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Praying for the south: Catholics and the Confederacy

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PRAYING FOR THE SOUTH: CATHOLICS AND THE CONFEDERACY

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Dedicated to my mother, Karen Wheeler Richardson,

who first taught me to love God,

and to my father, E. Henry Richardson, Jr.,

who taught me to love His people and their stories.

May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the distinctiveness of Southern Catholic support of the Confederacy during the American Civil War, with a geographic emphasis on Virginian Catholics. During the antebellum decades, the Catholic Church in America thrived despite facing increasing hostility from the largely-Protestant United States. In response to these challenges, Catholics learned to support their state and federal governments whenever and wherever they could as a means to defuse anti-Catholic attacks. This led Catholics to condone (and involve themselves in) American racialized slavery, even after the Church itself condemned the practice. Seen in this light, Catholics who fought for and supported the slaveholding South in the Civil War did so in defense of a theological divide with Rome. Such Catholics also saw their military and political service as another expression of loyalty which had been so instrumental in defending American Catholicism from its detractors throughout the mid-1800s. Indeed, some Catholics were so loyal to the Southern cause they opposed and even condemned their Northern brethren who supported the Union, indicating fractures within a nominally unified Church. Building upon a wealth of primary and secondary sources, including episcopal correspondence, journals of lay and ordained Catholics, and contemporary news sources, this argument focuses on Virginia as a way to demonstrate a larger historical phenomenon. While each of these three factors—the theological rift between Southern Catholicism and Rome, Confederate service as an expression of loyalty, and an intra-denominational civil war—is definitely present within Virginia, none of them are unique to that geographic area. Future studies could assess the applicability of this argument to Catholics across the South.

I. PRAYING FOR THE SOUTH: CATHOLICS AND THE CONFEDERACY

MY BROW is bent beneath a heavy rod!
My face is wan and white with many woes,
But I will lift my poor chained hands to God,
And for my children pray, and for my foes.
Beside the graves where thousands lowly lie
I kneel, and weeping for each slaughtered son,
I turn my gaze to my own sunny sky,
And pray, oh! Father, Let Thy will be done!

These words form the opening stanza of a poem written about the Civil War.[1] In these few lines, the author conveys the burden he feels from his sadness and fear, he offers supplication to God to spare his children and convert his enemies, he laments the destruction and death wrought by the war and resolves to submit all these sufferings and hardships to God's judgement. By the tone and the language used, a casual reader may think this poem was written by a slave or a former slave, or perhaps a prisoner of war taken captive by the enemy. However, none of those assumptions would be correct. The full work, entitled "The Prayer of the South," was written by Father Abram Ryan, a Catholic priest, and it serves as a eulogy of sorts for the former Confederacy. Father Ryan, like many Catholics in the American South, was an ardent supporter of the Confederate rebellion. He served as an unofficial chaplain for the rebel forces during the war and continued to support the Confederacy after the war by way of his talent as a poet and writer.

Father Ryan's action and advocacy on behalf of the Confederacy was not unusual for Catholics in the South; indeed, though a minority population in comparison to their Protestant neighbors, Catholics were as eager to fight and support both the Union and the

[1] Abram J. Ryan, *Father Ryan's Poems* (Mobile: Jno. L. Rapier & Co., 1879), 24.

Confederate causes as any American. However, further analysis does illuminate some distinct characteristics regarding Catholic support to the Confederacy. Catholics who supported the rebellion also supported slavery, putting them in conflict with the teachings of the Church,[2] which had condemned the practice. Thus, Catholic participation in the war to defend slavery represented theological dissent within the global Catholic Church. American Catholics were also motivated to take up the Southern cause in an effort to demonstrate their loyalty to their neighbors, many of whom still harbored suspicion against them because of their faith. In answering the call to arms, Catholics sought to earn the respect of their fellow Americans. A final way in which Catholic participation in the war was distinct is that the war challenged the unity of the Catholic Church. Not only did Catholics fight against each other within the armies of the Union and the Confederacy, but Catholic leaders also sparred against each other to defend and promote their respective political choices. For Catholics, this was a civil war both within the country as well as within their Church. The subsequent pages will examine how Catholic theological dissent, the need for Catholics to demonstrate loyalty, and the proliferation of intra-Catholic conflict distinguished Catholic service to the Confederacy from the service of their Protestant neighbors.

While the distinctiveness of Catholic service to the Confederacy is not limited to a particular region of the South, Virginia serves as an able focus of study for the purposes of this analysis. John McGill, the Bishop of Richmond, was the chief Catholic in Virginia

[2] Throughout this work, I capitalize Church when referring to the Catholic Church as an organization or institution, and leave it lowercase when referring to specific structures and for general uses.

and was well-versed in Catholic teaching.[3] His support for the South despite the teaching of the Church against slavery was instrumental in enlisting the support of the Catholics within his flock and throughout the commonwealth. Catholics in Virginia experienced discrimination based on their faith and were numerous enough to have those experiences documented in both primary and secondary sources. Finally, Virginia's geographic proximity to the Union gives a plethora of examples of intra-Catholic conflict. This study will focus on demonstrating the distinctiveness of Catholic service to the South in general, with special emphasis placed on an analysis of Virginia's Catholics.

Although stories of Father Ryan growing up in Virginia are likely apocryphal, his ardent devotion to the Southern Cause does illuminate the distinctiveness of Catholic service to the rebellion.[4] A classically-trained priest, he would certainly have been aware of Church teaching regarding slavery and its immorality, yet he chose to support the South regardless. Ryan professed to oppose slavery, yet was caught in what historian David O'Connell describes as "the basic dilemma of so many of those who supported the Confederacy: sympathy for those who were being treated unjustly while at the same time supporting a government that had no plan or intention to correct the injustice."[5] For example, O'Connell identifies Ryan's sympathy with the plight of enslaved people by analyzing "The Slave," a poem in which the priest describes the pain and suffering of a

[3] A Bishop is a senior official within the Catholic Church hierarchy with the administrative and spiritual responsibility of a given geographic area, called a diocese. Bishops are appointed by the pope, who is himself the Bishop of Rome.

[4] There is some historical debate over the location of Ryan's birth. Many historians writing in the twentieth century cited his birthplace as Norfolk, Virginia. There is even a historical marker in that city at his supposed birthplace. However, historian David O'Connell provides fairly conclusive evidence (in the form of baptismal records and letters) to indicate the future priest was actually born in Hagerstown, Maryland. David O'Connell, *Furl that Banner: The Life of Abram J. Ryan, Poet-priest of the South* (Mercer University Press, 2006), 2–3. James Thomson, "Father Ryan's Home," *The Historical Marker Database*, October 11, 2010, https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=36833 (accessed April 18, 2022).

[5] O'Connell, *Furl that Banner*, 8.

young slave's life. O'Connell implies this is enough evidence to demonstrate Ryan's opposition to slavery in spite of his support for the Confederacy. However, Father Ryan chose not to publish "The Slave" in *Father Ryan's Poems* in 1879. Considering that he wrote the poem sometime before the war, with O'Connell's sources indicating he penned it around 1857, he may have made the editorial decision to exclude the poem because it no longer reflected his sympathies following his wartime service. Regardless, in leaving "The Slave" out of his collection, he distances himself from his pre-war antislavery sentiments and provides a more heartfelt show of devotion to the rebellion. Ryan, therefore, gives evidence that the cause of the South was more important to him than the injustice inherent in that cause; his choice was to overlook the immorality of slavery, putting him at odds with Church teaching. Ryan's outlook was shaped by the anti-Catholicism of his time and he actively sought to use his position as a Catholic priest to show his loyalty to the South, as historian David Roach writes, "Ryan and other Catholics reckoned with white Southern suffering as a part of their ultramontane piety, and they employed church tradition and teaching to defend Southern political leanings and sanitize their endorsement of slavery."[6] Ryan framed the discharge of his duties as a priest in such a way as to show faithfulness to the rebel cause. The priest's outspoken support for the South marked his pastoral career, which included multiple transfers among various seminaries whose administrators could not tolerate his political stances, as well as several reassignments once he was ordained a priest for similar reasons.[7] In this way, Ryan's experience is indicative of the larger factional conflict which characterized Catholic

[6] David Roach, "Abram Ryan, Orestes Brownson, and American Catholics during the Civil War and Reconstruction" (MA Thesis, Baylor University, 2017), 36.

