

AMERICAN HISTORY AND THE THEOLOGICAL ENTERPRISE

HISTORY, THEOLOGY, AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGIANS

Before we talk about "American History and the Theological Enterprise," something has to be said about "history." What is it? What is it doing here. For some, the role of the church historian is to provide comic relief. Not a negligible function in the present-day world. Or the historian is asked to supply the consolation of perspective: to exemplify the "it's-been-this-bad-before" syndrome.

For others, the church historian should become an "historical theologian," a spinoff whose true roots lie deeply concealed in the old dogmatic theology tradition. It is tempting. Assaying the function of church history as a branch of theology, historical theologian Yves Congar has carefully distinguished two approaches. One considers "development," or the progressive revelation of the implicit. Frequently enough, there is in this approach the conservative instinct to deny substantial innovation. Congar's other approach finds in the history of the church "a series of formulations of the one content of faith diversifying and finding expression in different cultural contexts." The bias here is away from that prostitution of historical evidence, proof-texting, and towards an awareness of historical conditioning.¹ It is involved in what John Courtney Murray described as one of the great trends of the nineteenth century, the movement from classicism to historical consciousness.² It speaks the church historian's language.

But we have still not come to the task that the church historian sets himself. His interest is more comprehensive. He is mortally afraid of study that is called historical, but which really deals with ideas suspended in mid-air or else neatly categorized according to the fashionable philosophical mold of the moment. It may be that

¹ Yves Congar, O.P., "Church History as a Branch of Theology," *Concilium*, 57 (1970), 87.

² John Courtney Murray, S.J., "The Declaration on Religious Freedom," *Concilium*, 15 (1966), 11.

at least the Catholic church historian is here still reacting to a mentality like that of the onetime "prince of theologians," Cardinal Louis Billot, for whom "dogmas have no history."³ It is a mentality not much different from that of the contemporary theologian who told the organizers of the 1970 Boston College conference on Vatican I that "the theologians" would have preferred a preliminary paper that did not "truckle to history and sociology."⁴ Parenthetically, I don't know if I object more to the casual dismissal of history or to its equally casual association with sociology!

HISTORY, THEOLOGY, AND CHURCH HISTORIANS

In what, then, is the historian interested? I would define his subject as the total phenomenon he studies—in this case the church—as it exists in definite time and space, affecting and affected by the political, social, religious, economic and intellectual world of the day. He is interested in the history of ideas. But he is equally concerned about the context of those ideas. He is interested in the thought, the belief, the actions of those who make up whatever ecclesial community claims his attention. And he is interested in them, as Sidney Mead has reminded us, "in all areas of their lives, not just in their ecclesiastical organizations," because he must measure the ideal against the real. Further, the historian cannot deny his interest in the ecclesiastical organizations themselves. As Mead also reminds us, "these institutions are the vehicles through which the ideals of the culture are carried to the people of each successive generation."⁵

Obviously, the historian's theological presuppositions, or lack of them, color his work. Only in an abstract world is it possible to pretend otherwise. In the church historian's particular case, ecclesiology plays a major role. Henry Warner Bowden has described

³ Roger Aubert, "La Théologie catholique durant la première moitié du XX siècle," in Robert Vander Gucht and Herbert Vorgrimler eds., *Bilan de la théologie du XX siècle, I* (Paris: Casterman, 1970), 431.

⁴ Michael A. Fahey, S.J., et al., "Report on the Conference on Vatican I, Boston College, December 4-6, 1970," p. 4.

⁵ Sidney E. Mead, "Reinterpretation in American Church History," in Jerald C. Brauer, ed., *Reinterpretation in American Church History*, Essays in Divinity, Vol. V (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1968), p. 190.

John Gilmary Shea's starting point by saying that the Father of American Catholic History "viewed the church as coterminous with the duly consecrated hierarchy and activities sanctioned by them." I borrowed that from Philip Gleason, who uses it in a fine essay on the impact of ecclesiology on historiography.⁶ The pleasure is mutual. Historiography also has some things to say to ecclesiology.

There is something else. There are those who propose to dismiss all church historians and, if I understand them, historical theologians also, into history departments. Only those who equip themselves with the techniques of "historians of religion" would be let associate with the theological enterprise. Jerald Brauer explains:

If his concern is primarily with an institution taken for granted because of its historical existence, or primarily with abstract ideas in their historical continuity, then such a scholar might well be better off in a history department. He differs not a bit from those fellow historians, and he has nothing distinctive to offer. If the erstwhile church historian sees his essential task as the search to understand the nature of that religious experience called Christianity, then he has a special task. His interest in the history of the church is not primarily institutional.⁷

I have no problem with the approach; only with an assertion of its exclusivity. There remains need for study and understanding of the ecclesial context in which faith has lived the centuries. If there is a thesis to this paper, it is that expressed by Sidney Ahlstrom when he wrote:

Christian theology is not the product of solitary activity. Like the great confessions of the faith and like the great liturgies, it has arisen in the historical context of corporate church life.⁸

⁶ Philip Gleason, "Introduction" to *Catholicism in America*, Interpretations of American History, John Higham and Bradford Perkins, eds. (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 4-7.

⁷ Jerald C. Brauer, "Changing Perspectives on Religion in America," in Brauer, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁸ Sydney E. Ahlstrom, "Theology in America: A Historical Survey," in James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jamison eds., *The Shaping of American Religion*, Religion in American Life, Vol. I (Princeton: Princeton University, 1961), p. 235.

AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

What then is the historical context of corporate Roman Catholic church life in the United States? I hear an immediate suggestion: Don't bother. Whatever the context has been, it has certainly stifled all possibility of theological thought! The picture has become a commonplace: American Catholics were an immigrant group fighting for social acceptance. They had time first for survival, then for defense, then for bricks and mortar, but never for anything seriously intellectual. Gerhard Lenski added another factor when he reported:

. . . it appears to me that Catholics are not anti-intellectual. Rather, they have adopted a variant form of intellectualism—one which lays unusually heavy emphasis on revealed truth and the importance of individual assent to this truth.⁹

I am not so sure that it was exactly revealed truth that was the problem, so much as what masqueraded in that guise, but Lenski's general thrust is true. For our purposes, there is not much doubt but that Catholics have failed signally to reflect theologically on their American experience. They have certainly not written much about such reflection. For what comfort it is, this is entirely American. Ahlstrom began his survey of Protestant theology in the United States by remarking that "almost everyone has so far agreed . . . that a comprehensive historical account of American theology is unnecessary." Ninety pages later he finished the study admitting discovery of an anti-doctrinal, anti-theological bias in American history which led to the absence of anything that might qualify as an "American theology."¹⁰

Discouraging but not devastating. American Catholicism produced no one approaching the stature of Jonathan Edwards, "the chief figure in the Reformed tradition between Calvin and Barth,"¹¹ but it has been said, in reference to Vatican II's Declaration on

⁹ Gerhard Lenski, *The Religious Factor: A Sociological Study of Religion's Impact on Politics, Economics and Family Life* (rev. ed.; Garden City: Doubleday, 1963), p. 283, n. 17.

¹⁰ Ahlstrom, *art. cit.*, pp. 232, 320.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

Religious Freedom, that "from America's nonideological liberalism, her pragmatic laicism, and her nontheoretical Catholicism came the basic solution for one of the bitterly contested problems of the 19th century."¹² Muted more recently and flawed by insensitivity to "other ranks" on the part of bishops, a sense and practice of episcopal collegiality hardly equalled elsewhere developed in the early days of American Catholicism.¹³ These are only examples. Is there more? I think so. What I propose in this paper is to suggest other elements in the American historical tradition that seem to me to have value for theological reflection by applying to the study of American Catholicism some of the characteristics that historians predicate of American religion in general.

THE DERIVATIVE ASPECT: ROMAN MODEL

American religion is derivative and it is indigenous. It institutionalizes in denominations—not churches or sects—and finds its inspiration in voluntarism. Under each of these headings, American Roman Catholicism has its own special history. It is, first of all, derivative. There is the immigration factor which it shares in rather greater abundance than most Protestant churches. More on that later. There was also something uniquely Catholic, the tie to Rome which both created tensions and found solutions unavailable to American Protestant denominations. The Roman Catholic church in the United States was born, grew to maturity, lives under and has inevitably been deeply influenced by a civil polity that is radically different from that of Europe. The American and the French Revolutions simply were not peas from the same pod. Neither were the constitutional systems that grew from them. And the political preoccupations of nineteenth century Rome could hardly have differed more from those that shaped America's destinies.

¹² Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Catholic Crisis* (Boston: Beacon, 1969), p. 62.

¹³ James Hennesey, S.J., "Papacy and Episcopacy in 18th and 19th Century American Catholic Thought," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, 77 (1966), 175-189; reprinted as "The Distinctive Tradition of American Catholicism," in Gleason, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-44. Also James Hennesey, S.J., "Councils in America," in *A National Pastoral Council: Pro and Con* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1971).

The "wonder years" of American Catholicism coincided with the period that the wisdom of retrospect has labeled "the end of European primacy."¹⁴ That was not the way it seemed at the time. The nineteenth century world was Europe's world. And—simple, ineluctable fact—Rome is in Europe. After 1815 Cardinal Ercole Consalvi's diplomacy allied the papacy firmly with the victors of Waterloo. The nineteenth century church became an integral part of the reactionary Restoration settlement, even when this meant supporting Russian imperial rule over Polish Catholics and British imperial rule over Irish Catholics.¹⁵ Papal hostility to nationalism increased as the *risorgimento* gradually brought to an end the 1000-year old papal kingdom in central Italy.¹⁶ Catholicism became romantic, retrospective. It idealized the far-off middle ages. It affirmed authority and essential hierarchy in human affairs. As late as 1910, Pope Pius X would criticize *le Sillon* because it advocated "placing authority in the hands of the people" and because it "tended toward the levelling of classes."¹⁷ Union of church and state somehow became an absolute model. The corporative society of the medieval guild was scarcely less venerated. And there was the cult of the hero: the martyr-popes Pius VI and Pius VII, victims of Napoleon, and then, after the Porta Pia in 1870, the dramatic figure of Pius IX, prisoner of the Vatican.

As nationalism grew in Europe's political life, Roman centralization grew in the church. Nationalism's principal student has written: "An understanding of nationalism and its implications for modern

¹⁴ J. R. Western, *The End of European Primacy, 1871-1945* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967).

¹⁵ For an introduction to the Polish question, see Edward E. Y. Hales, *Revolution and Papacy, 1769-1846* (Garden City: Hanover House, 1960), pp. 285-288. Political considerations also inhibited religious feeling in the cause of the Belgians against the Dutch (*ibid.*, pp. 283-285). A recent illuminating study is E. R. Norman, *The Catholic Church and Ireland in the Age of Rebellion, 1859-1873* (London: Longmans, 1965). See also Patrick J. Corish ed., *A History of Irish Catholicism*, V (Dublin: Gill, 1967).

¹⁶ George Martin, *The Red Shirt and the Cross of Savoy, the Story of Italy's Risorgimento (1748-1871)* (New York: Dood, Mead, 1969).

¹⁷ Adrien Dansette, *Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine: l'Eglise catholique dans la mêlée politique et sociale* (rev. ed.; Paris: Flammarion, 1965), p. 663. The letter was despatched, certainly not accidentally, on August 25, 1910, feast of St. Louis IX, medieval crusader-king of France.

history and for our time appear as fundamental today as an understanding of religion would have been for thirteenth century Christendom."¹⁸ Be that as it may, the Roman effort was opposite: it was centripetal. National colleges were founded in Rome. Honorary Roman prelates and chamberlains multiplied; Pius IX named more of them than had been appointed in the previous two centuries. Papal encyclicals became the vehicle of the ordinary *magisterium*.¹⁹ There were theoretical underpinnings for it all. In 1799 a Camaldolese monk, Dom Mauro Cappellari, published *II Trionfo della Santa Sede e della Chiesa*, picturing a church that was rigid, immobile, monarchical and totally dependent on its head, the pope. Cappellari was no faceless curialist: from 1826-1831 he headed the Congregation *de Propaganda Fide* and from 1831-1846 he was Pope Gregory XVI. Another example: in 1819 Joseph De Maistre wrote in *Du Pape* "Infallibility in the spiritual order and sovereignty in the temporal order are two completely synonymous words. Both give voice to that high power which rules above all other powers, from which they derive, which governs and is not governed, which judges and is not judged."²⁰ It was no accident that De Maistre scorned the United States: "America is often cited to us: I know nothing so provoking as the praise showered on this babe-in-arms. . . . Not only do I doubt the stability of American government, but the particular institutions of English America inspire no confidence in me."²¹ It was no accident that the later hammer of the Americanists, Abbé Charles Maignen, praised De Maistre as "the great philoso-

¹⁸ Hans Kohn, *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1955), p. 4.

