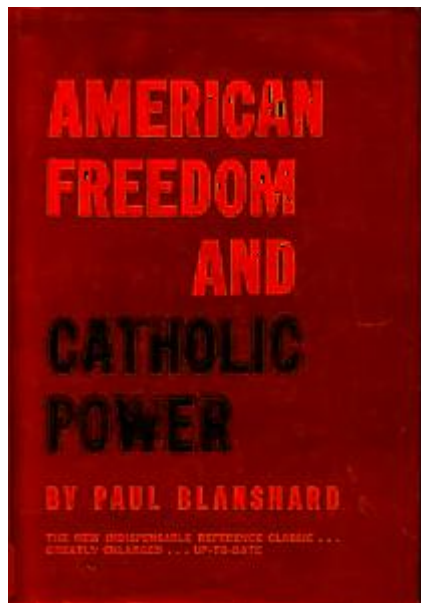


# How the Hierarchy Works – Chapter 2 of American Freedom and Catholic Power



Continued from [American Freedom and Catholic Power](#) Note: This is a very long chapter. You might want to read a section at a time.

## **Section 1 Introduction**

In two hundred years the Roman Catholic Church in the United States has increased from the smallest to the largest church in the nation, claiming in 1957 the allegiance of some thirty-five million Americans. The American branch of the Roman faith is now almost three times as large as the largest single Protestant denomination in the United States, the Methodist Church, and it constitutes about one-fifth of the total population. It contributes more money to the hierarchy at Rome than all the other national branches of the Catholic Church put together. Nominally the United States has become the fourth Catholic country in the world—below Brazil, Italy, and France—but there are many ways in which it is the first Catholic country. Catholicism in the United States is more secure and more prosperous than it is in any other major nation of the world.

This substantial position is something quite recent for the American Catholic Church. As late as 1908 it was a missionary branch within the Roman system, supported partly by contributions from abroad, and treated with conspicuous condescension by the European hierarchy. It was so unimportant in the total scheme of world Catholicism before 1875 that until that date not a single American cardinal had been appointed.

For the first 150 years of our history the Roman Church in America was on the defensive. All except one (Maryland) of the original thirteen colonies were settled by Protestants, and most of them were militant Protestants. Even Maryland's Catholics were not in a majority in that colony, and they soon lost control to non-Catholics. At the time of the Revolution less than one

per cent of the people of the American colonies were Catholic. Father John Tracy Ellis points out in his American Catholicism that there were "scarcely more than 25,000 Catholics" in a population of nearly 4,000,000 in the United States in 1785. The greatest political leaders, writers, and reformers of our early national history were all non-Catholics, and all the early centers of higher learning were dominated by Protestant influence.

In such an atmosphere the colonial Catholics were treated as outsiders by the other colonists, and when the new nation broke away from European control, the Romanists, as they were often called, were doubly suspect because of their continued allegiance to a European ruler. The Roman Church was the only church which did not sever its European controls and become an American church. Although its hierarchy accepted in America the new policy of disestablishment for all churches, its world policy remained unaltered. The suspicion increased rather than diminished as a great flood of Catholic immigrants poured into the country from Europe. Clustered together in little colonies in our great cities, these immigrants seemed to live a life apart. They were the poorest and the least assimilated members of the American community, and their presence increased the feeling among non-Catholics that the Roman Catholic Church did not "belong" in America.

During this stage the Catholic churches gained by the alienation of their people from the rest of America. Hostility drove the immigrant communities back upon themselves. The newcomers turned to their priests for leadership as well as comfort, and the priests became chieftains in the war against prejudice. It is not surprising that in this period of immigrant influx the Catholic Church in America gained strength more rapidly than it has ever gained before or since. Although the Irish immigrants, who became the most powerful group in the American Church, found more freedom here than in Ireland, they also found much personal hostility.

In many parts of America this feeling of hostility broke out into open persecution. Anti-Catholic fanatics in the forties and fifties of the last century caricatured priests, burned a few convents, and spread wild rumors that Catholics were plotting to capture the country by armed rebellion. The A.P.A. (American Protective Association) in the nineties became one of the most noisy and effective pressure groups in the country, and "no Popery" was adopted as one of the most popular political slogans. Millions of otherwise sensible Americans were persuaded that Catholic convents were little better than brothels, and that few priests observed their oaths of celibacy. The great cultural, and humanitarian achievements of the Church were almost forgotten. Anti-Catholic political parties appeared in several states and even anti-Catholic candidates for President.

Although the attack on the Catholic Church was bitter, it should not be supposed that all groups that criticized Catholic policy were unbalanced or irrational in their views. The nativist movement against Catholic power was not confined to religious fanatics. William Ellery Channing distinguished carefully between the autocracy of Roman power and the great moral achievements of the Catholic people, attacking one with bitter irony and praising the other with a sincere tribute. Theodore Parker, nineteenth-century Unitarian, centered his attack on the political and educational

policies of the hierarchy. Declaring that the Catholic Church "hates our free churches, free press, and, above all, our free schools," he said:

The Roman Catholic Church claims infallibility for itself, and denies spiritual freedom, liberty of mind or conscience, to its members. It is therefore the foe to all progress; it is deadly hostile to democracy. To mankind this is its first command— Submit to an external authority; subordinate your human nature to an element foreign and abhorrent thereto! It aims at absolute domination over the body and spirit of man. The Catholic Church can never escape from the consequences of her first principle. She is the natural ally of tyrants, and the irreconcilable enemy of freedom.

Because of the fundamental tolerance of the American majority, the most fanciful anti-Catholic movements of pre-Civil War days, and of the nineties, flowered briefly and then died down. Finally common sense was restored and fanaticism discredited. The Irish and other immigrants were rapidly assimilated and soon gained important posts in political life. By the time of World War I the Catholics, Protestants, and Jews in this country approximated one nation indivisible, even if that nation did not provide justice for all.

But the Catholic problem is still with us. Primarily it is not the problem of the assimilation of the Catholic *people*; they have been absorbed into the American community as completely as could be expected in view of the attitude of their priests. Essentially the Catholic problem in America is what to do with the hierarchy of the Roman Church. The American Catholic *people* have done their best to join the rest of America, but the American Catholic hierarchy, as we shall see in the course of this survey, has never been assimilated. It is still fundamentally Roman in its spirit and directives. It is an autocratic moral monarchy in a liberal democracy.

But we are getting ahead of our story. Before we start to discuss the political and ecclesiastical philosophy of the hierarchy we should describe the hierarchy itself and its basic methods of operation. And before we discuss these methods of operation, we should say a few words about certain special facts which make it difficult to judge just how large and powerful the Catholic Church actually is in this country.

## **Section 2 Catholic Church growth in America**

I have said that the Catholic Church claims thirty-five million people in this country and that it has grown from the smallest to the largest American church in the course of about two hundred years. Such a statement might give the impression that Catholicism is a great and spontaneous mass movement of thirty-five million Americans, and that it is increasing very rapidly proportionately in the population. It is increasing in numbers, but there are many special factors in that alleged increase which need to be studied before Catholic claims can be assessed.

The Catholic Church in America is growing in power— there is no doubt about that—but it is not growing in numbers as fast as it appears to be growing. In the first place, the hierarchy includes in its figures infants and children under thirteen. Most other churches do not do that. That one factor alone

adds about 27 per cent to the adult Catholic population in this country.

In the second place, the Catholic Church does not drop people from its rolls except under the most extraordinary circumstances. In general, "once a Catholic always a Catholic." Some of the most determined opponents of the Church are still counted as part of the thirty-five million "Catholics" in this country. The Church admits quite frankly that it continues to count "occult heretics" so long as they are "ostensibly Catholics." The system of recruiting and discipline used by the priests calls for almost no obligatory affirmative action by an adult to remain a "Catholic." The practicing Catholic is directed to attend Mass on Sundays and confess his sins to a priest at least once a year, under pain of definite penalties, but nothing outwardly happens to him if he neglects these duties, because it is a spiritual dereliction, remedied when he again confesses and attends Mass regularly. He is baptized as an infant, is confirmed and receives communion as a child. Thereafter he is counted in the totals of the Catholic Church.

It is doubtful that the Church is increasing any more rapidly than Protestantism when equivalent tests are applied to membership figures. (Of course, all religious statistics are inaccurate because we do not have a national religious census.) Almost all churches in the United States have gained substantially in the last decade, until the membership proportion in the population reached an all-time high of 62 per cent in 1957. According to the Yearbook of American Churches for 1957, the Roman Catholic proportion in the population jumped from 16 per cent in 1926 to 20.3 per cent in 1955, an increase in proportion of 27 per cent; but the Protestant proportion in the population jumped from 27 per cent in 1926 to 35.5 per cent in 1955, an increase in proportion of 31 per cent.

If Protestant churches counted their adherents as generously as Catholic statisticians count theirs, it is likely that Protestantism could claim almost three times as many adherents as the Catholic Church claims. By Catholic standards of measurement there are twelve states which have more Catholics than Protestants—all the New England states, New York, New Jersey, California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Louisiana; but there are millions of uncounted citizens in these states who are nearer to the Protestant outlook than to the Catholic outlook. They are not counted as Protestants because Protestant churches usually require some adult act of affirmation to continue names on membership rolls. The 1956 estimate of Presbyterian Life that for every two official Protestant members in the United States there is one "church-related" Protestant, either child or adult, seems conservative. By this method of counting there were about 84,000,000 Protestants and 33,000,000 Catholics in the United States in 1956.

How many of the thirty-five million people in America claimed by the Church are really loyal to the Church? Nobody knows, but one index of loyalty is some kind of support. Almost any "good" Catholic can give a dollar or two if he is loyal to the institution. By that test probably about half of our thirty-five million "Catholics" are real Catholics. Catholic writers who ought to know the field thoroughly have estimated that about half of the Catholic people in the United States give some kind of support to the Church.<sup>10</sup> That would make at most eighteen million Catholics in the country,

less than 11 per cent of the population. The Osservatore Romano itself, the newspaper of the Vatican, has admitted that only about half of the world's alleged Catholics are practicing Catholics. (One difficulty in describing the status of their belief accurately is that the majority of the world's Catholics are almost certainly illiterate, but no one can prove this fact statistically.) A similar admission concerning the lapsed and dormant Catholics in the United States has been made by Father Thomas J. Harte, assistant professor of sociology at the Catholic University: "One would estimate as high as fifty per cent of parish populations can be called practising Catholics in any sense of the word."