[7] Douglas J. Slawson, "The Ordeal of Abram J. Ryan, 1860–1863," *The Catholic Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (2010): 678–719, and O'Connell, *Furl that Banner,* 9–15.

participation in the American Civil War. Thus, Father Ryan serves as an excellent example of the larger historical phenomena which distinguish Catholic service to the Confederacy.

II. OVERVIEW OF SOURCES

This project relies upon a wealth of primary and secondary sources which form a foundation of historical knowledge to help analyze the distinct characteristics of Catholic service to the Confederacy. This section will showcase a brief overview of the major sources and works upon which this project rests.

This argument relies heavily on the works of several eminent scholars of American Catholicism, each of whom have diligently and painstakingly written excellent secondary surveys of American Catholicism in varying degrees of focus and specificity. General American Catholic histories consulted include *A History of the Catholic Church in the United States* by Fr. Thomas T. McAvoy, C.S.C., *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* by Dr. Jay P. Dolan, and *American Catholics: A History* by Dr. Leslie Woodcock Tentler.[8] Though dated in many respects, McAvoy's work is a solid foundation for American Catholic historiography, particularly his treatment of the colonial era. This work is best characterized as a church history, relying primarily on regional Church histories and ecclesiastical records, though to the author's credit, it is obvious from his popular style he intended it to be approachable to the lay (that is, non-ordained, or members of the congregation who are not part of the Church hierarchy) reader. A glaring weakness of this method of historical study is aptly described by Jesuit historian Fr. Charles Metzger, who writes, "denominational history is suspect because so much of it is blindly partisan, an apology for or a glorification of a group rather than a scholarly inquiry into and a factual

[8] Thomas T. McAvoy, *A History of the Catholic Church in the United States*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970); Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992); and Leslie Woodcock Tentler, *American Catholics: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

presentation of the record."[9] McAvoy does shy away from criticism of the Church to the detriment of the work, especially with regards to the lack of sources describing Black Catholics.[10] Dolan adds to the discussion by incorporating analyses of race, class, and gender to provide a much more social history of the Catholic Church in America, with his focus on the people within the Church.[11] He expands on McAvoy's source base to include many sources about lay Catholics, including Black Catholics and women religious, rather than just the institutional Church and its leaders.[12] His treatment of the history expands the subject to include previously-hidden peoples within the Church at the parish level, and he is forthright, if subdued, in his acknowledgment of the times when the Church failed to live up to its ideals. Tentler's analysis incorporates a much more narrative approach combined with a focus on lay intellectual sources, which she intentionally preferences over standard sources of church history. She focuses her study on determining what it meant to be a "good Catholic" throughout the history of the Church in America. While the book is smaller in scope compared to Dolan's sweeping

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[9] Charles H. Metzger, *Catholics and the American Revolution: A Study in Religious Climate* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1962), viii.

[10] Throughout this document, I choose to follow the preference of *The Chicago Manual of Style* and capitalize Black; as a matter of consistency, I have also chosen to capitalize White. At times, sources used within the research presented here did not capitalize either or both words; whenever quoting from a source, I kept the usage consistent with its original use by the source author.

[11] Dolan, himself a lay (not ordained) Catholic, writes that he chose to use the social history methodology in order to provide a history in line with the Second Vatican Council's conception of the Church as "the people of God" as defined in Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium,*" November 21, 1964, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html (accessed February 26, 2022).

[12] "Women religious" are women who choose to dedicate their lives to prayer and service to others by becoming sisters or nuns; the term is interchangeable with "sisters" and I will use them both during this study. The term "nun," though often used as another equivalent of "sister," actually refers to women religious who have chosen a cloistered life. For more information on the differences among the various terms used to describe women religious, see Mary J. Henold, *Catholic and Feminist: The Surprising History of the American Catholic Feminist Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 7–8.

history, it is not to the detriment of the work as Tentler still provides a wide view of their shared subject and adds a plethora of lay sources unpacked with cogent and straightforward analysis to the historiography.

One source worthy of special note is the detailed work of Dr. Maura Jane Farrelly in her book *Papist Patriots: The Making of an American Catholic Identity*, in which she argues the compromises, trials, and persecutions of Catholics in Maryland during the colonial period shaped the foundation of American Catholicism. It is a laser-focused analysis of how Catholics in colonial and Revolutionary America learned what they needed to do to survive and thrive in a land of Protestants—or as Farrelly puts it on p. 19, "how Catholicism became American for the first time."[13]

Southern Catholic histories upon which this argument relies include *Catholics in the Old South: Essays on Church and Culture,* edited by historians Dr. Randall Miller and Dr. Jon Wakelyn, and American religious historian Dr. Andrew Stern's *Southern Crucifix, Southern Cross: Catholic-Protestant Relations in the Old South*.[14] The arguments presented by various authors in Miller and Wakelyn's volume provide a view on how the institutional Church's growth in the South was shaped by Southern society and Catholic culture as well as how groups of Catholics responded to the Southern religious and social environment. Stern takes a similar yet distinct approach, demonstrating how Catholicism in the South developed alongside—and often, in partnership with—Protestantism.

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[13] Maura Jane Farrelly, *Papist Patriots: The Making of an American Catholic Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[14] Randall M. Miller and Jon L. Wakelyn, eds., *Catholics in the Old South: Essays on Church and Culture.* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1983) and Andrew H. M. Stern, *Southern Crucifix, Southern Cross: Catholic-Protestant Relations in the Old South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012).

Histories of Catholicism specific to Virginia are rare, with the two major works relevant to this study consisting of a pair of church histories, *A History of the Diocese of Richmond: The Formative Years* by James Henry Bailey, II, and *Commonwealth Catholicism: A History of the Catholic Church in Virginia* by Fr. Gerald Fogarty, S.J. Bailey's work, sponsored by the Diocese of Richmond, served for a time as part of the official diocesan history. Bailey makes the best of the very limited archival material available for the period of his analysis, which begins with missionary efforts in the 1500s and concludes with the death of Bishop McGill in 1872. To supplement these meager archival records, he includes newspaper publications and some journals from priests. Still, this is, first and foremost, a church history, and Bailey's work provides much more in terms of Church recordkeeping than it does in analysis and critical interpretation. Fogarty's *Commonwealth Catholicism* is written in a similar—though somewhat less adulatory—manner. The Jesuit author builds upon Bailey's work by including much more detailed information from a wider selection of archival material, including correspondence among the American bishops. While Fogarty does incorporate some elements of social and intellectual historical analysis to tell the story of Catholicism in Virginia, more than anything else he merely documents the actions of the church and its leaders, limiting the analytical scope of the book. Still, to his credit, the author does provide critical commentary, particularly when the objects of his study fell short of the mark as Catholics. Fogarty's work remains influential to the overall history of the Diocese of Richmond, which cites from him extensively in its current official form (updated for the diocesan bicentennial celebration in 2020), "Sowing Faith in a Catholic Frontier: A Condensed History of the Diocese of Richmond," by Fr. Anthony Marques.[15]

[15] James Henry Bailey, II, *A History of the Diocese of Richmond: The Formative Years*

However, in each of these works, Black Catholics are ever the sideshow, afterthought, or are relegated to being smaller parts of a larger history, and the first major attempt to tell the stories of Black Catholics is the groundbreaking effort of Fr. Cyprian Davis, O.S.B., *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*.[16] In this seminal work, Davis challenges the focus of the existing histories of Black Catholics in the U.S., as each major survey centered its analysis on Black Catholics as the objects of ministry rather than independent actors worthy of historical study themselves. Rather than provide simply another examination of the Catholic Church and how it ministered to its African American flock, Davis reorients the focus of historical analysis to the Black Catholic communities in the U.S. He argues the Catholic Church in the United States has always had a profound influence from its African adherents and has never been a White European church, while demonstrating Black Catholics have been ignored in the historical analysis of the Church and there is clear and abundant evidence within the existing historical record to tell the stories of Black Catholics. Davis paints the picture of the growth and development of the Black Catholicism in the United States from the first

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(Richmond: Diocese of Richmond, 1956); Gerald P. Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism: A History of the Catholic Church in Virginia* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001); and Anthony E. Marques, "Sowing Faith in a Catholic Frontier: A Condensed History of the Diocese of Richmond," Diocesan History, Diocese of Richmond, 2019.

