claimed that Communists in the ACTU 'are backed by Freemasonry, which is ruthlessly using the opportunity afforded by Catholic division to purge every Catholic influence from Public life'. He also conceded that some Freemasons 'whilst opposed to Catholics were still more opposed to Communism'. Santamaria to Mannix and attachment, 8 November 1957 (copy held by authors).

extraneous or alien force... but me mobilisation of a force that was already present but dormant.⁵⁰ The weapon that he employed in activating that latent force was anti-communism, which became the primary conduit of whatever influence he exerted. As Australia's most high-profile and indomitable Cold War warrior, he attained a prominence and stature far beyond that which his social theories warranted or would otherwise have won for him.

Also, Santamaria was influential over those who already shared his anti-communism. While he was a public polemicist, an equally important aspect of his operations was to address large, invitation-only meetings of Catholic laymen (women rarely were invited) organised by members of the then secretive and conservative Catholic men's sodality The Knights of the Southern Cross.⁵¹ To employ historian Sidney Hook's phraseology, Santamaria was an 'eventful' but not an 'event-making' figure.⁵² The Cold War made and sustained him long after the internal challenge of communism in Australia had receded.

By 1953 the objective of the Movement and the ALP Industrial Groups to break the Communist influence within the trade union movement had largely been accomplished, aided as it was by external events and the mindless militancy of some CPA trade union leaders. No longer content with weeding out communist unionists, Santamaria and the Movement now sought to exert their influence through the Grouper faction of the ALP to exclude from the party those who did not share their anti-communist view of foreign relations, and to pressure Labor to advance Catholic social policies, including his rural settlement proposals.⁵³ His apparently unlimited ambitions for the Movement were highlighted in a confidential letter he wrote to Archbishop Mannix in December 1952. It brazenly predicted that within a few years the Movement:

should be able to completely transform the leadership of the Labor movement, and to introduce into federal and state spheres large numbers of members who ... should be able to implement a Christian social program in both the state and the federal spheres... This is the first time that such a work has become possible in Australia and, as far as I can see, in the Anglo-Saxon world since the advent of Protestantism⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, 66.

⁵¹ These days the Knights have their own web site; www.ksca-org.au

⁵² Sidney Hook, *The Hero in History: A Study in Limitation and Possibility*, Boston: Beacon, 1955, 154. For Hook, the 'eventful' took advantage of opportunities presented, whereas the 'event-making' created those opportunities.

⁵³ Murray, 128 and 177. Henderson, 172-3; and Santamaria, *Santamaria*, \ 13-4.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Gerard Henderson, 'B.A. Santamaria, Santamariaism and the cult of personality' in *50 Years of the Santamaria Movement, Eureka Street Papers no. /*, Melbourne: Jesuit Publications, 1992, 43.

Comments such as this suggest that Santamaria's objectives extended far beyond the exclusion of communists from the trade union movement that he sought in fact to transform the ALP into a type of religious party. That he was an admirer of some of the Christian Democratic Parties of Western Europe there is little doubt⁵⁵, but whether he had ambitions to convert the ALP or the DLP into a 'confessional' party remains, even five decades later, contested and controversial.⁵⁶ Some among Santamaria's enemies lauded Evatt's October 1954 statement denouncing the Movement as saving the ALP from religious manipulation⁵⁷. A distinction needs to be drawn here between Santamaria's more fanciful aims and political reality. The Labor Party in 1954 was too complex and diverse an institution to be captured by a religious zealot who was not even a member. This was highlighted by the fact when the Split came in 1955, its major disruptions were confined largely to Victoria.⁵⁸

Santamaria's public views on the desirability of religious parties in Australia were tempered by fears of a sectarian reaction.⁵⁹ In private, however, he was less circumspect. In a report on the 1957 ACTU Congress he wrote for Mannix he lamented that in Australia 'Christian Trade Union Organisation is impossible' but if it were it would provide a beneficial counterbalance to the secular ACTU.⁶⁰ Santamaria firmly believed that the Movement's successes of the late 1940s and early 1950s were because it operated under the control of the Catholic Bishops and he was devastated when Rome, encouraged by the Sydney Hierarchy, ruled in 1957 that 'die Movement must exclude from its programme all direct and indirect action on unions or political parties'⁶¹. Among Rome's motives for its decision was a belief that 'it is not deemed advisable that a Confessional Political Party be

⁵⁵ *Spotlight on Santamaria*, (Meet the Press TCN 9 November 1959), Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1960, 29. Although he would have preferred the Christian Democratic Parties to be more obedient to the Church.