But even an 11 per cent bloc in the American population can make a tremendous impression if its controlling hierarchy is closely knit and well disciplined. The Protestant and Jewish "opposition" appears to be weaker than it is because it is so fragmented.

The concentration of the Catholic population in certain large cities gives the Church unusual political and civic power in those regions—two-thirds of all Catholics in the United States live in oneseventh of the national territory,<sup>13</sup> and in the total population of our fifty largest cities they outnumber Protestants by a considerable margin. The concentration is especially marked in the northeastern part of the United States, where two states, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, have, by Catholic methods of computation, Catholic majorities.

The Roman Church in America has a great gift for showmanship, and its ceremonials and costumes lend themselves naturally to pageantry in the grand manner. Ten thousand Quakers can live in an American community all their lives and not attract half the attention that ten thousand Catholics do, especially if the Catholics have an energetic bishop who understands modern publicity methods.

It is doubtful if the face of any nonofficial personage in America is more familiar to American readers than that of Cardinal Spellman, the American hierarchy's chief leader. Publicity worth millions of dollars in revenue and good will is given to the Catholic hierarchy every week by the newspapers and magazines of the country, all glamorous and respectful, with never a critical tone/ Protestant leaders and Jewish rabbis are accorded kindly treatment also, but not quite such pronounced reverence, and they are relatively drab and prosaic figures compared to the colorful, costumed leaders of Catholic spectacles.

To many non-Catholics from abroad the power of the Catholic hierarchy to gain and hold public attention in America is one of the most striking phenomena of our life. Cecil Northcott, British correspondent of the *Christian Century*, has remarked on what Harold Laski called "the immense and arrogant authority assumed by the Roman Catholic hierarchy" in American life. He said:

I would put this fact first among the vital maneuvers now going on in the U.S.A. It seems to condition nearly every phase of American thought. Rome has not captured America, but she has very nearly captured the machinery of American life. What the great roads were to the missionary expansion of the

faith in the ancient Mediterranean world, the press, the radio, the public relations machines are to the Vatican in the New World. The hierarchy is marching down them with the ordered tramp of Roman legions.

The Catholic parish buildings are also important items in the technique of denominational display. The Catholic church is usually a big church, and often an oversized church. Frequently the priests go to great extremes in their campaigns for building funds, even in the parishes of the poor. In 1936 the Catholic Church edifices of the State of New York had forty-one millions in debt, an average of \$23,000 for every edifice, old and new, in the state. The big church in the American community is the Catholic hierarchy's Exhibit A of ecclesiastical power, and the Catholic people have accepted it as their symbol of success even when it is heavily mortgaged. To raise the money for such a structure the parish priest often imposes a levy upon the Catholic community which burdens every one of its members for many years.

The resistance to these money-raising drives for huge buildings is sometimes very strong in the Catholic lay community. In spite of continuing pressure and the emotional appeal of Mother's Day collections, the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, planned as a multi-million-dollar rival of St. Peter's, Notre Dame, and Chartres, has been in the process of planning and construction since the 1920's and is not yet completed. When it is completed, it will be the greatest denominational show piece in the United States.

It will belong, of course, to the bishops and not to the Catholic people of the United States, who will have paid for it. This rule of complete clerical ownership is an organic and vital part of Catholic world policy. Under Canon 1518, "The Roman Pontiff is the supreme administrator and dispenser of all ecclesiastical goods." The bishops, as the Pope's representatives, sometimes admit lay trustees to controlling boards of local churches but these laymen do not have any real ownership power. In order to keep laymen in their place in such matters, the Sacred Congregation of the Council has instructed American bishops to favor the mechanism of Catholic ownership now prevailing in New York under which: "No act or proceeding of the trustees of any such incorporated church shall be valid without the sanction of the Archbishop or Bishop of the diocese. . . ." Catholic laymen have been accustomed to this financial autocracy for a long time. Local churches and dioceses sometimes make public the financial facts concerning building drives and local costs, but the Vatican itself never renders a financial report even to its own people concerning its own vast financial holding and enterprises. The Catholic Information Society has issued figures indicating that American Catholics gave about \$365,000,000 a year to their Church in 1953, an average of \$11.21 per member.<sup>17</sup> This is far below the average contribution per member of many Protestant churches.

In many states Catholic Church property is owned outright by the bishop under the device called corporation sole. I was a little startled to receive some years ago a prospectus from a broker in Wisconsin offering me investment opportunities in these words:

\$370,000. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Santa Fe, 3-3 1/2 % serial notes,

due 1950-59.

\$50,000. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Pueblo, Colorado, 3 1/2 % notes due 1958. \$150,000. Catholic Bishop of Corpus Christi, 3-314% bonds due serially, 1950-1961.

### **Section 3 Catholic public demonstrations**

The special factors of favorable publicity and traditionally showy edifices must be weighed carefully in assessing the real hold of the Catholic hierarchy upon the American people. Another practice which must be taken into account is the gigantic religious spectacle. The American people take delight in big shows, and the hierarchy in recent years has learned to give them the kind of displays they want.

Americans were given their first demonstration of what the Church could do in the way of an international spectacle at the Eucharistic Congress in Chicago in 1926 when, according to Catholic estimates, 400,000 men gathered under the auspices of the Holy Name Society at Soldier Field in what one Catholic writer called "the most impressive demonstration of religious faith and loyalty ever staged in the Western Hemisphere." When darkness came and the arc-lights were extinguished over the field, 400,000 men lighted candles, held them aloft, and repeated in unison their oath of religious loyalty with "an upsurging roar of voices that could be heard great distances through the streets of Chicago." Since then the Church has staged a number of spectacles almost as impressive, and the American press has described them with admiration.

What Protestant or Jewish organization could parallel the pageantry of the great international Marian Congress in June, 1947, in Ottawa's baseball park, where sixty-six special trains and countless autos brought a quarter of a million Catholics headed by nine cardinals to pay homage to the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God?

For the Catholic Church [said *Life*], which has put on spectacles for fifteen centuries in all manner of places, it was no trick at all to turn the ballpark into an impressive open-air cathedral. Making their recurrent symbol the letter "M" (for Mary), church architects built a dais 515 feet long. Along its back wall four blue and white angels raised their golden trumpets toward a statue of the Virgin, leaning forward a little toward the worshippers, which stood on a globe atop a 115-foot tower. In the center of the enormous dais was the stage and altar, used interchangeably for pageants and High Masses. In the flanking grandstands sat the clergy on long lines of prayer benches. Along the bottom of the dais, on the level of the field, stretched a row of confessional booths.

Twenty plaster effigies of the Virgin Mary on floats were pulled through the streets by horses, and one of her images was kissed on the foot so often by kneeling nuns that the paint was worn off before the five-day Congress had ended.

It is not surprising that one American journal said in 1937: "No other church on earth has the taste for pomp of the Roman Catholic Church, or possesses

such a world-wide organization geared to deck a city with yellow and white flags, and provide a week-long demonstration by happy enthusiastic masses. The Committees of the International Eucharistic Congress included even a Committee on Bells and Whistles."

It is hard for an outsider to believe that a Church that can produce such enormously successful spectacles is not increasing rapidly in its proportionate share in the population. Actually the Church's slight proportionate increase in the national population appears to be wholly a matter of a superior birth rate—although no scientific statistics are available to prove this superiority. The present Catholic claim is that at least one child in every four born in the United States is Catholic, while only one person in every five in the general population is Catholic. This claim seems to be conservative. There is a trifling transfer of Americans to Catholicism from other faiths, and there is a considerable unrecorded transfer in the opposite direction. The Church's claim of more than 100,000 "converts" a year includes as "converts" all adult baptisms. Father Paul Rust, writing in the *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* for April, 1957, complained that the Church was winning only one convert annually for each 240 Catholics, which is certainly a very low proselyting rate when the success of Protestantism in recruiting Catholic members is considered. Father Rust said mournfully that "neither we nor our parishioners are contributing any really constructive part to the Catholic apostolate of making America Catholic."

Here and there a conspicuous conversion takes place and is given due acknowledgment by the press, but the annual losses far exceed the conversions, and the annual losses are not recorded in the Church books or in the press. It is only in the journals written by priests for priests that one can discover the extent of the erosion that is going on in the Catholic system.

Father Felix M. Kirsch, instructor in religion at the Catholic University of America, has complained that "all thoughtful observers of the American scene are alarmed over the frightful leakage from the Church in the United States—some going so far as to estimate the annual loss to the Church to be half a million. . . ." Father Kirsch thinks that estimate of half a million is too high, but even if it is only 150,000, it still balances the conversions. We shall see later in chapter 8, that from one-fourth to one-half of the marriages of American Catholics are mixed marriages, that at least one-fifth of the Catholics involved give up the faith, and that the majority of the children of such marriages are probably lost to the Church. All these losses and leakages are so de-emphasized in Catholic propaganda that one has to be a sociological detective to discover them.