[16] Cyprian Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1993). Important supplements to Fr. Davis's work include Sister Jamie Phelps's dissertation, "The Mission Ecclesiology of John R. Slattery: A Study of an African-American Mission of the Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century" and Dr. Stephen J. Ochs's *Desegregating the Altar: The Josephites and the Struggle for Black Priests, 1871–1960*. Phelps provides an in-depth examination of the Church and its fraught relationship with its Black Catholic adherents amid its half-hearted attempts to minister to the spiritual needs of American slaves. Ochs's work, though primarily concerned with events beyond the scope of this study, begins with a detailed and poignant summary of the growth of Black Catholicism and the problems which stemmed from the shortage of priests to minister to Black Catholics. Jamie T. Phelps, "The Mission Ecclesiology of John R. Slattery: A Study of an African-American Mission of the Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century," PhD Dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1989; and Stephen J. Ochs, *Desegregating the Altar: The Josephites and the Struggle for Black Priests, 1871–1960* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

slaves who accompanied White settlers to the civil rights and equality movements of the mid-twentieth century. Throughout, he demonstrates both his mastery of the church records and his use of social history to showcase the stories of Black Catholics. Though valid criticisms of his work note the book has more breadth than depth, the fact remains Davis broke new ground with his work, and it continues to serve as the reference for Black Catholic history today.

Studies which center the stories of women religious abound, but many are fragmented parts of a greater whole, with numerous histories of particular orders and communities of sisters. However, two examples of effective national-level surveys of American women religious are journalist John Fialka's *Sisters: Catholic Nuns and the Making of America* and American Catholic historian Dr. Margaret McGuinness's, *Called to Serve: A History of Nuns in America*.[17] Fialka's work is an engaging and expansive study of the history of American women religious, though he does focus more on the Sisters of Mercy than any other particular community. Unlike general American Catholic histories, Fialka centers his study on women religious, and the book's narrative style serves as an excellent companion to McGuinness's *Called to Serve.* In this book, McGuinness examines the service of American Catholic sisters and nuns throughout the history of the country, providing what she calls a "collective history" of American women religious. She argues these women had more influence and impact on the everyday lives of American Catholics than priests. Writing a potent combination of church, social, and women's histories, McGuinness deftly weaves historical narrative with social and gender analyses throughout the book in order to produce a creative study

[17] John J. Fialka, *Sisters: Catholic Nuns and the Making of America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003) and Margaret M. McGuinness, *Called to Serve: A History of Nuns in America* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2013).

of these religious women and their work within American society.

There have been several major examinations of the reasons why Catholics in America supported slavery over the last century. The first serious effort is *American Catholic Opinion in the Slavery Controversy* by Dr. Madeleine Hooke Rice. She argues American bishops did not generally believe in the immorality of slavery, they did not feel the need to oppose slavery because they thought the emancipation of Blacks was inevitable, and they opposed the arguments and methods of the abolitionist movement. Though Rice uses secondary sources and American primary sources to good effect, she does not conduct any examination of the primary sources from the papacy, limiting the implications of her argument somewhat as she fails to consider the perspective of the moral authority of the Catholic Church at large. This particular source base is well-mined in *The American Catholic Church and the Negro Problem in the XVIII–XIX Centuries,* by Maria Genoino Caravaglios, who offers a more complete picture with the incorporation of documents from the Vatican Secret Archives and the Historical Archives of the Propaganda Fide; this enables her to illustrate in detail the theological conflict between the American prelates and the papacy. She agrees with Rice that American bishops felt slavery and Catholicism were compatible, though she also argues racism against Blacks pervaded the Church in the United States. However, Caravaglios chooses to offer excuses on behalf of the Church, providing sympathetic commentary in her work such as: “Many authoritative writers assert that the American Catholic Church did not realize that slavery was a moral problem…The American Catholic Church never achieved a true awareness of the situation. She was a missionary Church, whose members were poor and ignorant and who lived as strangers in the land.” A critical re-examination of the question from a

fresh perspective can be found in the aforementioned *History of Black Catholics in the United States*, by Fr. Davis. His argument is distinct from Rice and Caravaglios in that he recognizes bishops tried to mitigate the abuses inherent in slavery while not opposing it in principle. Davis argues the bishops were concerned primarily with the survival of the Church in the U.S., and supporting slavery (or at least, not opposing it) was a political requirement for the Church's existence. He agrees with Caravaglios's assertion of racism within the Church and places its origin at the feet of America's first bishops, who set the tone for their flocks and their successors. Davis insightfully describes a moral consciousness within the global Church which had turned against slavery by the mid-nineteenth century, but argues the Church in the U.S. "found itself incapable of taking any decisive action or of enunciating clearly thought-out principles regarding slavery" because of American bishops' focus on accommodating to American society as a survival tactic.[18]

Having discussed the secondary sources and some of the historiographic controversy which inform this study, what follows is a brief review of the primary sources used in the completion of this project.

This argument focuses in part on the theological controversy between American prelates and the Vatican over the morality of slavery. Papal interpretation of slavery and the slave trade was primarily expressed in bulls and encyclicals. Two sources used provide English translations of most of those documents. Several papal documents are sourced from the internet database "Papal Encyclicals Online," a reference website

[18] Madeleine Hooke Rice, *American Catholic Opinion in the Slavery Controversy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944); Maria Genoino Caravaglios, *The American Catholic Church and the Negro Problem in the XVIII–XIX Centuries*, ed. Ernest L. Unterkoefler (Rome: Caravaglios, 1974); and Davis, *History of Black Catholics*. The quoted texts are from Caravaglios, 218, and Davis, 66.

located at https://www.papalencyclicals.net/ which provides full-text translations of many papal documents since 1226 free of commentary or interpretation. The database is not entirely complete, however, and many of the gaps in documentation of relevant papal actions are filled by German historian Pius Onyemechi Adiele in his exhaustive work, *The Popes, the Catholic Church and the Transatlantic Enslavement of Black Africans 1418-1839.* Adiele includes the full Latin text of several bulls and papal documents not included in the Papal Encyclicals database as well as some partial English translations, all nested within a greater argument implicating Catholics as creators and perpetuators of African slavery. While his argument is somewhat persuasive and eloquently articulated, Adiele writes on a much larger Atlantic scope than the American focus of this project; he writes in depth about nearly every internal conflict within the Church as the popes encouraged, grappled with, and ultimately rejected slavery as a moral institution, while this analysis takes a more streamlined approach and traces the ultimate conclusion back to its origins while applying the papal actions to the American context. Adiele references many of the same source documents, but he uses them to analyze the Church as a whole, while in this argument they serve to highlight the moral divergence between the papacy and the American episcopate on the slavery question. Thus, this study refers to his work primarily for its inclusion of the papal documents, rather than his arguments.[19]

The positions of the American bishops are represented through several edited collections of primary source materials. First among these is Monsignor John Tracy Ellis's *Documents of American Catholic History*, which provides a selection of sources from the perspective of the institutional Church in America from the colonial period

[19] "Papal Encyclicals Online," https://www.papalencyclicals.net/ (accessed March 5, 2022) and Pius Onyemechi Adiele, *The Popes, the Catholic Church and the Transatlantic Enslavement of Black Africans 1418–1839* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2017).