⁵⁶ Ross Fitzgerald, *The Pope's Battalion's: Santamaria, Catholicism and the Labor Split*, Brisbane: Queensland University Press, 2003, 236.

⁵⁷ Paul Ormonde (quoting Arthur Gietzelt), 'A sort of healing', *Eureka Street*, (November 1994): 16.

⁵⁸ The Queensland split of 1957, which also terminated a Labor government, was only tangentially related to the events of 1954/5. See B. J. Costar, 'Vince Gain Labor's Loser' in Denis Murphy, Roger Joyce, Margaret Cribb and Rae Wear eds, *The Premiers of Queensland*, Brisbane: Queensland University Press, 2003, 459-74.

⁵⁹ Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, 249.

⁶⁰ Letter & Attachment, Santamaria to Mannix, 8 November 1957. (Copy held by authors)

⁶¹ Cardinal Fumasoni-Biondi, Sacre Congregatio De Propagando Fide to Cardinal Gilroy 25 July 1957. (Copy held by authors).

established [in Australia]'.⁶² After failing in attempts to circumvent the Roman ruling, which included the dispatch by Mannix of an extraordinarily intemperate letter accusing elements in the Vatican of doing the work of 'the Communists' in 'crushing the Movement'⁶³, Santamaria established the National Civic Council (NCC) which had no formal links with the Catholic Church but enjoyed the personal patronage of Mannix and the Bishops of Sandhurst, Toowoomba, Wagga and Rockhampton,

By embarking upon such a blatant attempt to manipulate a secular party to serve religious ends, Santamaria overplayed his hand. His behaviour opened divisions within the Movement and its supporters. Many of them, while being itappy to cooperate in the anti-communist struggle, had no intention, as Murray notes, of 'joining in a crusade for the implementation of Santamaria's cataclysmic and urgent view of Christian social principles and foreign relations'.⁶⁴ There would be a similar story in the DLP after the Labor Party split. The DLP acted as a stumbling block to the election of a federal Labor government and a pressure group on the coalition parties to maintain a hawkish foreign policy, but offered little that was distinctive in terms of social policy. As Murray indicates, an important reason for this policy sterility was that many of the DLP leaders had little sympathy for the dogmatic Catholic social philosophy aspirations of Santamaria. He regularly angered the leaders of the federal parliamentary DLP, Senators Vince Gair and Frank McManus, by assuming to speak on behalf of the party. The DLP senators were men of traditional laborist values who shared Santamaria's fanatical anti-communism but not much else.⁶⁵

The events of 1955 curtailed any ambitions Santamaria may have entertained to convert the Labor Party into a European-style Christian Democratic party, but evidence exists that he was keen to try again with the smaller DLP. Conventional wisdom holds that there existed a close, symbiotic relationship between Santamaria and the Democratic Labor Party; that he was its ideologue, the fount of

⁶² Fumasoni-Biondi to Gilroy, 27 May 1957; Cardinal Tardini to Mannix, 3 November 1957. (Copies held by authors).

⁶³ Mannix to Pius XII, 21 August 1957 (Copy held by the authors). Santamaria almost certainly had a hand in drafting the letter whose desperate tone shows how completely Mannix had been outmanoeuvred by Gilroy. See Duncan, 317-19.