¹⁹ Roger Aubert, *Le Pontificat de Pie IX (1846-1878)*, Fliche-Martin Histoire de l'Eglise, Vol. XXI (Paris: Bloud and Gay, 1963), pp. 287-289, discusses "Progrès croissants de la centralization" in the 19th century.

²⁰ Joseph De Maistre, *Du Pape*, Book I, Chapter 1, in Jack Lively ed., *The Works of Joseph De Maistre* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 131. For the whole development, see Roger Aubert, "La Géographie ecclésiologique au XIXe siècle," in Maurice Nédoncelle ed., *L'Ecclésiologie au XIXe siècle*, Vol. XXXIV (Paris: Cerf, 1960), pp. 11-55; and Yves Congar, O.P., "L'Ecclésiologie de la Révolution française au Concile de Vatican, sous le signe de l'affirmation de l'autorité," *ibid.*, pp. 77-114.

²¹ De Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, Chapter IV and Chapter VII, in Lively, *op. cit.*, pp. 67, 84.

pher."²² The gulf between old Europe and new America was, and is, far wider than our superficial similarities lead us to believe.

Unreflectively perhaps, Americans went their way. In 1869-70 a majority of the American participants in the first Vatican Council were uncomfortable with a definition of papal infallibility that reflected European political and intellectual concerns more than the felt needs of a universal church.²³ These were not transplanted Gallicans dredging up half-forgotten theological theses of seminary days; they were simply men whose practical theological formation had been in a climate which was not that of the "spirit of '89" or of the *risorgimento*.²⁴ The same difference in historical conditioning led the Americans to petition in vain the primacy for Baltimore in an age of Roman centralization,²⁵ it led them to oppose enlistment

²² Maignen's remark is cited by Albert Houtin, *L'Américanisme* (Paris: Nourry, 1904), p. 181.

²³ James Hennesey, S.J., *The First Council of the Vatican: the American Experience* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963); and "Nunc Venio de America: The American Church and Vatican I," *Annuario Historiae Conciliorum*, 1 (1969), 348-373. Jacques Gadille, "La Phase décisive de Vatican I: mars-avril 1870," *ibid.*, 336-347, puts the timing of the infallibility definition squarely into its French political context.

²⁴ James Hennesey, S.J., "National Traditions and the First Vatican Council," *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae*, 7 (1969), 491-512, is a revisionist effort at debunking a universal application of the Gallican syndrome.

²⁵ The status of primate for the archbishop of Baltimore was unanimously requested by the fathers of the eighth Council of Baltimore in 1849. It was refused, and again after the 1852 first Plenary Council of Baltimore. On November 18, 1852, Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick wrote to both Archbishop Peter Richard Kenrick of St. Louis and Archbishop John Hughes of New York of the refusal, which was coupled with a denial by Rome of a retrenchment of feasts and fasts in the United States as a whole, "deeming uniformity not desirable, as it tends to give a national character to the church of the United States in matters discordant from church discipline." Francis Kenrick wrote his brother on May 9, 1858 that the ninth Provincial Council of Baltimore had asked for the archbishop of that see the right to "hold the place of honor in precedence before the other archbishops of the United States without regard to the order of time in their ordination," and this was granted in August of that year. But in 1869 Archbishop Martin Spalding of Baltimore was let know that this gave him no precedence among primates at an ecumenical council, in a letter from Bishop Joseph Fessler, Secretary of the first Vatican Council (December 7, 1869, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore). See also Peter Guilday, *A History of the Councils of Baltimore (1791-1884)* (New York: Macmillan, 1932), pp. 157, 202; Frederick E. Tourscher, O.S.A. ed., *The Kenrick-Frenaye Correspondence* (Philadelphia: Wickersham, 1920), pp.

of Americans in the Papal Army,²⁶ it led to consistent opposition to the idea of a papal representative resident in the United States.²⁷ All of this says something to a concept of church. Theology is more influenced than it likes to admit by its political, social, religious, economic, intellectual ambiance.

Emphasis so far has been on ecclesiological themes. While Johann Adam Möhler and those who preceded and followed him in the Tübingen school were off in the wings reintroducing what Congar has called "a truly *theo*-logical and supernatural consideration of the church,"²⁸ official contemporary European ecclesiology would have been more at home in a treatise on political science. The point for us is that there was a profound divergence between the political science of nineteenth century Europe and that of the United States. The American Roman Catholic shared a common faith with his European cousins; the political and intellectual concomitants of that faith were different. One would expect it to find different expression. If it did not, then there would inevitably be a non-fit between theory and practice.

Pius IX's encyclical *Quanta Cura*, with the attached syllabus of errors, represented the classical negative statement of mid-nineteenth century Roman theological and political preoccupations. The syllabus generated only limited interest in Catholic circles in America.²⁹ In planning the 1866 second plenary Council of Baltimore, Archbishop

339, 414; John Tracy Ellis, "The Centennial of the First Plenary Council of Baltimore," in *Perspectives in American Catholicism* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1963), p. 158.

²⁶ William O. Madden, S.J., "American Catholic Support for the Papal Army, 1866-1868" (unpublished dissertation, Gregorian University, Rome, 1967). See the "excerpta" published in 1970, which detail initial American episcopal opposition to any plan to recruit American volunteers to prop up the Papal States (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1970).

²⁷ James Hennesey, S.J., "Papal Diplomacy and the Contemporary Church," *Thought*, 46 (1971), 55-71, contains a summary of representative American reaction to the assignment of a resident papal diplomat in the United States.

²⁸ Yves Congar, O.P., *L'Église de saint Augustin à l'époque moderne*, Histoire des dogmes III, 3 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1970), p. 415.