through the mid-twentieth century. Another treasure trove of primary source documents from Catholic religious leaders is Monsignor Peter Guilday's *The National Pastorals of the American Hierarchy (1792–1919).* Guilday compiles the letters published by American bishops—the titular "pastorals"— to their diocesan flocks in their full text, with brief and insightful commentary preceding each document. Finally, a collaboration between Fr. Davis and Sister Jamie Phelps produced *"Stamped with the Image of God" African Americans as God's Image in Black*, which showcases a series of primary sources from and about Black Catholics, including bishops' rationale and justifications of slavery, from the initial colonization of North America to the twenty-first century.[20]

Primary sources used in the following pages which illuminate the state of Catholicism within the Virginia Commonwealth during and before the Civil War include the diaries of a Confederate Soldier, John Dooley, and a Confederate Chaplain, Father James Sheeran, C.S.S.R. The published notes of Civil War veteran and journalist David Power Conyngham and the anonymous "English Combatant" who wrote *Battle-Fields of the South* provide some additional insight into Civil War Catholicism. Finally, several wartime letters from Richmond's Bishop McGill help to illuminate the prelate's thoughts and perspectives on the war and Catholicism.[21]

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[20] John Tracy Ellis, ed., *Documents of American Catholic History,* 2nd ed. (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1962); Peter Guilday, ed., *The National Pastorals of the American Hierarchy (1792–1919),* (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1954); and Cyprian Davis and Jamie Phelps, eds., *"Stamped with the Image of God" African Americans as God's Image in Black* (New York: Orbis Books, 2003).

[21] John Dooley, *John Dooley, Confederate Soldier: His War Journal*, ed. Joseph T. Durkin (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1945); James Sheeran, *The Civil War Diary of Father James Sheeran: Confederate Chaplain and Redemptorist*, ed. Patrick J. Hayes (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016); David Power Conyngham, *Soldiers of the Cross, the Authoritative Text: The Heroism of Catholic Chaplains and Sisters in the American Civil War*, eds. David J. Endres and William B. Kurtz (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019); and *Battle-Fields of the South: from Bull Run to Fredericksburg; With Sketches of Confederate Commanders, and Gossip of the Camps* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1863); Willard E. Wight, "War Letters of the Bishop of Richmond," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 67, no. 3 (1959): 259–270.

This is not an exhaustive list of sources; rather, this is a review of the major primary and secondary sources which inform this analysis. Perhaps the biggest historical phenomenon which impacts the reasons for Catholic support to the Confederacy is the nature of Catholic-Protestant relations in the antebellum United States. Therefore, the next two chapters will provide a brief examination of American Catholic history with an analytical eye toward the fraught relations which have existed between Catholics and Protestants throughout their shared American history. Chapter five examines how Confederate Catholics opposed the teaching of the Church in their support for slavery. Chapter six analyzes Catholic support to the South during the Civil War as expressions of loyalty and patriotism motivated, in part, by a need to stave off anti-Catholicism. Finally, chapter seven reveals how the American Catholic Church fractured during the war, with a focus on the divisive actions of Southern Catholic clergymen.

III. "TO PRESERVE THEIR FAITH UNTAINTED AMIDST THE CONTAGION OF ERROR SURROUNDING THEM" – THE CATHOLIC EXPERIENCE IN THE UNITED STATES, FROM COLONIAL TIMES TO 1820

The first American bishop, John Carroll (Diocese of Baltimore, 1789–1815), keenly understood the challenges facing him as he took up the responsibility of leading the Catholic Church in the United States. At the first Mass he celebrated in the U.S. following his consecration, the bishop acknowledged his duties as a shepherd of the Church, duties which fall upon the shoulders of any Catholic bishop—to work for the salvation of the souls of his congregations, to spread the faith, and to supervise the priests assigned to his diocese, to name a few. Yet, he also elucidated the obligations which were particularly important in his position as the American bishop:

> But there are others still more burdensome to be borne by me, in this particular portion of Christ's church which is committed to my charge, and where everything is to be raised, as it were, from its foundation; to establish ecclesiastical discipline; to devise means for the religious education of Catholic youth — that precious portion of pastoral solicitude; to provide an establishment for training up ministers for the sanctuary and the services of religion, that we may no longer depend on foreign and uncertain coadjutors; not to leave unassisted any of the faithful who are scattered through this immense continent; to preserve their faith untainted amidst the contagion of error surrounding them on all sides; to preserve in their hearts a warm charity and forebearance [*sic*] toward every other denomination of Christians, and at the same time to preserve them from that fatal and prevailing indifference which views all religions as equally acceptable to God and salutary to men. Ah! When I consider these additional duties, my heart sinks almost under the impression of terror which comes upon it.[22]

Bishop Carroll knew the Catholics under his care were members of a minority denomination in a largely-Protestant country. He was familiar with the social stigma and legal discrimination which had accompanied British rule during the recently-ended

[22] John Carroll, "Bishop Carroll's Sermon on Taking Possession of His See, St. Peter's Pro-Cathedral, Baltimore, December 12, 1790," in *Documents of American Catholic History,* 2nd ed., ed. John Tracy Ellis (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1962), 172–173.

colonial era, and understood the opportunity for the spread of Catholicism inherent in the new nation's commitment to the free exercise of religion. In this sermon, Carroll clearly establishes how his episcopal priorities are shaped by the reality of a Catholic minority, especially his focus on the balance required to maintain friendly relations between Catholics and Protestants while preserving the integrity of Catholic teaching. As the Church spread and grew throughout the antebellum period, Carroll and the prelates who followed in his footsteps would keep that balancing act foremost in their minds as they discharged their duties as shepherds on the frontier of the Catholic Church.

At the start of an essay on antebellum Catholicism, historian Richard Duncan makes an important observation about American Catholics in the early decades of the country: "Taking note of the dominant Protestant nature of the United States, it was essential for Catholics to become identified with and not to be viewed as antagonistic to the American spirit. For Catholics in the upper South not only was it important to be perceived as Americans but equally crucial, with the rise of sectionalism, for them to be regarded as Southerners as well."[23] Duncan's point is that Catholics had to adapt to demonstrate their American-ness. While he touches on the political tension which permeated that process of adaptation, he frames the process as Catholics accommodating themselves to American culture. He isn't wrong, but he misses the mark by choosing to bypass the religious tension inherent to that process. American culture was overwhelmingly Protestant, and thus any adaptation to it on the part of Catholics required an accounting for the not-inconsequential differences of faith between Protestants and Catholics.

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[23] Richard R. Duncan, "Catholics and the Church in the Antebellum Upper South," in Miller and Wakelyn, *Catholics in the Old South*, 77.

Understanding the dynamics of the Catholic-Protestant relationship in the U.S. is essential to comprehending the distinctiveness of Catholic service to the Confederacy, and this and the subsequent section will provide an overview of Catholic history in the antebellum United States with special emphasis on that relationship.

American Catholicism was established in Maryland, though the Maryland settlement was not the first arrival of Catholics to the American mainland. While the Catholic presence within the Spanish colony in Florida, the Spanish missions in the Far West, and the French trading posts in the Midwest and Northeast predate Maryland, all were on the periphery of American society until well after their incorporation into the United States. Several other examples demonstrate Catholics were active in the modern-day U.S. before the founding of the Maryland colony. Spanish Jesuits attempted to establish a mission in Virginia, but it was destroyed by American Indians after less than a year in 1571.[24] Church historian Thomas McAvoy describes two failed attempts by Catholics to establish an English colony in modern-day Maine in 1583 and 1605.[25] In 1613, some fifteen Frenchmen were held captive at Jamestown, including a Jesuit priest named Father Pierre Biard.[26] Indeed, the earliest Catholics to remain in Virginia permanently may have been the infamous "20. and odd Negroes" brought as slaves to the

[24] James Henry Bailey, II, *A History of the Diocese of Richmond: The Formative Years* (Richmond: Diocese of Richmond, 1956), 16–19, Anthony E. Marques, "Sowing Faith in a Catholic Frontier: A Condensed History of the Diocese of Richmond," Diocesan History, Diocese of Richmond, 2019, 1–2, and Gerald P. Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism: A History of the Catholic Church in Virginia* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 5–8.

[25] Thomas T. McAvoy, *A History of the Catholic Church in the United States*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), 9.

[26] Marques, "Sowing Faith," 3 and Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 10.