This does not mean that the American Catholic Church is losing its commanding place in the Catholic world system. Far from it. The European branches of the Church have lost proportionately for the past one hundred years. The Church still dominates Spain, Ireland, Portugal, and some of the South American countries, but it is on the defensive in most of Europe. It lost the whole Rumanian Uniate church in 1948 when that body of more than one million members returned to the Rumanian Orthodox Church, and it had already lost two or three million Ruthenian Catholics of the Slavic rite. Yugoslavia will



sooner or later be lost to the Roman hierarchy if present trends continue, and the Church's position is a question mark in Italy, East Germany, Poland, and Hungary. Not one of the five greatest powers in the world today is a genuinely Catholic state. The French people are nominally Catholic but the Church's followers are in a minority politically, and only about 20 per cent of the French people are practicing Catholics. The Vatican claims more than 484,000,000 souls throughout the world, but to reach this optimistic estimate the hierarchy includes millions of people who no longer pay even lip-service to the Pope, and millions of non-white Asians and Africans who will undoubtedly repudiate "the white man's religion" when they have achieved their cultural independence. The Church's statistics on world growth are produced by a propaganda organization, the Catholic Students Mission Crusade, whose estimates may safely be described as charitable. Its figures apparently include at least 100,000,000 in membership padding. For example, it credits Latin America with a 93 per cent Catholic population, whereas the same Catholic Almanac which publishes this estimate also includes the results of a detailed priestly survey showing that "the great body of people of Latin America five outside the Church . . . only about 10 per cent actually practice the faith."<sup>22</sup> Its world statistics in 1955 still claimed 67,000,000 alleged Catholics in countries under Communist control, including 3,000,000 in China, although Catholicism in that country has been almost wiped out, and its 5,700 foreign missionaries reduced to sixteen—eight in prison and eight free.

## **Section 4 The structure of the Catholic Church**

The observer of any great Catholic spectacle in the United States is impressed with one thing—the evidence of the absolute rule of the clergy. The public adulation given to clerical leaders is without parallel in the Protestant churches. The great masses of Catholic people who line the streets during a Catholic spectacle may kneel before the Host or a statue of the Virgin Mary or the relic of a saint, but the actual focus of their worshipful attention is more likely to be a gorgeously appareled cardinal with a red cloak three yards long. The genuflections of the faithful before the so-called princes of the Church, and even before simple bishops, annoy and disturb non-Catholic Americans, who are likely to ask: "Is not such servility utterly contrary to the American tradition?" "What good American ever kneels to any man?" "How did this medieval posturing ever get to the United States?"

This reaction to conspicuous medievalism is quite natural and justified. The framework of the power of the Catholic Church is medieval. The clerical caste, on the whole, corresponds to the nobility, and the Pope corresponds to the king. In the total authoritarian scheme the people are subjects, as they were in the Middle Ages, not participants in the government.

In a very real sense the Catholic Church is the clergy. Certainly the Catholic Church is not a church in the same sense that a congregational body is a church. In a congregational church the members can buy and sell the church's buildings as they choose, "call" or dismiss the pastor, and even determine the institution's creed. They do all these things by majority vote if any issue is raised which shows a difference of opinion.

In the Catholic system the people have none of these powers. The central structure of the Church is completely authoritarian, and the role of laymen is completely passive. The priest and his priestly superiors dominate the whole ecclesiastical, educational, and financial machinery. Priests are called to their vocation without any lay approval and assigned to parish or institutional posts by order of a bishop without any by-your-leave from the congregations they serve. A priest can be suspended summarily by his bishop without even a hearing if the reasons seem sufficient to his bishop, and the bishop is not even required to inform the priest of his reasons. The priest can be promoted also for reasons which seem sufficient to his bishop alone.

The beliefs of the Church are controlled in an equally arbitrary manner. They are crystallized in a long list of dogmatic utterances of councils and Popes that do not admit of modification or change by the Catholic people. The maintenance of these dogmas against error and heresy is the task of the Congregation of the Holy Office. Accordingly, the Pope himself heads this Congregation, and it is composed entirely of cardinals and minor prelates; there are also advisers, but no adviser may even be present at a meeting of the Congregation when a vote is being taken on any doctrinal matter. A solemn oath binds the eleven cardinals of the Congregation and the staff not to disclose any discussion which goes on behind the closed doors concerning the activities of the Congregation, and the penalty for violating this oath is excommunication.

The word "congregation" evokes in the minds of most Americans something democratic in nature, a group of people who meet together as members of some organization to decide something on their own authority. The twelve Congregations which surround the Pope in the government of the Roman Church are not congregations in that sense. They are not committees of Catholic people chosen by the members of the local churches in various nations. They are appointed committees of appointed cardinals, with a few minor prelates and advisers who are also appointed by the Pope directly or indirectly. They make important decisions but those decisions are subject to approval by the Pope and not by the Catholic people. The Congregations are entirely clerical and unanimously male. They are, in effect, departments of the central government of the Roman Church, and they form a great network of ecclesiastical power which reaches to every corner of the world.

The bureaucracy of the Roman Church at the capital is huge, centralized, and tightly controlled. The Roman Curia consists of the Pope, the Sacred College of Cardinals (maximum number seventy), twelve Congregations, three Tribunals, and five Offices. It is, as one Catholic writer has said, "the most conservative of all governments," and it rules its subjects with the pomp and pageantry of the Middle Ages.

The Sacred College chooses the Pope, and that Pope chooses the cardinals of the Sacred College as vacancies occur. A Pope can change the whole character of the Sacred College overnight if he wishes to make a flood of new appointments. Pius XII appointed thirty-two cardinals on one day, December 23, 1945.

The College of Cardinals has virtually no power independent of the Pope,

except to appoint a new Pope when one has died. Having exercised its elective function, it becomes merely a subordinate Papal committee, without even the power to change or dispense from Papal laws during the interim between popes. It is quite significant that every cardinal, at the time of his ceremonial appointment, must kiss the Pontiff's foot before receiving his red hat and his red *cappa magna*.

The Congregation of the Holy Office controls the faith of the Church and includes in its scope indulgences, heresies, miracles, medical practice, and the banning of books. The Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith supervises missionary effort; the Congregation for Seminaries and Universities controls the teaching and discipline in all Catholic seminaries and religious universities in the world; the Congregation of Rites controls worship, ceremonies and liturgy, and so on. I shall discuss the Roman political machinery later.

One Congregation, the Congregation of the Religious, deserves special mention. Its existence is a reminder that the ecclesiastical caste of the Church is divided into two sections, secular and regular. The secular clergy includes the ordinary priests, who live under the jurisdiction of their bishops. The regular clergy belong to monastic, mendicant, and other religious Congregations or orders, each having its own special rules approved by Rome. In the United States religious-order priests are gaining rapidly on secular priests in numbers. The secular priests have the advantage of being able to keep the money which they receive by gift or inheritance— and some of them die quite wealthy—but the religious-order priests have the even greater advantage of living in housing quarters with other priests, where they are able to combat the celibate's most dreaded enemy, the psychological disintegration that comes from loneliness.

Secular priests are bound by their oaths to live celibate and obedient lives; but their discipline is not so strict as that of the orders, and they take no vows of poverty. The members of orders observe a double discipline, that of the Church and that of their own orders. Such orders as the Benedictines, Carthusians, Trappists, Franciscans, and Dominicans have gained world-wide fame. Most famous of all are the Jesuits of the Society of Jesus, often considered the intellectual leaders of the Western Church. They have the largest and most powerful religious order in the United States.

More important in the total scheme are the feminine orders, for the Church in the United States is based largely on its nuns. The women's orders also come under the control of the all-male Congregation of the Religious. Although there are three times more nuns than priests in the Catholic system in the United States, the Religious women of America are completely subordinate to the men and have no voice in ecclesiastical affairs. Catholic nuns may vote in American political elections but not in their own Church. Altogether in the United States there are about 163,000 Sisters, garbed in the special dress of their orders, pledged to obedience, chastity, and poverty, living a community life in 275 religious organizations. They do the teaching and nursing and some of the social-service work of the Church.

The women's orders shield their members from the pitfalls and temptations of

the world, and foster a certain amount of institutional pride. They adopt medieval names and medieval practices of living. Many of them are very small, and there is frequent overlapping and jurisdictional conflict among them.

Most established religious orders are partially independent of the authority of local bishops and are governed by the Roman Congregation of the Religious directly, unless they have a local parochial responsibility. Their importance in the total Roman scheme is recognized by the fact that outstanding members of the greatest orders are often given key posts in the Congregations at Rome.

Discipline, poverty, chastity, and obedience are the watchwords of the Religious, as they are called. Not many of them in the United States in these modern days are completely cloistered, for usefulness is now more highly regarded than flight from the world. But many of the Religious practice personal mortification to repress the desires of the flesh, and all of them adopt a manner of living that is narrow, ascetic, and deeply devotional.

One of the latest guide-books for nuns, by Father Winfred Herbst, recommends "abandonment" and "dying to self" in terms of the following illustrations:

A clean sheet of paper on which God may write what He pleases.

A liquid, which has no shape of its own, but assumes the shape of the vessel in which it is put.

A ball of wax in the hands of God, which He can shape as He pleases.

A beast of burden (e.g., a pack horse) that is loaded by its master as the master wishes, having nothing to decide about the quality or quantity of its burden, and that goes or stops at the will of the master.

In the struggle for Roman power the Religious form the front line of Catholic expansion, the idealists and zealots of Catholic faith. Their spirit of extreme loyalty is well expressed in the mandate of the constitution of the Jesuits: ". . . let those who live in obedience allow themselves to be disposed of at the will of their superior like a corpse which permits one to turn and handle it any way one pleases."

In practice the members of the orders are sometimes far too lively to be classed with corpses and pack-horses, and it is no mean task for the Congregation of the Religious to regulate and coordinate them. Each order has its governing hierarchy, its convents or monasteries, and its systems of discipline. Each Mother Superior of a female order is likely to be especially anxious to recruit more members for her order and to promote the welfare and prosperity of her community. There are many reasons, as we shall see later, for competition among the orders. Recruiting is becoming more and more difficult in a nation where women are emancipated and independent. Obligatory chastity is losing some of its appeal as knowledge of sex spreads even to those adolescents who would normally be considered prospective recruits.

Although the regulation of the religious orders is difficult business, it is not impossible because the whole Roman system is strongly centralized in the

Roman Curia, headed by the Pope. He is the absolute monarch of the Catholic world. He is the One Voice of God speaking through the Vatican. Every bishop in the world, after selection by the Congregation of the Consistory, must receive his appointment from the Pope and report personally to the Vatican at five to ten year intervals.

The mechanism for the screening of potential bishops is so thorough that there is virtually no possibility of the appointment of any bishop who is not completely subservient to his own bishop and to the hierarchy.<sup>30</sup> Obedience is an essential qualification for securing or holding office. The system of control is essentially imperial, and in the total Catholic picture the United States is still a colony, with each American bishop appointed by a foreign monarch. Since he is responsible for his future to that monarch, the bishop has no more American independence in his professional life than a colonial governor in the days of George III.