⁶⁴ Murray, 128.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 60 and 354. Santamaria presents a modest scorecard of the political achievements of the DLP. However, he does argue that the introduction of limited state aid for private schools in the 1960s was a direct result of the party's political leverage over the Menzies Government. This view is disputed by Griffin. See Santamaria, *Santamaria*, chs 26-28; and Griffin, 29.

its policies and its chief political strategist⁶⁶ Yet, contrary to recent revisionism⁶⁷, Santamaria did not 'found' the DLP, never claimed that honour and was never a member. His relations with the party were conflictual from the beginning. As early as 1956 the New South Wales (where the party was founded) President of the DLP, Alan Manning, stated that 'as far as I am concerned, if Mr Santamaria came into the DLP I would get out of it'⁶⁸ Manning later resigned. Even in his home state of Victoria, Santamaria's attempted influence was resented, with former parliamentarian Stan Keon telling the 1959 state conference that the 'DLP cannot win an election because many Australians regard it as a Catholic party. Mr Santamaria's attempts to gain control of the DLP are responsible for that'⁶⁹ Until it was formally disbanded in 1975, the role of Santamaria continued to cause discord within the DLP.⁷⁰ The following, recent revelation helps explain why.

On 19 November 2000 the *Sunday Age* reported on Santamaria's failed, and legally dubious, attempt to convince the Victorian bishops to redirect 10 per cent of the aid they received from the federal government to fund Catholic schools to the NCC for its political work. This revelation evoked a response from a former President of the Victorian DLP, Jack Lloyd, who explained that the party was informed in 1967 that Santamaria had met Premier Henry Bolte and told him that the DLP would direct its preferences to the Country Party rather than Bolte's Liberals unless funds were made available to construct a Catholic teachers' college in Melbourne. Lloyd explains that 'there was an angry reaction [from the DLP executive] to the inadequacy of the deal and the fact that Mr Santamaria had taken it on himself to negotiate for the DLP.'⁷¹ DLP officers led their own deputation to Bolte and traded its preferences for a promise that all Independent school students would receive per-capita grants. In his memoirs Santamaria provides a disingenuous account of the same incident, omitting any reference to the proposed teachers' college and has himself and a Catholic layman securing the per capita grants promise from Bolte.⁷²

This episode is revealing in that it highlights an essential difference between the social location of Santamaria and that of many of the 'labor' men and women of the DLP. Not only was Santamaria prepared to trade preferences in 1967 for relatively little, but also it was significant that he sought a Catholic teachers'

* Paul Duffy, 'The DLP: Profile and Prospects', in Henry Mayer ed., *Australian Politics: A Second Reader*, Melbourne: Cheshire, 1969, 416.

⁶⁷ *Australian Financial Review*, 15 August 2003.

⁶⁸ Alan Manning quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 October 1956.

⁶⁹ *Herald* (Melbourne), 27 October 1961.

⁷⁰ See Paul Reynolds, *The Democratic Labor Party*, Brisbane: Jacaranda, 1974, 24-7.

⁷¹ *Sunday Age* (Letters), 26 November 2000.

⁷² Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, 269-70.

college serving relatively few. The DLP was concerned to obtain relief for the many thousands of Catholic primary school children whom the Federal Schools' Commission discovered in 1973 were being taught in seriously under-resourced institutions.⁷³ Santamaria's father was a hard-working, successful small businessman and Santamaria attended Catholic schools and the University of Melbourne at a time when that was the privilege of a few, though his academic ability took him there on a scholarship. Despite living a modest lifestyle, Santamaria was situated securely in the middle class, educating all his own children in private schools and experiencing few of the hardships and deprivations common to the Labor/DLP voting, Catholic working-class. After 1955 it is remarkable how little Santamaria had to say about social issues central to Laborism, such as inequality, educational opportunity or poverty; he preferred to advocate the value of the traditional family unit and to decry artificial methods of birth control and sexual permissiveness.⁷⁴

Anti-Capitalist or Anti-Modernist?

From when the Spanish Civil War diverted Santamaria's focus away from attacking capitalism to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the destruction of the Berlin Wall, his public *leit motif* was anti-communism. Communism's defeat saw his return to older themes of anti-capitalism and he became a critic, through his weekly column in the *Australian* newspaper, of the economic orthodoxy known as 'economic rationalism'. It was this apparent re-conversion that won him admirers on the Left, many of whom opposed the Hawke and Keating Labor Governments' enthusiasm for neoliberalism. There was, however, a fundamental difference between Santamaria's anti-communism and his anti-capitalism; while he polemicised against both, there is no evidence that he sought to 'permeate' the institutions of capital. Neither did he, as Ross Fitzgerald implies, cease being "a player in the political arena"⁷⁵ Instead, he concentrated his energies on what, for him, was forever the most important battleground of all—the Catholic Church. He explained his goals in the first issue of the religious magazine *AD 2000*, which he established in 1988:

Whether in its news reports or in its larger articles dealing with particular issues, *AD 2000* will describe what is orthodox as orthodoxy, what is modernist as modernism. It will support the former and oppose the latter.⁷⁶

⁷³ The per capita grants were also paid to students at wealthy Catholic and non-Catholic independent schools.