Virginia Colony in 1619.[27] Africanist historian John Thornton notes since these people had been originally enslaved by the Portuguese, they were more than likely forcibly baptized in accordance with Portuguese law soon after their enslavement.[28] Of course, these would not have been typical Catholic adherents, given that these people had been coerced into Christianity, but the presence of Black Catholics within the Church in America so early in its infancy supports Black Catholic historian Fr. Cyprian Davis's important assertion: "it is clear that the Catholic church in the United States has never been a white European Church."[29] While the White colonists of the Spanish and French empires enjoyed the support of their Catholic imperial governments, in Maryland, Catholics had to contend with legal and social challenges imposed by their English Protestant neighbors. The tension between the Catholic and his government defines the American Catholic experience much more so than the societal Catholicism of the Spanish and French, and thus the intellectual, societal, and cultural roots of American Catholicism are firmly planted in Maryland, even if the chronological ones lie elsewhere.

In the seventeenth century, several minority religious groups from England, facing various forms of persecution, established (or attempted to establish) places of refuge for their adherents in North America while seeking to maintain political ties with their homeland. Maryland's Catholics formed one such colony in 1634, though Massachusetts's Puritans (1630) and Pennsylvania's Quakers (1681) are two other

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[27] John Rolfe, ""Twenty and odd Negroes"; an excerpt from a letter from John Rolfe to Sir Edwin Sandys (1619/1620)," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, Virginia Humanities, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/twenty-and-odd-negroes-an-excerpt-from-a-letter-from-john-rolfe-to-sir-edwin-sandys-1619-1620/ (accessed September 16, 2021).

[28] John Thornton, "The African Experience of the "20. and Odd Negroes" Arriving in Virginia in 1619," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (1998): 434.

[29] Cyprian Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1993), 259.

examples of this phenomenon. The desire to create and maintain a religiously-tolerant society—or at least, a society more tolerant towards a particular theology than that of England—was an outgrowth of the ongoing battles over toleration occurring in England during the seventeenth century. As political scientist Andrew Murphy writes, "Between roughly 1630 and 1690, the philosophical, pragmatic, theological, and political grounds of toleration were argued with a vigor—indeed, a ferocity—never witnessed before or since in England. In both the colonies and the mother country, then, religious dissent raised serious issues of order, obedience, authority, and resistance, and the political decisions rulers took influenced the course of events for years to come."[30] Toleration was more than a matter of personal conscience or individual liberty in England's increasingly centralized religious environment, and deviations from England's official religion became viewed as an indicator of deficient citizenship. Participation in the English Church was a litmus test of loyalty, and those who failed the test faced legal consequences.

Within the larger context of this societal debate, English Catholics had reason enough to seek out a more welcoming society without sacrificing their English heritage. McAvoy asserts the motivations of English Catholic settlers were twofold: "Some hoped to find a refuge against persecution, and all hoped to achieve measure of financial profit."[31] American Catholic historian Maura Jane Farrelly concurs, describing how the English Catholic Church had become smaller in size but much more elite in class since the start of the English Reformation, as remaining Catholic required the use of enough

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[30] Andrew R. Murphy, *Conscience and Community: Revisiting Toleration and Religious Dissent in Early Modern England and America* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 6.

[31] McAvoy, *History of the Catholic Church*, 9.

financial and political resources to overcome social pressure to conform, to send children abroad for education, and to house clergy who were forbidden to maintain places of worship.[32] Poorer Catholics could not afford to resist. Farrelly argues, "To be Catholic in England—even secretly Catholic—was to challenge authority on some level."[33] Yet alongside this resistance to English authority, Catholics who sailed for the New World chose to retain their English identity, embracing their nation despite it refusing to fully embrace them. This sense of loyalty to the state undergirded the foundation of Catholic society in English America.

Founded as a colony in 1634, Maryland initially served as a haven for English Catholics, with the Jesuits supplying priests to minister to the colonists.[34] In his first instructions to the settlers, the proprietor for the colony, the second Lord Baltimore (Cecilius Calvert), specified the following:

> His Lo^{pp} requires his said Governor and Commissioners th^{t} in their voyage to Mary Land they be very carefull to preserve unity and peace amongst all the passengers on Shipp-board, and that they suffer no scandall nor offence to be given to any of the Protestants, whereby any just complaint may hereafter be made, by them, in Virginea or in England, and that they instruct all the Roman Catholiques to be silent upon all occasions of discourse concerning matters of Religion; and that the said Governor and Commissioners treate the Protestants wth as much mildness and favor as Justice will permitt. And this is to be observed at Land as well as at Sea.[35]

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[32] Maura Jane Farrelly, *Papist Patriots: The Making of an American Catholic Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 21–40. She summarizes her argument on p. 40: "the Catholic population in England had become smaller, wealthier, better educated, and more invested in its religious identity than it had been a hundred years earlier when King Henry VIII broke with Rome."

[33] Farrelly, *Papist Patriots*, 41.

[34] McAvoy, *History of the Catholic Church*, 8–13.

[35] Cecilius Calvert, "Instructions 13 Novem: 1633," in *Narratives of Early Maryland: 1633–1684*, ed. Clayton Colman Hall (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1959), 16. Throughout this work, I will transcribe spelling and word usage as they exist in the source I cite.

It is crucial to note these instructions to avoid confrontation, as they indicate from the beginning of established American Catholicism, the leaders of the Church were acutely aware of the risk of conflict with Protestants and took steps to avoid such an outcome.

Under Calvert's direction, Maryland developed a tradition of coexistence between Catholics and Protestants (largely Calvinists and Anglicans, with some Puritans). Though still outnumbered by Protestants, Catholics were more prevalent in Maryland in proportion to the overall population (ten percent) than they were in England (between one and five percent), and thus were much more visibly present in society.[36] Indeed, religious toleration was the unwritten law of the land for the first fifteen years of the colony, and Calvert actively worked to ensure the Catholic colonists heeded his warnings against disturbing their Protestant neighbors. The first major challenge to this policy came from Catholic clergymen.

Several Jesuit missionaries attempted to authorize special privileges for themselves, including refusing to serve in the Assembly (a requirement for landowners) and declining to pay taxes (a requirement for everyone); the Jesuits also violated the colony's charter by establishing missions among and acquiring land from the Patuxent Indians without receiving Calvert's approval. Furthermore, and perhaps most in violation of the spirit of religious amicability, the Jesuits made efforts to convert Protestants and employed a Catholic overseer who attempted to proselytize the mostly-Protestant indentured servants working Jesuit land.[37]

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[36] Farrelly, *Papist Patriots*, 27. The Protestant denominations in colonial Maryland included Anglicans, Puritans, Calvinists, and Quakers.

[37] Leslie Woodcock Tentler, *American Catholics: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 49 and Farrelly, *Papist Patriots*, 74–90.

Calvert confronted the offending priests, one of whom, Father Thomas Copley, protested that Catholic priests were exempt from civil laws and taxes by decree of the pope; Fr. Copley even suggested Lord Baltimore resolve the crisis by changing the laws of Maryland to grant the Jesuits such exemptions as they saw fit! Specifically, Father Copley sought legal assurances for the following: the designation of Jesuit homes and chapels as Sanctuaries; the exemption of clergy and some servants from taxation; that public magistrates refer any cases dealing with the Jesuits or their servants to an ecclesiastical court, the freedom to establish and maintain whatever missions and trade agreements the Jesuits desired with American Indians, as well as the freedom to purchase and sell land without seeking proprietary permission; and, lastly, the furnishing of a boat for use by the Jesuits. One can understand why caving into such demands would inflame relations with the Protestant colonists.[38] In his arguments to Calvert, Fr. Copley makes direct reference to Pope Urban VIII's *Bulla Coenae*, a papal bull which punished with excommunication "those who shall for any cause whatever,…make, ordain, and promulgate,…statutes, ordinances, constitutions, pragmatics, or any other decrees…by which the ecclesiastic liberty is taken away, or in any degree injured or depressed, or in any other way whatever restrained, or by which Our rights and the rights of the See aforesaid…are in any way…infringed."[39] In so doing, Fr. Copley sought to force the issue

[38] Thomas Copley, "Thomas Copley to Lord Baltimore," in *The Calvert Papers*, ed. John Wesley Murray Lee (Baltimore: The Maryland Historical Society, 1889), 166–168.