Every two years every bishop in every nation must forward to his metropolitan a list of priests he considers worthy of episcopacy; after the nominees have been investigated, the names are sent on to the Apostolic Delegate of the Pope in that country, and then to the Congregation of the Consistory for further sifting. The Pope and the Pope only has the final right of approval, and the Pope can and does at times select bishops without going through the Congregation of the Consistory. The Pope, in fact, is the Commander-in-Chief of the Catholic army, and more than a million clerical soldiers throughout the world—priests, nuns, and brothers—follow him with unquestioning obedience.

## **Section 5 The power of the Pope**

It is no reflection upon the Pope as a human being to say that, as he is presented to the American public, he is a glorified synthetic personage, exalted by competent photographers, efficient publicity men, and devout officials. Americans are told all the good things about him, and there are plenty of good things to tell. The Pope is said to work and pray about seventeen hours a day, and to sleep six. He is photographed frequently in democratic poses, speaking benevolently to little children and common laborers. All his speeches, even when flat and platitudinous, are given lengthy and respectful treatment in the press.

The Pope, as one of the few remaining absolute monarchs in the world, lives in an atmosphere of continuous adulation. His Vatican palace has 1,400 rooms. His 500 dial telephones do not work for incoming calls. Because he is considered too exalted to eat a meal with any other human, he eats alone at a little table covered by red silk, sitting under a red *baldachino*. When Catholic visitors are admitted to his presence, they remain kneeling unless he invites them to stand up or take a seat. When they quit his presence they genuflect three times and leave the room backward. The men visitors commonly wear formal suits, and the women long black dresses. No legs or arms may be uncovered during a Papal audience.

To kiss the Pope's ring is, for devout Catholics, the event of a lifetime, and to kneel in the streets as his golden chair is carried past is a duty and

a privilege. When a Pope is to be elected by the Sacred College of Cardinals, the cardinals are locked up in the Conclave and the windows blinded and sealed with lead. Each cardinal sits on a little special throne covered with a violet *baldachina* and when the Papal vote is called for walks solemnly from that throne to cast his written ballot in a large chalice; he also kneels in prayer and repeats a special oath. The whole ceremony is surrounded with the self-consciousness of creative history. A new epoch is being born. Great crowds gather for blocks in St. Peter's Square to watch for the special smoke which signals the election of a new Pope. When the two-thirds-plus-one vote necessary for election has finally been achieved, there is wild rejoicing.

When the Pope proceeds to his coronation he is weighted down heavily with ceremonial robes and carried through worshipful crowds from the Sistine Chapel to St. Peter's in a gold sedan borne by twelve servants clad in crimson damask. Underneath five layers of garments he wears special Papal stockings heavily embroidered with gold. When the senior cardinal-deacon finally puts the triple tiara on his head, he says: "Receive the three-fold Crown of the Tiara, and know that Thou art the Father of Princes and Kings, the Ruler of the round Earth, and here below the Viceroy of Jesus Christ, to Whom be honor and glory forever. Amen."

In contemplating this figure of imperial and priestly splendor one is reminded of the comment addressed by St. Bernard to Pope Eugenius II in his *De Consideratione* in the twelfth century: "I do not find that St. Peter ever appeared in public loaded with gold and jewels, clad in silk, mounted on a white mule, surrounded by soldiers and followed by a brilliant retinue. In the glitter that environs thee, rather wouldst thou be taken for the successor of Constantine than for the successor of Peter."

It is one of the ironies of history that this figure of imperial splendor has been evolved from the teachings of an impecunious prophet of Galilee who had no worldly possessions and no ecclesiastical rank. Certainly the immediate followers of Jesus gave no sign that they ever contemplated anything like this when they began to spread the tidings of their leader. According to the greatest authorities on Christian history the early Christians knew nothing about the primacy of Roman bishops. That primacy, in fact, emerged in the doctrinal conflicts which rent the Church in later centuries. For three or four centuries after the death of Jesus the authority of the Roman bishops was by no means universal in the Church, and even in the western part of Europe as late as the fourth century the Roman Church played quite a minor role. The notion of Rome's primacy developed after this, and Rome's universal jurisdiction began only in the ninth century.

Although it is not the function of this book to discuss theological issues, it must be pointed out that the Vatican's alleged basis and justification for Papal dictatorship in both the religious and political fields is purely Biblical, and when challenged in the political field, the priests always fall back on a religious formula, one passage in one book of the New Testament, the sixteenth chapter of Matthew, as a complete answer to all critics who accuse the Church of betraying democracy. The form as well as the substance of Church government, the priests claim, is prescribed automatically by this delegation of authority to the Pope as successor to St. Peter. "And I say

unto thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

To deny this delegation of authority, the priests assert, is to deny the will of God. And it must be conceded that if this passage is all that the priests claim, the argument for orthodox Christians is ended. A moment's reflection, however, will convince any independent critic that, even if the statement was actually made by Jesus, it gives no carte-blanche sanction for Roman dictatorship. (I discuss this passage in Chapter 3 of *Communism, Democracy and Catholic Power*.) It is ambiguous and very general. Jesus said nothing about popes, bishops, or centralized ecclesiastical power. And the passage itself, written long after Jesus's death by a writer who relied chiefly on earlier manuscripts, has often been under suspicion as a possible interpolation.

Even when Roman supremacy began to take shape in the western part of Europe, the Roman bishops and Popes were not absolute rulers of the Church in the sense that they are today. There was even a little democracy in the hierarchy for a few centuries, since laymen took part with the lower and higher clergy in choosing Popes. *Qui omnibus praeest ab omnibus eligatur*—he who is above all must be chosen by all—was a statement endorsed by several Popes, and, in theory, this principle lasted for several centuries. The election of Popes by appointed cardinals began only in the eleventh century. Princes took part in Papal elections in early days and for a time the Papal position was a political football kicked about by various sovereigns. It is not surprising that under such circumstances some Popes were elected who were guilty of simony and nepotism, and who sometimes lived scandalous lives. Lewis Browne in his *Since Calvary* has written a vivid account of the individual robberies, murders, and adulteries of the worst Popes. Benedict IX, a twelve-year-old Pope of the tenth century "ruled like a captain of banditti, committing murders and adulteries in open daylight. . . . Finally in 1045, after emptying the treasury, he put up the Apostolic See at auction and sold it to a presbyter for a thousand pounds silver." For forty-one years in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there were two competing Popes with competing sets of cardinals and competing capitals. For a short time there were even three Popes to add to the confusion. Driven from Rome, the Papacy almost perished before it finally came back to greater glory than before.

If Catholic theologians were compelled to base their claims of Papal infallibility on the character of their Popes, they would be gravely embarrassed. Some of the Popes have belonged so obviously in a rogues' gallery that Catholic historians have frankly admitted their imperfections. To reconcile their villainies with an exalted concept of papal character, the Church's theologians have developed the doctrine that an imperfect man may yet be a perfect conduit for divine grace.

Thomas F. Woodlock puts it this way: "A Pope may be a wicked man with a load of deadly sins on his soul, which would damn him forever if he died under it unshriven and unrepentant, yet he will not define untruth. If he define, he

will define truth— or else he will not define.” “The Pope can’t sin, but the man who is pope can sin,” says another Church writer.

## Section 6 The Pope vs. modernism

(**Editor:** In this section the author talks about the Catholic position against birth control as something bad for the world. From a biblical standpoint I certainly do not agree with him. The Bible says in Psalms 127:3: *Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.* There is no verse in the Bible that discourages the birth of a child. But I also believe the Catholic Church has ulterior motives for discouraging birth control. More children means eventually more adults to make the Church even more richer and politically powerful.)

The American Catholic Church was founded in the days when the Pope had less authority than he has today. In the eighteenth century absolute kings disputed his rule over various national churches; then the French Revolution and the rise of liberalism left him free to control his own ecclesiastical world but greatly reduced his sphere of influence.

In the middle of the nineteenth century Pius IX came to the papal throne and served for more than thirty years. At the beginning of his pontificate, Pius adopted some liberal measures in the government of the Pontifical States, but he soon learned that people were beginning to think for themselves and to repudiate absolute sovereigns. From then on he tried desperately to stem the liberal tide. He made common cause with kings and urged the union of throne and altar, but thrones were toppling and parliaments rising to power. The new science which culminated in Darwin’s *Origin of Species* was beginning to challenge established beliefs. The Church, which had been the exclusive custodian of culture in the Middle Ages, saw the intellectual as well as the political leaders of the period drifting away from its power. Should the Papacy adjust its doctrines to the new attitudes and institutions? Pius IX decided not. (**Editor:** Later the popes did accept Darwin’s pseudoscience of evolution simply because it became popular among the public.) The Church was unchanging and unchangeable. As Cardinal Gibbons put it later, “. . . the Church is not susceptible of being reformed in her doctrines. ... Is it not the height of presumption for men to attempt to improve upon the work of God?”

So the Papacy decided that it must defy the whole trend of modern thought in Europe. Pius IX issued what is probably the most famous document ever issued by a Pope, the *Syllabus of Errors* of 1864, which branded as false many of the basic beliefs of democracy and liberalism. It attacked public education, the separation of church and state, and the right of men to choose their own religion.

Here are some of the propositions upon which Pius IX pronounced anathema as among “the principal errors of our time.”

Every man is free to embrace and profess the religion he shall believe true, guided by the light of reason.

The Church ought to be separated from the State, and the State from the Church.



The Roman Pontiff can and ought to reconcile himself to, and agree with, progress, liberalism and civilization as lately introduced. In the present day, it is no longer expedient that the Catholic religion shall be held as the only religion of the State, to the exclusion of all other modes of worship.

Naturally this anti-democratic philippic (discourse full of condemnation) caused an indignant reaction in the intellectual world of Europe and America. It was, as the Encyclopedia Britannica says, "a declaration of war against the modern political and social order, which in its day provoked the unanimous condemnation of public opinion."