⁷⁴ Santamaria, *Santamaria*, 261 ff.

⁷⁵ Fitzgerald, 178.

⁷⁶ *AD 2000*, vol. 1, no. 1 (April 1988): 1.

The term 'modernism', as employed here by Santamaria, occupies a particular and controversial place in Catholic religious thought. It refers to a diverse movement of Catholic theologians mainly from France and Italy who, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries sought a reconciliation of the Enlightenment ideas of liberty and modernity with traditional church teaching.⁷⁷ Their efforts were not welcomed in Rome, which saw them as heretically questioning received dogma and challenging the papal magisterium. Modernism and its adherents were trenchantly denounced in Pope Pius X's 1907 Encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*. Not only was the theology of 'these enemies of divine revelation' rejected, but the Pope gave clear instructions to the Bishops for their rooting out. No suspected modernists were to be appointed to Catholic universities; seminarians should avoid secular universities; the printing of 'bad' books was to be prevented; the calling of Congresses of priests was to be restricted; 'Councils of Vigilance' were to be established to 'watch out for every trace and sign of Modernism' and act against it; and the Bishops were required every three years 'to furnish the Holy See with a diligent and sworn report' on the actions taken to suppress modernists.⁷⁸

Anti-modernism resurfaced at the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), and was repudiated in the Council's declaration on religious freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*. The document commenced with the standard assertion of the freedom of religion from government encroachment, but then trenchantly asserted the primacy of human conscience in religious matters:

This Vatican Council urges everyone, especially those who are charged with the task of educating others, to do their utmost to form men who, on the one hand, will respect the moral order and be obedient to lawful authority, and on the other hand, will be lovers of true freedom—men, in other words, who will come to decisions on their own judgement and in the light of truth...

⁷⁷ A Vermeersch, 'Modernism', *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, 1911, www.newadvent.org 2-5. This was not as 'modern' as the Vatican implied since it was in the tradition established by Aquinas in the 13th century in reconciling the rediscovered thought of Aristotle with existing Catholic philosophy. See George H Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*, 3rd ed, London: Harrop, 1963, 247ff.

⁷⁸ Pius X, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, 1907, www.vatican.va. 23-9.

It is one of the major tenets of Catholic doctrine that man's response to God in faith must be free: no one is to be forced to embrace the Christian faith against his own will.⁷⁹

To many conservative Catholics this appeared to signal the victory of modernism within the Holy See itself.⁸⁰

While fundamentally opposed to the liberalism of *Dignitatis Humanae*, Santamaria had to be careful not to publicly criticise the living Popes John XIII or Paul VI because obedience to the papacy is central to the integralist creed. But there can be no doubt that he blamed Vatican II for unleashing forces that undermined traditional Catholicism. In 1981 he wrote:

To those [including himself] who accepted the primacy of supernatural values over the purely mundane values of politics and economics, the strictly religious consequences of the period of anarchy which followed the Second Vatican Council were the more important⁸¹

Santamaria used *AD 2000* to campaign against all manifestations of modernism evident within the Catholic Church in Australia.

Even as a septuagenarian he was more than a mere armchair polemicist; he acted against liberals in the Church in the manner demanded by Pius X. He applauded the actions of the traditionalist Pope John Paul II (1979-) in removing the right of the then moderate theologian, Hans Kung, to teach in Catholic universities in 1981, and the 1997 excommunication of Sri Lankan theologian, Tissa Balasuriya, for heresy.⁸² Santamaria established groups such as the Australian Defence Association and the Australian Family Association, attempting in 1993 to create a 'pro-family' political party.⁸³ Clandestinely, he encouraged groups of conservative Victorian lay Catholics to report to Rome those parish priests who strayed from orthodoxy. He also regularly reported the liberal Jesuit magazine *Eureka Street* to

Paul VI, *Dignitatis Humanae* 7 December 1965. www.vatican.va 4-5. The central place of conscience was not a modernist doctrine, but a restatement of a more traditional moral theology dating as far back as Aquinas.