²⁹ Agnes C. Battersby, S.S.J., "American Public Opinion on the Syllabus Errorum of Pope Pius IX," (unpublished master's thesis, Catholic University of America, 1952).

Martin John Spalding took care that the first serious doctrinal efforts by an American council reflect the home scene and not just echo the 1864 syllabus.³⁰ In a pastoral letter he carefully highlighted the European conditioning of that document:

To stretch the words of the Pontiff, evidently intended for the standpoint of European radicals and infidels, so as to make them include a state of things established in this country by our Constitution in regard to liberty of conscience, of worship, and of the press, were manifestly unfair and unjust.³¹

Ten years earlier, American representatives had been reserved about the definition of the Immaculate Conception. They did not sense, as did Europeans, a compelling need to highlight by that definition the concomitant doctrine of original sin. They were not at all interested in demonstrating that the effects of original sin made democratic government impossible. They were not worried about exaltation of human nature. They were—and this also was an effect of the American world in which they lived—more concerned for the integrity of scriptural and other arguments adduced for the doctrine.³² The reason? Their context, as John Courtney Murray has put it, was one whose native condition was religiously pluralistic and not, as in Europe, “the result of the disruption and decay of a previously existent religious unity.”³³ The context was immensely formative.

I have suggested a negative response to Roman ties. Obviously, the pattern was not that uniform. Even John Carroll’s cisalpinism—of which more later—was moderated by a strong sense of loyalty

³⁰ David Spalding, C.F.X., “Martin John Spalding, Legislator,” *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, 75 (1964), 131-160; James Hennesey, S.J., “The Baltimore Council of 1866: an American Syllabus,” *ibid.*, 76 (1965), 157-172.

³¹ John Lancaster Spalding, *The Life of the Most Rev. M. J. Spalding* (New York: Catholic Publication Society, 1873), p. 272.

³² James Hennesey, S.J., “Prelude to Vatican I: American Bishops and the Definition of the Immaculate Conception,” *Theological Studies*, 25 (1964), 409-419.

³³ John Courtney Murray, S.J., *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960), p. 27.

to the Holy See. And a predominant tradition of episcopal absolutism, which is only now beginning to be explored adequately, served to tighten the bonds between Roman curia and lower clergy. Six million Catholic immigrants, most of them from southern and eastern Europe, who poured into the United States in the forty years 1881-1920 did not always find the Irish-model American church particularly attuned to their religious needs.³⁴ Older and better-organized German immigrants were no more attracted by the Irish way of doing things, and they had difficulty adjusting in any case to the "melting-pot" concept. As one of their prominent spokesmen put it, "Americans" were only one of the peoples who inhabited the United States.³⁵ The hold of the presumed normative European model tightened with the coming of the first apostolic delegate in 1893,³⁶ and with the fin-de-siècle neo-thomistic revival, which

³⁴ A study of the immigrants, particularly those from southern and eastern Europe, is badly needed. Among other questions, the alienation from Roman Catholicism of several hundred thousand Byzantine Catholics needs explanation. According to a recent Orthodox study, "the real growth of the [Russian] diocese in the United States began with a mass return of Uniates to Orthodoxy." Otherwise generally liberal Archbishop John Ireland was one of the villains of the piece. It is estimated that "over 225,000 Carpatho-Russian and Galician Uniates become Orthodox" (Dimtry Grigorieff, "The Orthodox Church in America from the Alaska Mission to Autocephaly," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 14 [1970], 202-203). See, provisionally, for the Italians, Silvano M. Tomasi and Madeline H. Engels eds., *The Italian Experience in the United States* (Staten Island: Center for Migration Studies, 1970). Nicholas Russo, S.J., "The Origins and Progress of Our Italian Mission in New York," *Woodstock Letters*, 25 (1896), 135-143, vividly recreates the picture of his parishioners, alienated from the "established" church because, among other factors, they were too poor to pay five cents seat money at the door and too proud to beg free admittance. Within five years, this Italian community grew from nothing to a flourishing mission where 3000 people regularly attended mass.

³⁵ The judgment was that of Anton H. Walburg, pastor of St. Augustine's in Cincinnati, in his 1889 brochure, *The Question of Nationality in Its Relation to the Catholic Church in the United States*. See Colman J. Barry, O.S.B., *The Catholic Church and the German Americans* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1953). Also, Philip Gleason, *The Conservative Reformers: German-American Catholics and the Social Order* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1968).

³⁶ John Tracy Ellis, *The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, 1834-1921* (2 vols.; Milwaukee: Bruce, 1952), I, 595-652, is the best published account of the coming of the Delegate. See also Gerald P. Fogarty, S.J., "Denis J. O'Connell, Americanist Agent to the Vatican, 1885-1903" (unpublished dissertation, Yale University, 1969), pp. 187-227.

migrated to these shores in its essentialist Roman form.³⁷ The hold was strengthened by Leo XIII's 1895 *Longinqua Oceani*, where the pope admitted "the prosperous growth" of Catholicity in America, but added that the church "would bring forth more abundant fruits if, in addition to liberty, she enjoyed the favor of the laws and the patronage of the public authority."³⁸ Nineteenth century Catholicism had not learned its European lessons; Pope Leo's comment shows that the American book was never really opened. Then came the condemnations of Americanism (1899), with an almost total lack of intelligent, self-reliant response from progressives who had begun to discern new forms, but lost heart too easily, and of Modernism (1907). The integrist aftermath effectively imposed solutions conceived in other cultures to answer other problems. American Catholic theological thought entered into a half-century's hibernation. And when it re-emerged, it did so in what an Australian observer has described for his own country: ". . . a new era of philosophic and theological imperialism, in which European Catholicism . . . has been a dominant force in shaping our ideas and attitudes." I suggest that we Americans also must ask whether we have allowed imported thought to become "a substitute for local thinking" . . . whether we intend to admit to a "laziness and incapacity for independent thought."³⁹ It's really the whole question that we are discussing here today.