Pius made his anathemas "infallible" by sending them out with an important encyclical, *Quanta Cura*, in which he reiterated and underlined the reactionary doctrines in the *Syllabus*.

Four years later he committed himself to the greatest intellectual blunder of Papal history—matched only by the social blunder of his namesake, Pius XI, in banning birth control—by declaring himself virtually divine and errorless in his role as Pastor of the Human Race. While the political world was moving toward liberty and democracy, the Church went to the other extreme and proclaimed the dogma of Papal infallibility. That this dogma could be promulgated in the year 1870 without a complete split in the Church was a demonstration of the supreme discipline of Catholic world organization.

As it was, the doctrine of infallibility of the Vatican Council of 1870, even though it was restricted to matters of faith and morals, was a cause of profound embarrassment to American Catholics. The American bishops opposed it as either unfounded or untimely, and some of them threatened to walk out of the Council if they were not given more time to consider it. They had good reason to believe that the proclamation of such a dogma would make their position in America more untenable than ever in a period of militant anti-Catholic agitation. There is little doubt that if the whole question could have been discussed freely and voted on by the Catholic *people* of the world, they would have repudiated the doctrine, and possibly the Papacy along with it. Certainly the doctrine was repugnant to contemporary American ways of thinking—and still is. Professor Geddes MacGregor of Bryn Mawr in his new book, *The Vatican Revolution*, has proved to the hilt the thesis that the doctrine of infallibility had no sound basis in the history of the Christian Church.

The hierarchy, under the usages of the Church, could not give the American Catholic people or even the lower clergy of this country any opportunity to take part in the Council which proclaimed infallibility. Only bishops and high prelates were eligible to echo or challenge the Pope's design. Pope Pius IX feared French and German reactions, and he would have feared American reaction if the United States had had a large episcopate. As it was, an elaborate technique for smothering the opposition was worked out by the Vatican before the Council began.

Although the Popes had long claimed that their decisions in matters of faith and morals were final, British and American bishops had been careful not to

emphasize Papal infallibility. The Catholic Church as a minority group was on its good behavior in England and the United States. A Catholic catechism in England had spread the theory that the doctrine of infallibility was a libelous Protestant invention circulated by anti-Catholics. American and English bishops were especially fearful of the possible reaction against claims of infallibility because of the hostility to any kind of absolute rule among their people.

In this critical situation Pius IX convoked the last ecumenical council of the Church. It proved to be a Council that made any later sessions unnecessary. In preparing his Bull of Convocation for the session, Pius was deliberately vague. He left it to the Jesuit-controlled periodical, *Civiltà Cattolica*, to mention casually the fact that Papal infallibility was on the agenda. The reaction was immediate and bitter. Many leading Catholic theologians denounced the doctrine, and Lord Acton, the foremost British Catholic, calling the dogma a "soul-destroying error," expressed the hostility of his people in a letter which said of the proposed reform: "It makes civil legislation on all points of contract, marriage, education, clerical immunities, mortmain (inalienable possession of property by the Church), even on many questions of taxation and Common Law, subject to the legislation of the Church, which would be simply the arbitrary will of the Pope. Most assuredly no man accepting such a code could be a loyal subject, or fit for the enjoyment of political privileges." Acton regarded the whole doctrine of infallibility as contrary to Christian tradition and remarked that he could see no reason to change his religion because the Pope changed his. He escaped excommunication by an eyelash, because his expulsion would have created almost as much scandal as the promulgation of the doctrine itself.

Pius IX went ahead with calm determination. He had arranged to have the question of infallibility brought up in the form of a humble prayer to himself, and the hope was entertained that the proposal might pass quickly by acclamation. He determined the general scope of discussion at the meeting and he controlled in one way or another not only the committee chairmen but the working majority of the bishops. He had the support of the Jesuits, who had served as a pro-dictatorship party in working up sentiment for the proposed reform.

In spite of all the advantages, it took Pius two months to persuade the Council of his own infallibility, and then he won out in the first test vote by a margin of only 451 to 150. That may seem like a wide margin, but it must be remembered that the bishops who opposed Pius IX were risking their whole careers. They were living and working inside a tightly controlled, absolute monarchy, and it took unusual courage to oppose the monarch. Among the negative voters were the bishops of St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Rochester, and Louisville. According to Dom Cuthbert Butler, the American bishops in attendance at the Council were opposed to the declaration of infallibility by a count of about 22 to 8. When the effort was made to make the vote unanimous, Bishop Fitzgerald of Little Rock was one of the two who held out to the bitter end. Fitzgerald knew what reception an American would get in Arkansas who voted for the proposition that a Pope could not make a mistake

in matters of faith and morals.

The new doctrine, of course, did not claim that the Pope was always infallible, or that he could not make a mistake in political matters. It said that "the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when, in discharge of the office of pastor and teacher of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority he defines a doctrine regarding faith and morals to be held by the Universal Church, is, by divine assistance promised him in Blessed Peter, possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith and morals . .

American and British Catholics, faced with a storm of criticism in their own countries, stressed the fact that the Pope's infallibility was strictly limited and that he could, in the fields of politics and economics, make mistakes with which a Catholic could safely disagree. Cardinal Gibbons jokingly pointed out that the Pope had pronounced his name "Jibbons," so he could not be infallible in everything.

But who determines what subjects come within the sweep of infallible power? The Pope, of course! The power to define jurisdiction makes authority almost limitless. The word "morals" is so broad that it invites indefinite expansion; similarly the word "faith." If faith deals with ideas and morals deals with behavior, is not the whole range of human experience encompassed within the Papal claim?

The Popes, although they have persisted in describing themselves as infallible, have had the good sense to be vague about specific utterances. It is impossible for the inquiring student to discover a list of alleged infallible statements. Some Catholic writers claim that there have been scores of infallible utterances by the Holy Pastor; others contend that the infallible pronouncements of the Popes can be counted on the fingers of one hand. According to Bishop Wright of Worcester, "The first solemn exercise of infallibility of the Roman Pontiff since the definition of that prerogative in the Vatican Council" was the declaration of Pius XII on November 1, 1950, that the body of the Virgin Mary had been miraculously taken up to heaven—the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. Certainly the declaration of this dogma was the most spectacular event in recent Papal history, the crowning show of the Holy Year, but there is no reason to believe that it was more genuinely *ex cathedra*, more binding or more significant, than, let us say, the 1929 and 1930 encyclicals of Pius XI on education, marriage, and birth control.

The Holy See never issues statements with labels attached; it never says *this* paragraph on birth control in this encyclical is everlastingly sacred because it is in the field of morals and the Pope addressed it to all Christians simultaneously, and that paragraph on school control is fallible discipline. In general, Papal encyclicals addressed to the whole Church on moral and spiritual subjects are rated as having the highest authority but are not necessarily infallible. Statements made to an individual may be rated on a lower level, and casual speeches of the Popes may be treated simply as casual speeches.

However, all Catholic authorities are agreed on the infallibility of one type of Papal utterance. The Pope is always and indisputably infallible when he declares a certain person to be a saint. (By good fortune I stood within a few yards of Pius XII and heard such infallible pronouncements on two occasions during the 1950 Holy Year in Rome.)

The difference between an infallible and a fallible statement by the Pope, as far as practical results are concerned, may be important for theologians; but it is not important for the public at large, because the Pope is the Vicar of God in any case, and it is a Catholic's duty to follow his teaching and directives in all things that affect religious life. And the definition of "religious life" belongs to the Pope. For all practical purposes there is no appeal from a Pope's judgment, since Canon 2332, promulgated in 1918, provides excommunication for any Catholic "of whatever state, rank, or condition, even though he be king, Bishop, or Cardinal, who appeals from the laws, decrees, or mandates of the reigning Roman Pontiff to a universal Council . . . "There is no distinction made here," says Father Ayrinhac in his standard work on Canon Law, "between legitimate and illegitimate decisions, as all are presumed to be legitimate . . . "

Catholic dialectitians like to describe the infallibility of the Pope as something which resembles the power of the United States Supreme Court. "See," they argue, "you have a supreme authority in the United States to act as final arbiter under your constitution, and we have a supreme authority under our constitution. It is natural and fitting that such authority should exist." The analogy is not accurate. The power of the United States Supreme Court is derived from the people, and the people could abolish the Court if they wished by constitutional amendment. The members of the Court are chosen by an elected official and confirmed by an elected Senate. They are subject to impeachment and trial by an elected body. They have never claimed divine or even juridical infallibility in anything. The Catholic doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope does not provide for any of these democratic safeguards.

The most embarrassing aspect of the doctrine of infallibility is that it must be retroactive or it is nothing. Infallibility was not created or discovered in 1870; it was only promulgated and stamped with official approval at that time. It is a "tradition received from the beginning of the Christian faith," as Pius IX put it. Since it came from St. Peter down through the long line of Popes, every solemn declaration by all the Popes in the field of morals and faith must be true. This is an ambitious claim, and it has taken all of the skill of the Catholic historians to adjust history to it. To answer some of the embarrassing questions with some show of consistency, the Jesuits have created several grades in Papal utterance. The most embarrassing Papal blunders are classified in one of the minor grades for which infallibility is not claimed.

## **Section 7 The Heresy of Americanism**

The Popes have been apprehensive about American Catholicism for many years, and they have watched its growth in power with great anxiety, being fully aware of the dangerous influence of liberalism under religious freedom. This

fear reached its climax with the transmission by Leo XIII in 1899 of a special letter to Cardinal Gibbons condemning the "heresy" of Americanism. This "heresy" of Americanism was not American patriotism as such but "the pretext . . . that in matters of faith and of Christian life each one should be free to follow his own bent in the spirit of the large measure of civil liberty recognized in these days. . . . The Pope was horrified by the prospect of the growth of such independence in the United States, and declared that "it raises the suspicion that there are some among you who conceive and desire a Church in America different from that which is in the rest of the world." Since then there has not been a visible glimmer of defiance of Papal autocracy among the American bishops. Nor has there been any American movement toward Church democracy among laymen to correspond to the anticlerical movements of Europe. The most eloquent American Catholic advocates of democracy do not dare to apply that gospel to the structure of their Church's government.