[39] "The Bull *"Pastoralis Romani Pontificis,"* Commonly Called The Bull *"Coenae Domini"* or *"In Coena Domini."*", in *The Papal Bull, "In Coena Domini," Translated into English. With a Short Historical Introduction; and Evidence of its Present Validity, as Part of the Roman Law, and of its Recognition by the Romish Hierarchy in Ireland* (London: John Hatchard & Son, 1848), 16. A bull is a letter authored by the pope which applies to the entire Catholic Church. The *Bulla Coenae* to which Fr. Copley refers defines the crimes which result in the penalty of excommunication from the Church, including the quoted text, which forbids the taxation of priests or the impediment of their priestly duties as well as a host of other infractions against the authority of the papacy. This particular bull was unusual in

by demanding legal protection for himself and his fellow priests commensurate with those protections enjoyed by clergymen in the domains of Catholic empires and kingdoms; by invoking the pope, he also threatened Calvert, challenging him to prove his faithfulness as a Catholic and show his submission to papal authority. This was completely at odds with Calvert's vision of a religiously neutral but politically English Maryland, where both Catholics and Protestants could work and live together under the same laws, and to make an exception for the Jesuits would court disaster for the experiment of toleration.

Calvert insisted the Jesuits comply with the legal statutes of the colony, with the sole exception that they did not have to serve in the Assembly, as doing so could put them in a position to decide the fate of a man's life, forcing them to violate their order's prohibition against capital punishment.[40] Thus, Calvert demonstrated his commitment to a Maryland which served to give Catholics freedom to live out their faith, but not freedom to impose their faith on others. Farrelly argues this first period of the colony's history highlights the uniqueness of the Maryland experiment compared to the other Catholic communities in the New World: "Unlike French or Spanish Catholics, Maryland's Catholics were going to have to at least pretend that they believed there could be more than one way to know God, and they were going to have to accept that the responsibility for maintaining their faith would lie with them, and not with their government."[41]

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that it was issued annually with minimal changes from the previous year. The authors of *The Papal Bull* note that the bull was first issued in 1299 by Pope Boniface VIII and the version to which Fr. Copley made reference was the twelfth edition of the bull, having been last updated by Urban in 1627.

[40] Farrelly, *Papist Patriots*, 78–79.

[41] Farrelly, *Papist Patriots*, 73.

Protestants also challenged the unwritten laws of religious toleration during the early years of the Maryland colony. In a short—though dramatic—interruption from the amicable peace, Virginian Protestants seized control of the colony in 1645, plundering the wealth of its Catholic residents and sending many Jesuits and lay leaders to prison in England before being expelled again by the Catholic governor almost two years later.[42] Tentler notes how this episode was tied to events occurring in England, with the Virginia colonists supporting the Parliamentarians in the First English Civil War and striking out against the Royalist-leaning Catholics in Maryland.[43] In Maryland, Catholics could not count on protection from colonial authorities, and despite Calvert's best attempt at forming an organically tolerant society in the New World absent of any explicit legal protections for his fellow Catholics, the Protestant takeover demonstrated a pivotal weakness of the Maryland system.

Following the reassertion of control in 1646, Calvert worked with the colonial assembly to pass the 1649 "Act concerning Religion," which stated in part: "noe person or persons whatsoever within this Province,…professing to believe in Jesus Christ, shall from henceforth bee any waies troubled, Molested or discountenanced for or in respect of his or her religion nor in the free exercise thereof within this Province…nor any way compelled to the beliefe or exercise of any other Religion, against his or her consent".[44] This act enshrined the principle of religious toleration—at least, for all Christians—in

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[42] McAvoy, *History of the Catholic Church*, 13 and Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 75–77.

[43] Tentler, *American Catholics*, 49.

[44] "An Act concerning Religion," *Assembly Proceedings 1649*, 246, Maryland State Archives, https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000001/html/am1--246.html (accessed March 1, 2022).

law. However, after only five years of codified toleration, Catholics were once again under legal duress following another Protestant takeover of the colonial government in 1654.[45] Like the prior period of intolerance, the 1654 interregnum in Catholic control of Maryland was tied to events in England. Farrelly describes how Oliver Cromwell's Parliament, suspicious of Maryland due to its ties to (and its charter from) the deceased Charles I, ordered the seizure of Maryland's Assembly.[46] She also argues Cromwell's anti-Catholicism played no small part in encouraging the actions of the Protestant government, which passed another "Act Concerning Religion" in 1654 to nullify the act of toleration: "none who profess and Exercise the Popish Religion Commonly known by the Name of the Roman Catholick Religion can be protected in this Province by the Lawes of England…but are to be restrained from the Exercise thereof".[47] Nevertheless, Calvert was able to regain control of the colony by 1658, and the 1649 act remained in effect for another thirty years, though increasing numbers of Protestant settlers eroded the influence of Maryland's Catholics.

A Protestant revolution ended the colonial period of religious toleration in Maryland in 1689. As before, colonial changes were sparked by changes in England—in this case, the abdication of Catholic King James II and the ascension of Protestant King William and Queen Mary II in the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Yet actions on the part of Maryland's Catholic leaders contributed to their own fall from power as well. Charles Calvert, who became the third Lord Baltimore following the death of his father in 1675,

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[45] Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 75.

[46] Farrelly, *Papist Patriots*, 103–108.

[47] "An Act Concerning Religion," *Assembly Proceedings 1654,* 341, Maryland State Archives, https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000001/html/am1--341.html (accessed March 1, 2022). See also Farrelly, *Papist Patriots*, 104–105.

sought to limit the growing Protestant influence in Maryland by enacting policies to inflate Catholic power. Specifically, he meddled in the makeup of the Assembly, reducing delegate allotments from some predominately Calvinist counties, redefining the rules for the franchise and office holding requirements to benefit the more wealthy Catholic population, and appointing several Protestants to the Upper House who were sympathetic to Catholics—and who were related to his family by marriage; indeed, he appointed so many Catholics to the Upper House that they were far out of proportion to the colonial population, with Catholics comprising 14 percent of the White population yet accounting for 67 percent of the Upper House appointees.[48] These policies bolstered Catholic influence in the short term, but ultimately exacerbated tensions with Protestant colonists in Maryland, who then seized the opportunity presented by the Glorious Revolution to enact change. A popular uprising in the colony in 1688 established a new government which outlawed Catholicism, and the Crown took control of Maryland by appointing a governor.[49]

An examination of the colonists' justification for their rebellion, as John Coode and other rebel leaders declared in a letter to the Crown, provides insight into a larger examination of Protestant anti-Catholicism. In the letter, the "Protestant Associators" accused their Catholic leaders and neighbors of ruling unjustly, of acting disloyally, and of oppressing loyal Protestants.

They wrote that colonial laws in Maryland had been arbitrarily decided by the Catholic governor and proprietor, and Englishmen in Maryland had been told "fidelity to his Lordshipp was allegiance [to the Crown] and that denying of the One was the same

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[48] Farrelly, *Papist Patriots*, 116–118.

[49] Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 84 and Farrelly, *Papist Patriots*, 133.

thing with the refusal or denyall of the other."[50] The authors continued in a similar vein: "the question in our Courts of Judicature, in any point that relates to many of our Laws, is not so much the relacōn it has to the said Laws, but whether the Laws themselves be agreeable to the pleasure and approbacōn of his Lordshipp."[51] The rebels tied the source of this unjust and corrupt system to Catholicism, writing with hope that, following royal intervention, King William would "putt a check to that great induation of Slavery and Popery," and that "the future be secured under a just and legall Administratcōn from being ever more subjected to the yoke of arbitrary government of tyranny and popery."[52] The Associators' grievance here is not altogether invalid—Charles Calvert was in fact manipulating the political system to give Catholics a much larger voice and influence than they would have otherwise. However, the Protestant rebels did not simply complain about these problems of governance; rather, they overstated their case by arguing the corruption and nepotism which characterized the Calverts' administration of the colony stemmed from and is a natural attribute of their Catholic faith. The Associators charged Catholics not only with weakening Maryland through corrupt governance, but also with working alongside foreign enemies to destroy the colony.