³⁷ On the inauguration of neo-thomism and its characteristics, see Roger Aubert, "Aspects divers du néo-thomisme sous le pontificat de Léon XIII," in Giuseppe Rossini ed., *Aspetti della cultura cattolica nell'età di Leone XIII* (Rome: ed. 5 June, 1961), pp. 133-227. Sixty years later, George Bull, S.J., of Fordham University, wrote that fundamental to "the Catholic approach to learning" was "the simple assumption that wisdom has been achieved by man, and that the humane use of the mind, the function proper to him as man, is contemplation and not research . . . research cannot be the primary object of a Catholic graduate school, because it is at war with the whole Catholic life of the mind" ("The Function of the Catholic Graduate School," *Thought*, 13 [1938], 364-380). References on pp. 368, 378. Michael Gannon's research drew my attention to this frightening, but profoundly explanatory article.

³⁸ John Tracy Ellis ed., *Documents of American Catholic History* (3rd ed.; Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1967), II, 502.

³⁹ Patrick O'Farrell and Deirdre O'Farrell, eds., *Documents in Australian Catholic History* (2 vols.; London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1969), II, 392. The excerpts are from a talk given by Patrick O'Farrell in 1967.

THE INDIGENOUS ELEMENT: CISALPINISM

American Catholicism also had something indigenous about its origins. It was firmly rooted in the cisalpine tradition of eighteenth and early nineteenth century Anglo-American Roman Catholicism which, at its best, combined a spiritual allegiance to the pope with a sturdy sense of political independence.⁴⁰ Early American Catholics showed this spirit in many ways. In 1784 John Carroll wrote that he would never have begun debate with ex-Jesuit Charles Wharton

. . . if I could fear that it would disturb the harmony now subsisting amongst all christians in this country, so blessed with civil and religious liberty; which if we have the wisdom and power to preserve, America may come to exhibit a proof to the world, that general and equal toleration, by giving a free circulation to fair argument, is the most effectual method to bring all denominations of christians to a unity of faith.⁴¹

Three years before his 1790 consecration as first bishop of Baltimore, Carroll wrote how "preposterous" it was that English-speaking Catholics were obliged "to perform divine service in an unknown tongue."⁴² The cisalpine division of political and religious was a constant. In 1837 at the third provincial council of Baltimore the nation's bishops declared:

⁴⁰ A fresh study of the cisalpine phenomenon is needed. Maude Petre, *The Ninth Lord Petre* (London: S.P.C.K., 1928), pp. 322-329, expresses the spirit of the cisalpines. "The great question was . . . that of the rightful position and claims of the papacy in regard to both Church and State." She saw as cisalpinism's theological premises: (1) "the strong, though sometimes latent and unconscious belief in the Church as a self-contained entity, not a department of the State; (2) a sense of her essential unity; (3) a belief that the Papacy, in its purest and truest form, can be and has been the most potent factor of that unity." At the same time, the cisalpines "realised . . . that the spiritual value and force of the Papacy were conditioned by its confining itself to spiritual ends . . . on the self-restraint of Popes depended the good of the Church, as also the welfare of Catholics." I am grateful for this reference to Clyde Crews, whose doctoral dissertation, "The Role of Maude Petre in the Modernist Movement" (Fordham University, 1971), sheds considerable light on the part played in forming that redoubtable lady's attitudes by her Old English Catholic cisalpine heritage.

⁴¹ Ellis, *Documents*, I, 146-147.

⁴² John Tracy Ellis, "Archbishop Carroll and the Liturgy in the Vernacular," in *Perspectives in American Catholicism*, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

. . . we do not detract from the allegiance to which temporal governments are plainly entitled, and which we cheerfully give; nor do we acknowledge any civil or political supremacy, or power over us in any foreign potentate or power, though that potentate might be the chief pastor of our church.⁴³

It was the spirit that Alexis de Tocqueville found:

The Catholic priests in America have divided the intellectual world into two parts: in the one they place the doctrines of revealed religion, which they assent to without discussion; in the other they leave those political truths which they believe the Deity has left open to free inquiry. Thus the Catholics of the United States are at the same time the most submissive believers and the most independent citizens.⁴⁴

To point up the contrast, listen to the bishops of Québec in an 1875 pastoral:

The church is not only independent of civil authority; it is superior to it in extent and purpose. . . . The church is not in the state; the state is in the church.⁴⁵

THE INDIGENOUS ELEMENT: DENOMINATIONS AND VOLUNTARIYISM

To another question. Whatever theories may have been held, or noses bloodied, over the status of the "one true church," I submit that American Catholicism has in practice long accepted the peculiarly American status of "denomination," a "voluntary association of like-hearted and like-minded individuals, who are united on the basis of common beliefs for the purpose of accomplishing tangible and defined objectives."⁴⁶ Whether the acceptance was explicit or implicit is not the question. Writing of Protestants, Martin Marty emphasizes that the concept "imposed itself as if its logic were irresistible and its scope predestined on all churches."⁴⁷

⁴³ Peter Guilday ed., *The National Pastorals of the American Hierarchy 1792-1919* (Washington: N.C.W.C., 1923), p. 91.

⁴⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* ed. by Phillips Bradley (2 vols.; New York: Random House, 1945), I, 312.

⁴⁵ Aubert, *Pontificat*, p. 441.

⁴⁶ Sidney E. Mead, *The Lively Experiment: the Shaping of Christianity in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 104.

⁴⁷ Martin E. Marty, *Righteous Empire: the Protestant Experience in America* (New York: Dial, 1970), p. 69.

The same thing happened, I believe, with American Catholicism, although a tension was thereby created with the derivative Roman nineteenth century model.

American Catholicism—*Longinqua Oceani* and Ryan and Millar⁴⁸ to the contrary notwithstanding—also accepted one of the key elements of denominationalism: voluntaryism, which Robert Baird described in 1842:

Upon what, then must religion rely? Only, under God, upon the efforts of its friends, acting from their own free will, influenced by that variety of considerations which is ordinarily comprehended under the title of a desire to do good. This, in America, is the grand and only alternative. To this principle must the country look for all those efforts which must be made for its religious instruction.⁴⁹

Alien to American Catholic thinking? Listen to Archbishop John Baptist Purcell of Cincinnati in 1870:

. . . the church of God has no need of kingly patronage or protection . . . our civil constitution grants perfect liberty to every denomination of Christians . . . perfect liberty to them all. . . I verily believe this was infinitely better for the Catholic religion, than were it the special object of the state's patronage and protection . . . all we want is a free field and no favor. Trust is mighty and will prevail; and as we are here side by side with every sect and denomination of Christians, it is for the people to judge which of us is right, which of us teaches that which is most conformable to Holy Scriptures. If they approve our religion, they will embrace it; if not, they will stay away from it. I believe this is the best theory.⁵⁰

The emphasis on "truth" is interesting. It is a far cry from the Cartesian quest for certitude that permeated nineteenth century European Catholic thought. The explanation for it can be illustrated

⁴⁸ Reference is to the thesis once considered "traditional" on church-state relationships and advanced in John A. Ryan and Moorhouse I. X. Millar, S.J., *The State and the Church* (1922), which became an issue in Alfred E. Smith's 1928 campaign for the presidency.