Every move by the American Church toward self-government has been scrutinized and double-checked to avoid the possibility of a drift toward national independence. While the American Church has had its provincial and national councils, the acts of those councils have always been subjected to Roman veto or approval, and Rome has always been careful not to elevate any bishopric in the United States to a position of primacy. For a time the bishops of Baltimore enjoyed a kind of primacy of honor, but even this has now disappeared. Leo XIII, instead of creating an American primate whose viewpoint and background might be fundamentally American, created an Apostolic Delegation at Washington, and each succeeding Pope has sent his own representative to occupy the spacious building in Washington which, in effect, is the general Roman headquarters of American Catholicism. Since the Pope's appointee is always an Italian, whose line of promotion runs toward Rome instead of the United States, there is little danger that he will become infected with the "heresy" of Americanism.

For a long time American Catholicism was in considerable confusion because of the lack of a central administrative authority in this country. The confusion was accentuated in the beginning by the fact that many immigrant branches of the Church spoke different languages and represented competing national interests. As late as 1912, 43 of the 231 churches in Boston, 84 out of 200 in Chicago, and 40 out of 156 in New York were national. Even to this day (mid-20th century) there is no love lost between the dominant Irish and the German-, Polish-, or Italian-American Catholics. The rivalry between them is natural because in many sections of America the Church is virtually an Irish church operating under Irish priests and cardinals. All but one of the ten native-born cardinals of American history have been sons of Irish immigrant workers.

This Irish dominance explains many of the characteristics of American Catholicism. The Irish hierarchy which rules the American Church is a "becoming" class. It represents the Irish people struggling upward in a hostile environment, using the Roman system of authoritative power to compensate for an inner sense of insecurity which still seems to survive from the days when the Irish Catholics were a despised immigrant minority. Boston

is aggressively Catholic largely because it is aggressively Irish, and it is aggressively Irish because its people have not quite overcome their sense of being strangers in a hostile land. Jealousy between the Irish and the Italians is only one phase of the competition among all immigrant groups to make good in the American environment. The growth of Catholic power in America is part of the Irish success story. Perhaps the Italians find compensation in the thought that the government of the universal Church is in Italian hands, that all the Popes for four hundred years have been Italians, and that all the Apostolic Delegates have been fellow countrymen.

After the establishment of the Apostolic Delegation at Washington, it was the war (World War I) which gave the American bishops a chance to create a closer unity in American Catholicism. Some agency had to speak for all American Catholics in dealing with the government during the war, and out of the National Catholic War Council, created for this purpose, grew the National Catholic Welfare Conference (N.C.W.C.). At first it was called the National Catholic Welfare Council, but to a Vatican which could remember other defiant councils that word "council" smacked too much of national authority. So the word "council" was changed to "conference" the following year, and even then the whole idea of a conference of American bishops encountered much skepticism at Rome. Periodic conferences of American bishops were approved by the Holy See only after it was made perfectly clear that they were not to be legislative, canonical councils but merely private meetings for the exchange of ideas.

The N.C.W.C. is still careful to call itself merely "a voluntary association of the bishops of the United States." In 1922, just after the death of Benedict XV, it was announced that Benedict had signed a decree dissolving the National Catholic Welfare Conference shortly before his death. Pius XI, out of respect for his predecessor, declared that he would promulgate the law. Later it was alleged that some enemy of "Americanism" had slipped the decree in among the late Pope's papers after his death. So Pius XI allowed the National Catholic Welfare Conference to continue, but he hedged it about with a set of special regulations.

American laymen were completely excluded from all places of power in the new American organization. It was provided that even the chairman of the "laymen's" division in the N.C.W.C. was to be a bishop or archbishop. The more than 20,000,000 members of Catholic lay organizations are without any power in the Church, except advisory power. The Vatican wants everyone to be sure that the N.C.W.C. is an organization of the hierarchy and not an organization of the American Catholic people. Pius XII went out of his way, in a 1954 allocution at the time Pius X was canonized, to rebuke any lay independence and "lay theology" in the Catholic Church.

Once a year all the Catholic bishops in the United States— 200 more or less—meet in Washington to discuss American Church activities. They profess their utmost devotion to the Pope, and then proceed to promote American Catholicism with characteristic American energy. In spite of the restrictions, they have built up during the last forty years an efficient and aggressive organization that is the envy of many other American religious groups. An administrative board of archbishops and bishops supervises all

operations, and eight departments send out propaganda and advice to all Catholic organizations in the United States. The organization is especially useful in co-ordinating the vast money-raising activities of American Catholicism. It is a gigantic and successful public relations office.

The bureaus of the N.C.W.C. are full of busy young priests, lobbyists, pamphleteers, journalists, and lawyers who attempt to co-ordinate the Catholic population of the country as one great pressure group when any "Catholic issue" arises. The Press Department sends out myriad news releases and feature articles to some 500 Catholic papers in this country and abroad with a circulation of more than 20,000,000. That is one reason the front pages of the diocesan newspapers in this country look so much alike.

Whenever any issue arises in Congress which may or might affect Catholic interests, a seasoned lobbyist in priestly garb is likely to appear in a congressman's office, reminding the legislator that 35,000,000 Catholics in America feel such and so about this matter. Even when the legislator knows perfectly well that the opinion is actually that of a handful of top-ranking bishops, acting on orders from Rome, he may swallow his convictions and say "Yes, yes," because he knows that in American Catholicism the bishops speak for Catholic power. He knows also that Catholic pressure can be mortally effective in swinging any close election against him.

The theory on which the National Catholic Welfare Conference is organized is that the Catholic people of the United States should function primarily as Catholics in every branch of their activities. The keynote of the Church's strategy in a non-Catholic country is denominational separatism, described as "the preservation and expansion of the faith." (It is in many ways the direct opposite of the strategy recommended in Catholic countries like Spain.) Catholic advertising promoters boast that "37,800 Catholic institutions of all types are operated and maintained by Catholic organizations" in the United States, and that for these institutions alone "an estimated billion dollars will be spent each year from now through 1965 in new construction, remodeling, equipment, furnishings, decorations and maintenance." The national strategy is based upon the assumption that American Catholics should not only worship and work together but also buy together, read together, play together, boycott together, and (ultimately) vote together when any issue of direct interest to the Church arises.

There are no Catholic regiments in the army, but there is a Catholic organization for almost every other aspect of American life.

In the educational and scientific field there are the National Catholic Educational Association, the American Catholic Sociological Society, the Catholic Anthropological Conference, the American Catholic Psychological Association, the American Catholic Philosophical Association, the National Federation of Catholic College Students, the Catholic School Press Association, etc. There is even an American *Catholic Who's Who*.

In the literary, book, and dramatic world there are the Catholic Library Association, the Catholic Dramatic Movement, the Legion of Decency, the National Office for Decent Literature, the Catholic Book Club, the Newman

Book Club, the Catholic Children's Book Club, the Catholic Actors Guild, the Catholic Writers' Guild, etc.

In the field of journalism and communications there are the Catholic Press Association, the Catholic Broadcasters Association, the Catholic Film and Radio Guild, the Catholic Information Society, etc.

In the field of youth activity and sports there are the Catholic Boy Scouts, the Catholic Girl Scouts, the Newman Club Federation, the All-Catholic All-American Football Team, the Junior Catholic Daughters of America, etc.

In music and art there are the National Catholic Music Educators' Association, the Catholic Cadet Choir of the United States Military Academy, the Catholic Art Association, etc.

In the field of government, law, and military service there are the Catholic War Veterans, the Catholic Postal Employees' Eucharistic League, the Catholic Court Attaches' Guild, the Guild of Catholic Lawyers, etc.

In the economic and labor world there are the Catholic Economic Association, the Catholic Conference on Industrial Problems, the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, the Young Christian Workers, etc.

In medicine there are the Catholic Hospital Association, the Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds, the National Council of Catholic Nurses, the Hospital Social Service Association, etc.

In addition there are the Knights of Columbus, the Holy Name Society, the National Council of Catholic Men, the National Council of Catholic Women, Catholic Action, the Catholic Daughters of America, the Catholic Total Abstinence Union, the Catholic Airmen of America, the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, the National Catholic Interracial Council, etc.

Of these organizations the best known is the Knights of Columbus—although its 1,000,000 membership is smaller than the 3,500,000 membership of the Holy Name Society. The K. of C. allows its name (and funds) to be used for a gigantic and continuing religious propaganda campaign of advertising designed to convert non-Catholics. (See Chapter 13.) Under the guidance of specially trained priests and public-relations advisers, the Knights issue a great amount of literature protesting the one-hundred-percent American loyalty of all Catholics and asserting the imperative necessity of uniting to fight Communism. The organization's strength comes not only from its social activity but also from its 700-million-dollar, low-cost life insurance program. It controls what Life magazine calls a "billion-dollar financial empire," and its monthly magazine, *Columbia*, claims the largest Catholic circulation in the world. It can produce a wave of "public opinion" on almost any subject on twenty-four hours' notice from the Catholic hierarchy. In 1956, by producing a flood of angry letters, telegrams, and editorials, addressed to the federal government, it brought about the cancellation of a visit to the United States of Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia, as an enemy of the Catholic people. Its propaganda for Franco as a friend of the Catholic people has been equally effective.



The K. of C. has been the particular target of anti-Catholic sentiment in the South during its seventy-five years of existence, and an alleged "secret oath" of the organization has been widely circulated through the Southwest, in which the Knights are pictured as promising to tear out the bowels of their opponents and effect similar and sundry changes in American life. Unhappily, this type of anti-Catholic fanaticism—the oath is purely imaginary (Editor: He may be wrong about that) and has been proved so in court on a number of occasions—has produced counter-fanaticism in the K. of C. Its propaganda persists in the illusion that critics of Catholic autocracy are somehow attempting to revive the Ku Klux Klan and destroy the liberties of the Church. The priests encourage this illusion, since it is a valuable stimulant to partisan spirit. Aside from this partisan spirit, and the uses to which the order is put by the hierarchy, the K. of C. is simply one more American fraternal order, composed of men who love plumes, their country, and a good time.