The rebels condemned their Catholic neighbors as disloyal, untrustworthy, and ungrateful subjects who sought to overthrow the English rule of Maryland. "Jesuits, Priests, and lay papists", they asserted, take part in "solemn masses and prayers…for the prosperous success of the popish forces in Ireland, and the French designs against

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[50] William Hand Browne, ed., *Archives of Maryland: Proceedings of the Council of Maryland, 1687/8–1693* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1890), 102.

[51] Browne, *Archives of Maryland*, 103.

[52] Browne, *Archives of Maryland*, 105, 107.

England".[53] Catholics, the rebels claimed, publicly insulted the English monarchs and their claim to the colony: "Wee every where have not only publick protestations against their Majesties rights and possessions of the Crown of England, but their most illustrious persons vilefied and aspected with the worst and most trayterous expressions of obloquie and detraction."[54] According to Coode and his followers, priests even conspired with American Indians to attack the colony in 1681: "Northern Indians…were conducted into the heart of this Province by French Jesuits".[55] Thus did the rebels portray their own act of revolution as truly faithful to the Crown, as the Catholics in charge of the colony had supposedly conspired with foreigners against England. No records exist to support that claim, and the suspicion of Catholics being more loyal to a foreign power than to their own country would continue to mark American anti-Catholicism. Yet the list of grievances against Catholics did not end there, as the Associators also asserted Catholics were actively persecuting Protestants.

Coode and his fellow rebels described the oppression of the Protestant majority in Maryland under the heavy rule of their Catholic leaders. Houses of worship built within the colony, they complained, "are erected and converted to the use of popish Idolatry and superstition,…and the richest and most fertile land sett apart for their use and maintenance, while other lands that are piously intended, and given for the maintenance of Protestant Ministry, become escheats, and are taken as forfeit, the ministers themselves discouraged, and noe care taken for their subsistance."[56] This claim, though false, stems

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[53] Browne, *Archives of Maryland*, 105.

[54] Browne, *Archives of Maryland*, 105.

[55] Browne, *Archives of Maryland*, 106.

[56] Browne, *Archives of Maryland*, 102.

from a kernel of truth. Because the 1649 Act Concerning Religion established legal protection for the free exercise of all denominations of Christianity, the government of the colony did not provide funds for the construction or maintenance of churches for the Church of England (or any other Christian sect, as the Jesuits discovered). As a consequence, all houses of worship and all compensation for religious ministers had to come from private sources. Farrelly notes the Catholic and Quaker communities were much better about caring for the temporal requirements of their respective religions than were the Anglicans: "priests from the Church of England had refused to come to Maryland without a guarantee that they would be taken care of."[57] Thus, the Associators were correct in that some Protestant worship was limited or nonexistent, but that was not because of Catholic persecution. Indeed, the irony of the situation is that the root cause of the rebels' angst was that Anglican clergymen were denied the same privileged treatment the "popish" Jesuits had demanded at the founding of the colony!

In the letter, the rebels continued listing their grievances, and claimed "several children of protestants have been committed to the tutelage of papists, and brought up in Romish Superstition."[58] If true, this would have been in defiance of a 1681 Act which declared "noe orphan shall bee putt into the handes of any person of a different Judgem^{t} in Religion to that of the deceased Parents of the said orphans."[59] Given that the Third Lord Baltimore had by 1681 already ensured Catholic overrepresentation in the

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[57] Farrelly, *Papist Patriots*, 127.

[58] Browne, *Archives of Maryland*, 103.

[59] "An act for the better Admstracon of Justice in probate of Wills, granting Admstracons Recouery of Legacys & secureing filiall porcons." *Assembly Proceedings August–September 1681*,198, Maryland State Archives, https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000007/html/am7--198.html (accessed March 10, 2022).

Assembly, for the Associators' claim to be true, Catholics would have had to oppose a law they had helped craft and approve. The Associators' letter demonstrates a distinct animus on their part towards the toleration of Catholicism, interpreting the religiously diverse society established in Maryland as an attack on Protestantism.

Following the Protestant revolution, life for Catholics in Maryland became much harder. In the conclusion of their declaration to the English monarchy, Coode and his co-authors asserted they wished only "to defend the Protest[t] Religion among us, and to protect and chelter the Inhabitants from all manner of violence, oppression, and destruccōn, that is plotted against them, the which wee doe solemnly declare and protest wee have noe designes or intentions whatsoever."[60] Yet the experience of Maryland's Catholics in the years following the Glorious Revolution belies this assertion. Coode and his followers immediately stripped Catholics of their rights to serve in the military or government and demanded the governor's council sign articles of surrender which stated in part: "That noe papist in this Province being in any Office Military or Civil as by their Majesties Proclamacōn and the Laws of England."[61] The Protestant oppression continued, with Charles Carroll writing to Lord Baltimore that the new government even targeted fellow Protestants "that refuse to joyne with them in their irregularities," and imploring, "soe it is that neither Catholique nor honest Protestant can well call his life or estate his own…for dayly their cattle are killed, their horses prest and all the injury imaginable done to them, and to noe other".[62] This had a chilling effect on the public expressions of Catholicism, with historian Leslie Woodcock Tentler noting, "by the early eighteenth

[60] Browne, *Archives of Maryland*, 106.

[61] Browne, *Archives of Maryland*, 107.

[62] Browne, *Archives of Maryland*, 125.

century, Catholic practice in Maryland was confined to the home and private chapels, while even high-status Catholic men were excluded from public life."[63] The new General Assembly passed resolutions which established the Church of England in Maryland, demanded the reading of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer on Sundays and holidays, and instituted a tax to pay for the construction of English churches and the salaries of Anglican priests.[64] In this way, the Maryland experiment of religious toleration between Christian denominations ended.

In colonial Maryland, Catholics needed to compromise their public expressions of devotion and temper their piety to fit in with their neighbors; they also experienced firsthand the crushing reality that their neighbors may very well attack them despite their best efforts at placation. This dual-faceted concept—Catholics needing to adjust their religious practices to survive in a hostile Protestant society—would become a distinguishing characteristic of Catholicism in America.

The American Revolution serves as an important precursor to an analysis of Catholics and the Civil War, in that it provided Catholics an opportunity to improve their status within America by demonstrating their loyalty as patriots. Historians agree Catholics generally supported the Patriot cause, though ethnicity and class may have played a larger role in that support than strictly religion. McAvoy and Tentler both argue German Catholics in Pennsylvania and New York opposed the Revolution or remained politically-neutral, while Irish Catholics throughout the colonies sought independence

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[63] Tentler, *American Catholics*, 49.

[64] Farrelly, *Papist Patriots*, 133–134.

from Britain.[65] Tentler and Farrelly each demonstrate Maryland's Catholics overwhelmingly supported the Revolution, with Farrelly using archival sources to estimate Catholic support to the Patriot cause may have been as high as seventy-nine percent of Catholics in the colonies, whereas she estimates Protestant allegiance to the Revolution as no more than forty-five percent.[66] There is no doubt Catholics served with distinction in various offices throughout the Revolution, including Charles Carroll (a signer of the Declaration of Independence), Captain John Barry (one of three men credited as "The Father of the American Navy"), and Colonel John Fitzgerald (General Washington's aide-de-camp, 1776–1778), among many others. Father John Carroll, the future Bishop of Baltimore and cousin of Charles Carroll, even participated in a diplomatic mission to Catholic Quebec in 1776 which attempted to convince the French Canadians there to join the rebellion. Tellingly, McAvoy asserts the Quebecois bishop, Olivier Briand, refused to even entertain the notion of joining the American cause because of the intolerance he observed from American Protestants towards Catholics.[67] Indeed, in his thorough quantitative analysis of Catholic participation in the American Revolution, Metzger argues although the absolute number of Catholic soldiers in Continental service was not nearly as many as their fellow Protestant servicemembers, the Catholic support was much more significant than these raw numbers would suggest, especially in Maryland and Pennsylvania, where "Catholics were more numerous—numerous enough in fact, that," he asserts, "their opposition would constitute a definite

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[65] McAvoy, *History of the Catholic Church*, 37–38 and Tentler, *American Catholics*, 54.