⁴⁹ Robert Baird, *Religion in America*, ed. by Henry Warner Bowden (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 122.

⁵⁰ Hennesey, *First Council*, p. 132.

in Bishop John Lancaster Spalding's opening remarks at the cornerstone-laying of the Catholic University of America in 1888:

The special significance of our American Catholic history . . . lies in the fact that our example proves that the church can thrive where it is neither protected nor persecuted, but is simply left to itself to manage its own affairs and to do its work. Such an experiment had never been made when we became an independent people, and its success is of worldwide import, because this is the modern tendency and the position towards the church which all the nations will sooner or later assume.⁵¹

Ample illustration on the themes of denominationalism and voluntarism can be found in the study of attitudes on church-state relationships. Paul Kauper has suggested that the very formula "church-state" falsifies the American situation:

It has its origin in a time when the church was indeed a single monolithic Church and governmental power was centered in a single ruler. It is inadequate to describe the American situation both because of the multitude of churches in this country and the dispersion of governmental power among the federal government, the states, and the local communities.

"In our situation," he continues,

. . . it is more illuminating to call them problems of the interrelationship of the civil and religious communities. This phrase at least makes clear that we are discussing communities that embrace in part a common membership.⁵²

In 1953 John Tracy Ellis traced in *Harper's Magazine* the American Catholic tradition of a century and a half in this area. He expressly disclaimed "the professional competence to discuss the theological aspects of the problem," which were then being debated in the theological journals.⁵³ I wonder if Ellis did not show more

⁵¹ Ellis, *Documents*, II, 464.

⁵² Paul G. Kauper, *Religion and the Constitution* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1964), p. 4.

⁵³ John Tracy Ellis, "Church and State: an American Catholic Tradition," *Harper's Magazine*, 207 (1953), 63-67, reprinted in *Perspectives in American Catholicism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-8.

professional theological competence than he knew in detailing so carefully a sesquicentennial tradition of being Catholic within the American tradition. Far from its being an aberration to be corrected by continuing reference to Old World forms, John Courtney Murray would hold that "the American proposition" was "in fundamental continuity with the central political tradition of the West."⁵⁴ This line of thought seems to have prevailed when the American experience of Catholicism made its first major mark on the whole body of the church in Vatican II's Declaration on Religious Freedom in 1965.

There are other characteristics of the denomination which could with profit be applied to American Catholicism. Sidney Mead lists them: historylessness, missionary outreach, revivalism (has anyone studied the impact of the parish mission in American Catholicism? Or the retreat movement? Or the *cursillo*?), a general flight from reason and "the concomitant triumph of pietism," a competitive stance that frequently led to substantialization of minor differences.⁵⁵ The study of Catholicism within the study of American religion is interesting.

THE INDIGENOUS ELEMENT: LAYMEN, PRIESTS AND BISHOPS

American polity shaped American religion in other ways. Using Denis O'Connell's 1897 Fribourg speech, "A New Idea in the Life of Father Hecker," Gerald Fogarty has pointed to the superiority of the common law tradition over that of the Roman public law, for which man had rights only as

. . . the free gift of the State made to him in his character of citizen, and these were neither inalienable nor inviolable; it subordinated the individual to the state which had no obligation to consider individual rights when opposed to itself; and it placed the Emperor above the law as 'the sole real source of law . . . and the embodiment of all judicial and executive powers.'⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, p. 30.

⁵⁵ See Sidney Mead's essay, "Denominationalism: the Shape of Protestantism in America," in *The Lively Experiment*, pp. 103-133.

⁵⁶ I am grateful for this reference to Gerald Fogarty, S.J., who included it in an unpublished essay, "An American Pastoral Council: an Expression of

But when these ideas got into the internal structure of American Catholicism, theory yielded to conflict. Lay trusteeism bulks large here. Many whose knowledge of American Catholic history is slim have heard about trusteeism. There is no thorough study of it, and one is needed.⁵⁷ The quarrel of lay trustees and their clerical allies with bishops made for a classic confrontation rooted in the conflict of American and European ecclesial models, and precisely in that period when older lay influences based upon a theory of patronage were fast becoming anachronistic.⁵⁸ Had matters worked out differently, and had European forms not been made normative, the American experience might have made a contribution that would have eased present-day tensions. Even Archbishop John Hughes, who did more than any single man to assert episcopal prerogative, wrote in 1853: "Regarded *a priori*, no system could appear to be less objectionable, or more likely, both to secure advantages to those congregations, and at the same time to recommend the Catholic religion to the liberal consideration of the Protestant sentiment of the country."⁵⁹ The chief sticking point was lay demand for a voice in the choice of pastors. It was allowed to the noble lords and

an Ecclesiastical Tradition." The theme is expanded in his dissertation, "Denis J. O'Connell: Americanist Agent to the Vatican," *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ Joseph J. McCadden, "The Specter of the Lay Trustee," *America*, August 5, 1967, pp. 133-136, is a presentation suggestive for a positive approach to the story of trusteeism; Gerald P. Fogarty, S.J., "Lay Trusteeism Yesterday and Today," *America*, November 19, 1966, p. 656-659, is another.

⁵⁸ For a study of the question, particularly as it applies to choice of bishops, see the essays in William W. Bassett ed., *The Choosing of Bishops* (Hartford: The Canon Law Society of America, 1971), particularly in our context the essay by Robert Trisco, "The Variety of Procedures in Modern History" (pp. 33-60). But I am not sure I agree with Trisco's groundrules for determining lay participation. It is not something granted by administration. Rather it would seem to arise from the fact that—as they put it in Rome when it was decided not to invite the Catholic princes to be officially represented at Vatican I: "There are no more Catholic powers properly so called" (Friedrich Engel-Janosi, *Oesterreich und der Vatikan* [2 vols.; Graz: Styria, 1958-1960], I, 147). The same reasoning would apply to Pius X's abolition of the "exclusive" after the conclave of 1903. The whole political world has changed, and the people as a whole now stand in place of the monarchs of old. It is hard to see how canon law, which attended to older political forms, can ignore contemporary ones.