## **Section 8 "Catholic Action"**

These multiple and expanding organizations are an important part of the Catholic system of power, and they have a serious purpose in the Catholic plan for America. I shall discuss some of their operations in detail in later chapters, particularly the operations of the over-all organization known as *Catholic Action*, which describes itself as "an army engaged in a holy war for religion." Catholic Action creates in many non-Catholic as well as Catholic organizations cells of devotees which function in a manner strikingly similar to Communist cells.

The Catholic organizations in America are not merely fellowships of genial and like-minded Catholic people. They contain many genial and broad-minded Catholic laymen, but in the hands of the hierarchy they become instruments for the development of a militant and exclusive faith. The lay members are carefully guided by the hierarchy into ways of separatism and monopoly. They are segregated from the rest of American cultural and social life as much as possible in order to preserve their faith unsullied. The Church tries to parallel every activity of non-Catholics with a specialized activity under Catholic auspices.

The hierarchy is not satisfied with an American Mother of the Year. It must celebrate the maternal instinct with someone who is distinctly Catholic. So we must have a Catholic Mother of the Year, with all the fanfare of a national Mother of the Year. A mere American mother might be a Methodist, a Jew or an agnostic. She might practice birth control and have only two or three children. So the hierarchy boldly appropriates the idea of the Mother of the Year for its own purposes, and all over America priests take advantage of the selection of this Catholic mother to deliver little sermons on the superiority of the Catholic home and the high devotion of the mother who worships only at a Catholic altar.

A similar method has been used in developing the Catholic Boy Scouts in the United States. One of the chief purposes in creating the original Boy Scout movement was to build national solidarity among all classes of boys by getting them to associate together as loyal and honest Americans regardless

of creed. The Catholic hierarchy has taken over this concept for its own purpose and developed a segregated Boy Scout movement for Catholic boys to promote its own brand of denominational loyalty. In 1956 the Catholic Committee on Scouting served 520,000 Catholic Boy Scouts in 8,776 troops, almost 14 per cent of the total membership.

The various Catholic organizations all have priestly "advisers" whose purpose, as The Catholic Action Manual says, is officially to serve merely as "a safeguard of the orthodoxy of the associations," but actually they serve as a supreme authority in many cases. Intolerance of all other faiths is cultivated and emphasized by these priestly advisers because such intolerance is part of the Catholic philosophy of religion.

"Protestantism," says Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, the favorite prophet of American Catholicism, "in great part has ceased to be Christian." Under Canon 1325, all Protestants are branded as heretics, and the very name of "faith" is denied to Protestant and Jewish organizations. The *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* of February, 1947, in answering a question for priests as to whether it is right to use the word "faith" to describe other religious groups, said: "For, if there is anything in Catholic teaching, it is the doctrine that the Son of God established only one religion and imposed on all men the obligation of embracing it; consequently no other religion has a real objective right to exist and to function, and no individual has an objective right to embrace any non-Catholic religion."

This narrowness of outlook should not surprise anybody who has studied Church history. The attitude has been traditional with the Popes for centuries, and the doctrine is still official that: "Out of the Church there is no salvation."

This is the doctrine that is taught to Catholic school children in the standard text, *Manual of Christian Doctrine*, when it says:

"For whom is there no salvation outside the Church? For whoever willfully remains outside the Church, refusing to profess the faith taught by the Church, to partake of her sacraments, and to obey her laws."

Any honest interpretation of these words leads to the conclusion that under this rule a Protestant or Jew who studies Catholicism and then rejects it is damned. In the famous controversy in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1949, the Jesuit leader Father Leonard Feeney insisted on a literal interpretation of this principle and was finally expelled from the Jesuit order and excommunicated for defying Archbishop Cushing of Boston. Feeney was a fanatic, but his interpretation of Catholic dogma was far more honest and accurate than the liberal make-believe adopted by Archbishop Cushing. The official letter of the Holy Office on this subject, withheld from publication by the Boston hierarchy for three years, condemns Feeney's intransigence but reaffirms the basically exclusive doctrine of salvation which the Church has taught for centuries.

Now, among those things which the Church has always preached and will never cease to preach is contained also that infallible statement by which we are

taught that there is no salvation outside the Church. However, this dogma must be understood in that sense in which the Church herself understands it . . . that one may obtain eternal salvation, it is not always required that he be incorporated into the Church *actually* as a member, but it is necessary that at least he be united to her by *desire* and *longing* . . . this desire need not always be explicit . . . when a person is involved in invincible ignorance, God accepts also an *implicit* desire . . .

For the sake of appearances the Vatican nominally stood by its archbishop and his synthetic liberalism in the Feeney case. Then, when Archbishop Cushing was due to receive a red hat at a Papal consistory, he was conspicuously passed over.

The hierarchy is particularly concerned about protecting Catholic youth against association with non-Catholics who accept "indifferentism." Indifferentism is the form of broad-mindedness which permits men to view other religions with calm detachment and to search for a common denominator of agreement. Nothing enrages Catholic theologians more than "common denominator" talk. "It is sheer nonsense to talk of a common religion for all American children or a common denominator for the hundreds of religious beliefs that we have in America," said the Most Reverend John T. McNicholas, late general president of the National Catholic Educational Association. To be safeguarded against indifferentism young Catholics are forbidden in their various organizations to discuss any subject connected with their faith with non-Catholics without the consent of their priest. Every Catholic is forbidden, in general, to explain or defend the truths of his faith publicly, or to attend Protestant services regularly, or to read any book which takes a critical attitude toward the fundamentals of Catholic faith. The prohibition was extended in the summer of 1957 to the New York revival meetings of Billy Graham.

The chief diocesan Catholic newspaper in the United States, *The Register*, carried in its religious information column on May 12, 1957, the following question and answer by Father Robert Kekeisen:

*"If a Catholic attends a social affair in a Protestant church hall, should he bow his head along with the others present when the Protestant minister says the blessing?"*

No. A Catholic who is present at a public Protestant service (and this seems to be the case here, though the service is most brief) must give no signs whatever of participation in the rites. To give visible signs of taking part in non-Catholic prayer services is a manifestation of religious indifference and also a possible source of scandal to others in this matter.

If a Catholic eats dinner privately in the home of a Protestant family, he may bow his head as the meal prayer is said, as this does not take on the nature of a public religious service.

The Church's most noted British authority on morals, Father Henry Davis, in his *Moral and Pastoral Theology* summarizes some of the protective rules that Catholics are bound to observe in their organizations in order to avoid

doctrinal contagion:

1. It is wrong to play the organ in a non-Catholic church as a help to the religious service, or to be a member of the choir during religious services.
2. In Protestant marriages in a Protestant church, a Catholic should, in general, not take part as witness. . . .
3. [Catholic servants who must accompany masters and children to a Protestant service must not] take any part in the service.
4. It would be sinful and scandalous for Catholics to contribute specially to the upkeep of . . . Salvation Army shelters. . . .

The very alarm with which the hierarchy combats all forms of "indifferentism" among its various organizations is proof that it is having a difficult time in holding young Catholics to a restricted, denominational point of view. The intellectual climate of America is not congenial to narrow zealots, and the hierarchy must struggle constantly to keep its people from drifting to that most dangerous condition which the nineteenth-century Popes branded as "liberalism."

One device for maintaining an exclusive spirit among the faithful is to punish swiftly and severely any priest who proposes mercy for heretics. One of America's most noted priests, Father John A. O'Brien, in 1934 and 1935, wrote a series of articles in the magazine for priests, the *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, in which he suggested that a heretic in hell might some day, after centuries of torture, cease burning and sink into welcome oblivion. He pointed out that fire is often used in the Bible in a metaphorical sense, and asked: "What good would it do to torture souls without end in another life for sins, however numerous and grave, committed during a few years on earth?" The hierarchy was horrified, and both Father O'Brien and the editors of the magazine were compelled to print an abject and craven apology. On June 22, 1935, they signed a retraction which was printed in the August issue of the magazine, repudiating without mental reservation the heresy that "Catholics should not be forced to believe in the eternal torment of the damned," and accepting the dogma that such unfortunates never lose consciousness while suffering in *real* fire.

The sufferers, according to official Catholic teaching, include every faithful Protestant and Jew who "deliberately remains outside the pale of the said Catholic Church through his own fault . . . should he continue in this state to the end."

## **Section 9 Church discipline**

The whole Catholic system of global discipline rests fundamentally on its great army of priests. The parish priest is the contact man between the hierarchy and the people, and the agent for Roman spiritual and political goods. Although he is never allowed to forget that he is subordinate to the hierarchy, he must be a man of versatility, initiative, and independent judgment to operate a modern parish successfully.

The priest's role is varied and often difficult. He is a comforter for the dying, an adviser for the troubled, a friend of the lonely, and a teacher of those who thirst after knowledge. His success depends partly upon his intimate personal knowledge of his people. He must be an able administrator and businessman because he carries the whole burden for the parish school as well as the parish church upon his shoulders. In general, he must live a personally exemplary life in order to hold the respect of his parishioners. He must be a reasonably vigorous preacher, but not necessarily a brilliant or original one. The preaching in a Catholic pulpit is more authoritative and less original than in a Protestant church or Jewish synagogue, because the limits of variation in belief are so much more precisely drawn.

In general, the hierarchy tells its American priests what to believe in great detail. Usually the parish priest has no strong inclination toward heretical belief because he has been conditioned and indoctrinated systematically in the Catholic educational system from the kindergarten through the seminary. A glance at any biographical list of prominent Catholic prelates will show how few of them ever stray from the Catholic educational system. Most of the priests are conditioned for the priesthood in a Catholic parochial school, then in a Catholic high school, then in an American Catholic college and seminary, and finally, perhaps, in the North American College at Rome, which has been made "the United States national seminary in the Eternal City." Auxiliary Bishop John J. Wright of Boston declared in 1948 that not a single Roman Catholic prelate in the United States is the son of a college graduate.