⁸⁰ That there is an extremist element to this debate is evident in the current US website *Catholic Tradition* (www.catholictradition.org), which asserts that: 'The most Holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes and preaches that none of those existing outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews and heretics and schismatics, can have a share in life eternal; but they will go into the eternal fire which was prepared for the devil and his Angels, unless before death they are joined with Her.'

⁸¹ Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, 333.

⁸² *Ibid*, 344; *AD 2000*, vol. 10, no. 2 (March 1999). Balasuriya has since been rehabilitated.

⁸³ *Australian*, 28 February 1998.

church authorities and intervened to oppose what he saw as an attempted radical takeover of the St Vincent de Paul Society charity in 1995. In what was, for him, the all-important field of education, he promoted the teaching of traditional dogma in Catholic schools and waged a persistent but unsuccessful campaign to have the independent Australian Catholic University placed under the authority of the bishops.⁵⁴ At the same time, he maintained his anti-communist vigilance, as Redemptorist priest and scholar Bruce Duncan explains:

Many Catholics were dismayed that Santamaria continued to interpret overseas events so rigidly with his preoccupation with communism. In the struggle for human rights in South-East Asia, he repeatedly sided with authoritarian regimes ... he attacked many human rights campaigners, like Father Brian Gore, as communists ... My Redemptorist colleagues in the Philippines were very disturbed that he sometimes denounced individuals by name, endangering their lives as they could then be targeted by death squads.⁵⁵

Contrary to Fitzgerald's view that in the last decade of his life Santamaria became 'increasingly preoccupied with economic policy'⁵⁶, his newspaper commentaries on economics were a minor part of his activities. His friend and fellow anti-modernist, then Archbishop[now Cardinal] George Pell, was correct when, having eulogised his many achievements over sixty years of public life, he noted that 'some would believe that his greatest religious contribution has been during the last ten or fifteen years as different forces contended for the soul of Catholicism. Here B. A. stood squarely with the Holy Father'.⁵⁷ Santamaria would not have asked for a better obituary.

Conclusion

White not an alien figure in twentieth century Australia, Santamaria was, in the eyes of many, an exotic. He was an extremely pietistic, militant Catholic traditionalist whose religious beliefs propelled him to political action inside but also apart from the party system. Santamaria was ambivalent on the combustible issue of the separation of Church and State—the Galesian doctrine of the 'Two

⁵⁴ See *AD 2000*, vol. 3, no. 7 (August 1990): 2; vol. 6, no. 4 (May 1993): 12; and vol. 7, no. 1 (February 1994). The campaign continues: *AD 2000*, vol. 13, no. 1 (Dec 2000/Jan 2001): 3.

⁵⁵ Bruce Duncan, 'The Role of Catholics in the Cold War: The Conundrum of B. A. Santamaria*', in Peter Love and Paul Strangio eds, *Arguing the Cold War*, Melbourne: Red Rag publications, 2001, 86.

⁵⁶ Fitzgerald, 263.

⁵⁷ *AD 2000*, vol. 11, no. 3 (April 1998).

Swords'" While he asserted the inviolability of religious practice from government intervention, his ideal State was one based on a particular set of Christian principles and, in Australia, the vehicle for the attainment of that State was to be the Labor Party. It was not in Santamaria's interest to split the ALP and the circumstances of 1955 proved disastrous for his religious objectives. The parry of his hopes, the ALP, was gutted for a generation, and Rome cut his Movement adrift from any formal relationship with the Church. Santamaria also seriously misread post-war Australian society. While not as secular as is sometimes asserted, it became increasingly unreceptive to his anti-modernist religio-political theories—he was indeed swimming *Against the Tide*.

BRIAN COSTAR and PAUL STRANGIO
School of Political and Social Inquiry, Monash University

¹⁸ See Sabine, 194-6.