⁵⁹ John Tracy Ellis, *American Catholicism* (2d ed. rev.; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1969), p. 46.

squires of one age; it was refused to the democratic people of another. But "people" had replaced "monarch" as the embodiment of the nation. There should have been an ecclesiological conclusion from that. There began to be, in the United States. But then it ended.

Reference has already been made to the American tradition of conciliar and collegial episcopal government. This tradition of episcopal collegiality, which grew in a hospitable American climate, unfortunately masked a parallel tradition of episcopal autocracy. Historical circumstances had something to do with this. In 1878 Bishop George Conroy of Ardagh, Ireland, visited the United States for the Holy See. In his report to Rome he noted that the tumultuous financial situation in post-Civil War America, together with the great increase of immigrant Catholics, had placed an immense burden on the church. Its debts equalled half the entire value of ecclesiastical real property. As a result, priority was given to financial ability in selecting bishops and pastors. Of episcopal candidates, Conroy wrote: ". . . too often . . . the most valued gifts in the candidate proposed to the Holy See are properly those of a banker, and not of a pastor of souls." He contended: "Of the total number of 68 bishops there are hardly *ten* distinguished for any kind of talent. The others hardly reach a decent mediocrity, and in theological knowledge they do not even reach mediocrity!"⁶⁰

American ecclesial theorists frequently adverted to the American political system, comparing councils to the United States Senate, the role of the papacy with that of the Supreme Court. The bishops did meet in council and deliberate together for the whole country. But other considerations—some of them just noted in talking of trusteeism, and in Conroy's report—entered in. They blocked full development of an ecclesial polity framed in American terms. Conroy warned Propaganda that there were Americans who "would shape the church along American lines," who contended that foreign disciplinary customs and the provisions of canon law did not apply in the United States.⁶¹ The inability of the church's bishops to associ-

⁶⁰ Archives of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Scrittura riferite nei Congressi, America Centrale, vol. 36 (1882), fols. 212-215. Trisco, *art. cit.*, pp. 49-51, has an excerpt from Conroy's report.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

ate the clergy and laity effectively with them in church government rendered that danger remote.

This is not the place to write the history of the American Catholic laity.⁶² But it remains to be done. For the clergy, a substantial start has been made in the essays in John Tracy Ellis ed., *The Catholic Priest in the United States: Historical Investigations* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1971).

THE INDIGENOUS ELEMENT: THE IMMIGRANTS

The immigrants became American Catholicism. In their millions they destroyed America's WASP homogeneity and they paid the price for doing it. They were seen as threats to American sobriety ("they bring the grog shops like the frogs of Egypt upon us"),⁶³ and to the common school system ("institutions which were coming to be a kind of junior branch of the established religion of the American Way of Life").⁶⁴ They loaded the welfare rolls and furnished a disproportionate percentage of those convicted of criminal offenses.⁶⁵ They were deeply alienated from the American mainstream. American mobility shattered inherited social patterns based on the close ties of family and village and set the immigrant adrift in a vast new land.

But then there was the church. Here is the traditional picture: it was an anchor, a solace in the loneliness and despair of a culturally and religiously alien land. If the immigrant was "without meaningful connections in time and space," the church provided him with a touch of grandeur—lights, flowers, incense, vestments, mysterious rites—and, most importantly, it gave him something which was his own.⁶⁶ Catholic ministry was a ministry to the urban

⁶² Daniel Callahan, *The Mind of the Catholic Layman* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1963), is an introduction to the subject.

⁶³ This is quoted by Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade 1800-1860: a Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1964), p. 323.

⁶⁴ Marty, p. 146.

⁶⁵ Billington, p. 324. For example, in 1850, when the foreign-born population was 11 per cent, it accounted for half the criminal convictions reported.

⁶⁶ For this whole development, see Oscar Handlin's chapter, "Religion as a Way of Life," in *The Uprooted* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1951), pp. 117-143.

poor, because the urban poor were the Catholics. Only the growth of black urban ghettos and the post-World War II flight to suburbia has changed that pattern and given American Catholicism for the first time since colonial Maryland a substantial non-urban constituency. There were effects: among others, the church supported the labor movement and helped make it conservative rather than socialist. It has been credited with being one of "the most effective of all agencies for democracy and Americanization," providing "not only spiritual refuge but social security."⁶⁷

That is the traditional picture, and it is not false. But perhaps it is too pat. There have always been acknowledged faults: quarrels among nationalities, complaints of Irish domination, large-scale intellectual failure, lack of appreciation for theatre, art, music, literature. There was a stance of "defending the faith" by censorship of books, plays, movies. There was the irony that Catholics ended up as almost the last champions of "Blue Laws" and "Comstock Laws," whose authors were hardly friends of the church of Rome. There was a compulsive nationalism, a determination to show the WASP what a "real" American was. And there were the schools, a venture unique in the whole history of the Christian church, a major vehicle in preserving Catholic group identity in the United States.

THE IMMIGRANTS: REVISITED

The accepted myth has been that of the melting-pot. By and large you will still find it in histories of American Catholicism. Yet it's clear that considerable revision is needed. Roman Catholic Chicanos, Indians, Blacks, and Puerto Ricans have not shared the presumably satisfactory experience of others. Nor have white ethnics, one of whose spokesmen has urged the metaphor of the seething cauldron to replace that of the melting-pot. I do not mean that history should be fashioned out of rhetoric, however necessary rhetoric may sometimes be. But recent studies have opened wide new dimensions of the American historical process, and account has to be taken of them.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Henry Steele Commager, *The American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University, 1950), p. 193.

⁶⁸ See, for example, Wayne Moquin and Charles van Doren eds., *A Docu-*

There are other questions that history has still to ask about the immigrants and the church they made. Why so many radicals came from Catholic backgrounds? Why so many of them left the church's communion?⁶⁹ Why the same was true of so many literary figures? And why their names do not generally occur in books on American Catholicism. And the theologian must ask what this has to say to the Roman Catholic church's American understanding of itself.