One reason for the limited culture of these bishops is that after they have finally arrived at episcopal status they are too busy with problems of administrative supervision to fill in the gaps in their sectarian education. It was H. G. Wells who said:

These Catholic prelates, so imposing in their triple crowns and mitres and epicene garments, are in fact extremely ignorant men, not only by virtue of the narrow specialization of their initial education, but also by the incessant activities of service and ceremony that have occupied them since. They can have read few books, they can have had no opportunities of thinking freely.

Inside the closed cultural system the priest is supplied at second hand with all the arguments against Catholicism, and the stereotyped answers. He takes his religion from others above him as a matter of duty because he has always been taught that submission to Church authority is the essence of "freedom." In the diocesan synod the priest does not even have the right to vote against any law or rule promulgated by the bishop. Likewise, the members of the parish church are taught to take religion in turn from the priest, with what has been described by one Catholic writer as "the apron-string mentality which leaves the clergy to do all thinking for the faithful."

No one has stated this systematic subjection of the Catholic mind to clerical guidance more frankly than the noted British Catholic writer Hilaire Belloc:

Hamack uttered a profound truth in what he intended to be a sneer, when he said that men had their own religion or somebody else's religion. The

religion of the Catholic is not a mood induced by isolated personal introspection coupled with an isolated personal attempt to discover all things and the Maker of all things. It is essentially *an acceptance of the religion of others*; which others are the Apostolic College, the Conciliar decisions, and all that proceeds from the authoritative voice of the Church. For the Catholic, it is not he himself, it is the Church which can alone discover, decide and affirm.

With such an attitude toward his own personal doubts and toward any independent thinking in his own congregation, the parish priest becomes primarily the Voice of Authority. He is not a man among men. He is a member of a special caste. He follows a routine which is almost military in its severity, and he must obey his superiors with military precision. He wears special uniforms and does not marry. He is called "Father" to emphasize his paternal supervision over his people. He has certain special powers that distinguish him from his fellows, and by using those powers he becomes a purveyor of certain supernatural benefits to all believers.

The Catholic priest is also armed with several special and effective devices of control over his people. The people are told that under certain circumstances he is able to forgive sin and grant absolution, and he performs these operations with impressive dignity. As an instrument of divine power he performs the exclusively Catholic miracle of transubstantiation, transforming bread into flesh and wine into blood, actually, not figuratively. He blesses certain articles, and thereupon they take on some of the mysterious qualities of a primitive charm. He makes certain motions and repeats certain words, and the souls of struggling penitents in purgatory are presumably moved up one step on the long stair that leads through the valley of the shadow.

I shall discuss some of the abuses of priestly practice in the chapter on "Science, Scholarship, and Superstition." Not all the abuses are due to any shortcoming in the priests themselves. To a certain extent the priests are the victims of the medievalism of their own Church, imprisoned by ancient beliefs and forced into the role of a "good" magician.

One unfortunate result of tradition is the survival of certain commercial practices in connection with prayer, forgiveness, and indulgences which shock non-Catholics. Although Catholics resent the suggestion that prayers for the dead and indulgences for the punishment of sins are bought and sold, there is no doubt that the ceremonial accompaniments of prayer and indulgences are paid for in cash at standard prices, and sometimes at competitive prices.

Many of the financial policies of the hierarchy seem to the outsider to be dangerously near commercialism, or worse. The gambling game of bingo is one of the great sources of revenue for Catholic churches in the United States, and the game is openly encouraged on church premises in many parts of the United States. Even Mayor LaGuardia was not powerful enough to eliminate it from New York City Catholic institutions. One parish in New England has maintained five Catholic missionaries in the foreign field from the profits of gambling alone. The spiritual territory of the late Archbishop McNicholas (Cincinnati), administrative leader of American Catholicism, made a profit of almost \$1,500,000 for some thirty Catholic churches in 1939 out of bingo as

played by 2,500,000 players, after the Archbishop had valiantly defended the practice against threats of legal suppression.<sup>62</sup> In 1948 Catholic groups in New Jersey spear-headed the successful drive for a state-wide law permitting gambling for religious organizations, after the state supreme court had ended a predominantly Catholic gambling enterprise that had yielded an annual "take" of almost \$4,000,000 in the political territory of Frank Hague. "Gambling in itself," says the Church, "is not sinful. It may become sinful however by reason of certain circumstances often related to it."

It should be added that the gambling enterprises of the Church disturb the consciences of many priests. "While we would not tolerate any insinuation that our schools have come under the influence of money changers," says Father John A. O'Brien, "or that they are vestibules to gambling dens, as a Catholic jokingly said to me some time ago, we can scarcely escape the accusation that with lotteries, raffles, chance books, and punch boards in the hands of the children, we are developing the gambling instinct that may lead them to the pool rooms and the gambling dens in the not too distant future."

Every Catholic diocese has its schedule of fees for the various grades of prayer and the various types of religious ceremony. It is difficult for a non-Catholic to read one of these fee schedules without arriving at the conclusion that the priest is, in some ways, a salesman for magic. The inferential commercial tags are not pleasing. The most profitable activity of priests during the year is the offering of special prayers for the dead, appealing for their rapid progress through purgatory. On All Soul's Day in November a popular priest is likely to receive several hundred dollars extra for the performance of his functions.

The lowest Mass takes about twenty-five minutes of the time of one priest; the High Mass with three priests, for which a fee of \$35 to \$40 is collected, consumes perhaps an hour. Priests are not allowed to argue over rates and they are told not to turn away the indigent, but few Catholics dare ask the favor of intercession for themselves or their departed relatives without paying both the minimum stipend for the parish and the extra gift for the priest. Under certain circumstances bishops and pastors may keep part of the Mass stipend or the extra emolument and farm out the actual praying to their assistants or to smaller churches whose priests are not overwhelmed with requests, where the fee for Masses is lower. The bishops receive a portion of parish income and the bishops themselves determine their own percentage. Incidentally, the bishops render a financial accounting for such revenues only to Rome. The ordinary priest is not a rich man, and, especially in country districts, he is likely to be a very poor man.

In all of these spiritual transactions, the suggestion is painfully apparent that there is a relationship between money payments and the favors granted by a Catholic Providence. Forgiveness for the violation of Church regulations is especially tied up with the payment of standard fees, since dispensations and indulgences call for specific contributions or acts. Frequently the only external fact which distinguishes a priestly devotional proceeding from a sales transaction is that a poor petitioner may be granted this service free of charge.

Rome shares directly in many of these transactions of American prelates. If, for example, a bishop grants a faithful Catholic permission for a mixed marriage, the bishop asks for a fee for the dispensation, and the fee is divided between himself and Rome. Appeals for Church funds are coupled with promises of spiritual rewards. Missionary funds controlled by Rome are raised with the definite written pledge in official advertisements that all contributors will "gain all indulgences now granted members of the Confraternity of the Propagation of the Faith." Purgatorian Societies and Mass Leagues are popular in the United States; they solicit funds in the Catholic press for blanket Masses recited for beneficiaries *en bloc* (as a whole), and every Catholic who contributes \$10 to such a league can have a specified name of a departed soul included in the blessings of "eleven High Masses celebrated daily ... in perpetuity." 65 American priestly organizations which advertise for contributions in the Catholic press have accepted cash from me at various times to pray for (1) a new family car; (2) the removal of a nonexistent wart on my left hand; (3) the termination of a nonexistent alcoholism in my wife. This commercialization of a spiritual faith horrifies many Catholic mystics, but it also guarantees the maintenance of the priesthood.

In a sense the survivals of magic in the Catholic system give the priest an enormous advantage over his Protestant and Jewish confreres in controlling a congregation. In times of crisis and bewilderment human beings crave authority and definiteness. Also in times of crisis and bewilderment most human beings want some definite thing to *do*, some act that will serve as a token of inner hopes and longings, some physical gesture toward the mysterious Power which rules the universe. The Catholic priesthood satisfies that craving in the ministrations of the comprehensive ritual for birth, illness, marriage, confession, death, and burial.

Most important of the devices of priestly control is that of the confessional. Every good Catholic is supposed to kneel down at least once a year before the dark screen in the Church where, in a confession box, a priest is posted unseen to hear him confess his innermost thoughts. Particularly when the penitent is a woman, her mind in the process of unburdening her regrets and worries is delivered, so to speak, wide open to the priest. The joy of release for pent-up emotion and the comfort of communion are mingled with personal submission and the yearning of the grown-up child for a substitute father.

It is a tribute to the high moral standards of American priests that a device which is so intimate and inviting is rarely abused to the point of scandal. In Latin countries this is not the case; there, under the severe penalties of Canons 904 and 2368, action must frequently be taken against priests who are guilty of sexual solicitation in the confessional. In 12 years of intensive study of the Catholic problem in the United States, I have heard of almost no sexual scandals among priests and nuns involving members of the opposite sex. There are a few, of course, and they are dutifully hushed up by the newspapers under pressure, but the remarkable fact is that there is so little justification for scandal. I am convinced that nearly all American priests and nuns strictly observe their oaths of chastity. The most fundamental



objection to the confessional is not its obvious sexual temptation but its elevation of sexual amateurs and unscientific dogmatists to the role of family advisers.

The priest is trained to supply promptly in the confessional a definite answer for every situation, a Catholic formula approved by the Holy See and given out as the law. The latest devotional manuals even tell the priest precisely how to take a confession in an airplane. As we shall see in our chapters on medical and sexual matters, the young celibate priest has only one Catholic answer for the mature married woman inquiring about birth control, or for the experienced surgeon on therapeutic abortion. In each case the priest delivers the answer confidently, declaring that he speaks the word of God in the field of religion and morals.

Is it surprising that, with such a perfect instrument for the control of conduct, the priest does not hesitate to extend the directive power of the confessional into the regions of politics, sociology, and economics? Who could resist the temptation to mold character at its most malleable moment, when a consciousness of imperfection makes the mind receptive to priestly guidance? At any rate, the record shows that in many parts of the world the confessional is used not only to keep Catholic girls pure and Catholic boys honest but also to defeat British control in Malta, birth-control reform in Massachusetts, and democratic government in Spain. The priests would be more than human if they did not use this remarkable instrument for the attainment of the whole Catholic program. And the whole Catholic program, as we shall see in our next chapter, is almost as much political as spiritual.

(To be continued.)