But the most significant thing about the immigrant phenomenon is that it is over. This raises questions about institutional forms built to respond to needs of the immigrant generation, and which now serve needs other than those for which they were built. American Catholicism no longer seeks security in separateness. Then neither can it give itself to unreflective preservation of forms and institutions of the past. If there is any lesson that history has to teach, it is that.

THE INDIGENOUS ELEMENT: AMERICANISM AND MODERNISM

The picture I have tried to draw is of a church taking root in America and attempting to define itself without either losing contact with or being dominated by Rome and the European tradition. But what we have is not exactly the result of that process. What happened? The answers, I think, came at the turn of the century in the controversies known as "Americanism" and "Modernism."⁷⁰ It is generally accepted that Leo XIII's encyclical *Testem Benevolentiae* (1899) put an end to the first. All good liberal historians join in

mentary History of the Mexican Americans (New York: Praeger, 1971); Angie Debo, *A History of the Indians of the United States* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1971); Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee, an Indian History of the American West* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971).

⁶⁹ Among subjects for research might be the anarcho-syndicalist priest Thomas J. Hagerty, a founder of the I.W.W.; another founder of the same, and onetime convent-school teacher in Monroe, Michigan, "Mother" Mary Harris Jones; Mary Elizabeth ("Raise less corn and more hell") Lease, niece of an archbishop of Dublin; the Socialist priest Thomas McGrady; Communist leaders like Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and so on.

⁷⁰ Standard is Thomas T. McAvoy, C.S.C., *The Great Crisis in American Catholic History 1895-1900* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1957). See also Houtin (above, n. 22).

denying that "Americanism" ever happened on this side of the Atlantic anyhow. A footnote here, provided by an astute observer of American Christianity: "It was obvious, of course, that Leo XIII had the United States in mind as the seat of the infection. He addressed the letter *Testem Benevolentiae* to Gibbons and not to the primate of France, and directed that it be sent to other members of the American hierarchy."⁷¹ I wonder if in these days when "the Church has adapted herself somewhat to our advanced civilization and, relaxing her ancient rigor, shows some indulgence to modern popular theories and new methods"—the words are from *Testem Benevolentiae* and indicate what Leo XIII was *not* interested in doing—the time has not come for reconsideration of the Americanist episode?⁷² When Catholic theologians are moving away from a notion of dogma as a conceptually objective conveyor of divine ideas, it would be illuminating to review the premises for Pope Leo's remarks about the Americanist emphasis on liberty, reliance on the Spirit, virtues natural and supernatural, active and passive, religious vows and the rest.

The point is not to suggest that we look to 1890 thinking for 1971 solutions. Rather it is that we can better understand our present position if we see in "Americanism" not a phantom heresy to be glossed over, but the inchoate groping of Catholics formed in a tradition both indigenous and derivative, of which, like it or not, we are the continuers.

The story about Modernism in America is gradually getting out.⁷³ Much depends on definition. If Modernism means historico-

⁷¹ Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America: An Historical Account of the Development of American Religious Life* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1965), p. 259.

⁷² Margaret Mary Reher, I.H.M., is presently preparing such a study at Fordham University, entitled "The Church and the Kingdom: a Catholic Contribution."

⁷³ See pp. 236-250 of John Tracy Ellis, "A Tradition of Autonomy," in Neil G. McCluskey, S.J. ed, *The Catholic University: an American Appraisal* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1970); the essays by Gannon and Ellis in *The Catholic Priest in the United States*, already cited; the section (pp. 259-336) on William Sullivan in John Ratté, *Three Modernists* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967); and Joseph Lienhard, S.J., "The New York Review and Modernism in America," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, 82 (1971).

biblical criticism and a philosophical emphasis on the subject, then there was little of it. But Modernism was larger. The world was passing into a new phase. Industrialization was a fact. So was urbanization. Universal suffrage and women's rights were not far behind. The illiteracy rate was being lowered. Europe's primacy was soon to end. The changing face of the world meant economic, social, political, intellectual change. That meant theological change. American contact-points with the new face of things were in areas of social, political, pastoral preoccupation. What was afoot was not merely a scriptural or a philosophical renewal. It was a wholesale reorientation of men's lives. Transatlantic socio-politico-pastoral concerns were as much part of the larger pattern with which theology must concern itself as were historical criticism and immanentist philosophy. The tragedy is that American Catholicism, after the dawn of a golden age in the nineties, shrank from the challenge.

AND THE FUTURE?

Where are we then? There is a presentism about American Catholicism today. The past is irrelevant, the future will be essentially different. It's really an odd kind of history that considers only one's own experience and that of like-minded contemporaries. Surely a very narrow basis for action!

Are we left, then, with exclusive options: petrification in past forms, or a total ignoring of them? The historian looks for a middle ground. He hopes that study informed by a historical sense will lead to a better understanding of the church by underscoring the temporal and spatial character of structures. In the case of the American church, there is room for critical examination of the supposedly mandated European model. On inspection it turns out to be so largely contingent and so much the product of a chain of historico-political circumstances. That raises confidence in the possibility of an American model, as one among many.⁷⁴ There are other

⁷⁴ For the broader theme hinted at here, see James Hennesey, S.J., "The Two Vatican Councils: the Church Becomes Universal," *Catholic Mind*, 69 (1971), 22-31. The American model must find its place in the pluriform unity that replaces uniformity.

areas, about which we want to hear—about the common law tradition from the lawyers and political theorists, about philosophy, about literature. The needs of the immigrant have detained American Catholicism too long. The melting-pot has shut down. The myth is over. The Americanism and Modernism episodes represent significant failures of courage, conviction and perhaps most, reflection. Now we face other problems: a new ethnicity, pragmatic power, revolutionary romanticism. In the midst of it all, a church that has been from the beginning, in its own peculiar and unreflective way, both American and Roman, has somehow to identify itself. Old forms served sometimes well, sometimes less well. Today they frequently do not serve at all well. The historian can point this out, and point out, too, that they are but forms. The rest is up to the theologian.

JAMES HENNESEY, S.J.
Jesuit School of Theology
at Berkeley