[66] Tentler, *American Catholics*, 54 and Farrelly, *Papist Patriots*, 242.

[67] McAvoy, *History of the Catholic Church*, 37–38, Tentler, *American Catholics*, 54, and Farrelly, *Papist Patriots*, 248–253.

threat to the hopes and efforts of the patriots."[68] Catholics rose to the challenge of the Revolution by throwing their support behind the Patriot cause, demonstrating their compatibility with the new American society.

The actions of Catholics within America did much to help cool tensions with (and assuage the fears of) American Protestants, as did the American military alliance with Catholic France. In 1775, General George Washington banned the celebration of "Pope's Day" in the Continental Army, describing it as "that ridiculous and childish custom of burning the Effigy of the pope", both in reaction to the demonstrated loyalty of Catholics as well as in recognition of the need for the French alliance.[69] Benjamin Franklin, who was also part of the Canadian delegation, was impressed by John Carroll and softened his previous anti-Catholic views following their joint assignment; Franklin even gave the Holy See his recommendation of Carroll to serve as the Superior of the Mission in the thirteen United States of North America, a position Carroll held from 1784 until his ordination as bishop in 1789.[70] Various states within the new country codified religious toleration in their constitutions as well, with historian Robert Curran indicating the legislatures did so in part to aid the prospects of French military support.[71] Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland each ratified constitutions in 1776 which enfranchised (White, male, property-owning) Catholics, and other states, while stopping short of

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[68] Charles H. Metzger, *Catholics and the American Revolution: A Study in Religious Climate* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1962), 153; this is the concluding statement of his quantitative analysis, which he organizes by state and which begins on p. 138.

[69] George Washington, "General Orders," November 5, 1775, in Ellis, *Documents of American Catholic History*, 136 and McAvoy, *History of the Catholic Church*, 41.

[70] Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 104 and Ellis, *Documents of American Catholic History*, 142–143.

[71] Robert Emmett Curran, *Papist Devils: Catholics in British America, 1574–1783* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 269.

granting full citizenship rights, removed laws which penalized Catholics or restricted Catholic worship. In 1786, Virginia went even further in its commitment to toleration, enacting Thomas Jefferson's Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, which stated in part:

> Be it enacted by the General Assembly, That no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested or burthened, in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge or affect their civil capacities.[72]

Finally, the U.S. Constitution and its First Amendment removed the remaining legal barriers to (White, male, property-owning) Catholic citizenship; indeed, two of the document's framers, Daniel Carroll of Maryland and Thomas Fitzsimmons of Pennsylvania, were Catholic.[73] The Maryland experiment of toleration had become the law of the land in the new United States.

Domestically, Catholics eased the fears of their Protestant neighbors by proving their loyalty to the Patriot cause, while the aid and military might of Catholic France helped further open the minds of Protestant America. President Washington's response to a note of congratulations from leading Catholics following his election articulated this sentiment: "I presume that your fellow-citizens will not forget the patriotic part which you took in the accomplishment of their Revolution, and the establishment of their government; or the important assistance which they received from a nation in which the

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[72] The General Assembly, *The Virginia Statute for Establishing Religious Freedom*, 1786. The full text of the statute is included in Virginia's current code of law, Title 57, Chapter 1, https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/57-1/ (accessed March 19, 2022).

[73] Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 102.

Roman Catholic religion is professed."[74] It is no small irony that, although Protestants in the colonial era feared giving Catholics too much power would invite foreign influence, the American Revolution was won with the help of a foreign, Catholic power. Washington spoke for most Americans when he recognized the new friendship which existed among the various Christian adherents in the new country.

Following the success of the American Revolution, Catholics and Protestants within the United States enjoyed a period of unprecedented amicability, cooperation, and even ecumenism. When Rome first sought to appoint a bishop for the new country, the priests of the United States voted unanimously to oppose the act in 1784, with Ellis asserting the American clergymen did so in part out of fear the civil government would not actually tolerate an American bishop. Yet the priests met again four years later, during which time they witnessed the commitment to religious freedom throughout the country, and submitted a formal petition to the pope to assign them a bishop, leading to the appointment of Bishop Carroll in 1789.[75] This is one example of how the political changes secured by the Revolution changed the Catholic experience in the United States. Church historian Fr. Joseph Chinniei provides another such example with his description of the first Mass celebrated at St. Mary's Church in Lebanon, Pennsylvania on July 23, 1810. He writes that the priest, a Jesuit named John William Beschter, preached "to a mixed congregation of Catholics and Protestants. Three Lutherans, three Reformed, and one Moravian minister listened attentively as Beschter spoke on Protestant misrepresentations of Catholicism and the solidity with which Christ had built his church.

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[74] George Washington to the Roman Catholics in the United States of America, March 12, 1790, in Ellis, *Documents of American Catholic History*, 172.

[75] Ellis, *Documents of American Catholic History*, 163.

After the services, all of the clergy dined at the home of the local Lutheran pastor."[76] Similarly, exiled French priest Fr. John Dubois was invited by the Virginia General Assembly to celebrate Mass in the courtroom of the Capitol in 1791 and formed unexpected friendships with Protestant ministers Rev. John Buchanan and Rev. John Blair during his three-year stay in Richmond.[77] These episodes marked a significant change from the colonial period, and Chinniei describes how such liturgical and social interactions were common in the country's early years. The removal of legal restrictions after the Revolution meant Catholics could operate openly in American society. This had a profound impact on the social and cultural development of the Catholic Church in America.

From the end of the American Revolution and after religious toleration was secured in law, Catholicism in the United States began to take on particular forms and practices which were distinct from European Catholicism. The Catholic monarchies of Europe, especially those in France, Austria, and the Italian states, could not justify a system of government which allowed for differing religious opinions, as these monarchies relied upon uniformity of belief and worship to maintain civil order.[78] Toleration of diverse beliefs meant disorder: the Church and the Catholic state were intertwined, and thus the state would work against its own interest if it allowed or

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[76] Joseph P. Chinniei, "American Catholics and Religious Pluralism, 1775–1820," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 16, no. 4 (1979): 727–728. Chinniei does not identify the parish church by name, but the brief history for the Lebanon parish which contains St. Mary's Church (found here: https://abvmlebpa.org/about/) fits the author's story, including the name of the priest and the date in which construction began.

[77] Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 24–26 and Richard Shaw, *John Dubois, Founding Father: The Life and Times of the Founder of Mount St. Mary's College, Emmitsburg; Superior of the Sisters of Charity; and Third Bishop of the Diocese of New York* (New York: United States Catholic Historical Society, 1983), 19–26.

[78] Chinniei, "American Catholics and Religious Pluralism," 729–733.

encouraged faith traditions other than Catholicism. A 1795 report to the Spanish monarchy written by Luis Ignacio Maria de Peñalver de Cardenas, the Cuban-born bishop appointed to oversee the newly-created Diocese of Louisiana and the Two Floridas, provides an example of European apprehensions surrounding toleration: "I have encountered many obstacles. The inhabitants do not listen to, or if they do, they disregard, all exhortations to maintain in its orthodoxy the Catholic faith, and to preserve the innocence of life." He continues, "Because his Majesty tolerates here the Protestants, for sound reasons of state,…[the Catholics] think that they are authorized to live without any religion at all….His Majesty possesses their bodies and not their souls. Rebellion is in their hearts, and their minds are imbued with the maxims of democracy".[79] The bishop's ominous tone illustrates the fear European prelates and monarchs shared regarding the political implications of religious diversity.

In the United States, far from diminishing the power of Catholicism, religious toleration was the revolutionary legal concept which allowed the Church to formally exist, grow, and eventually thrive, even as it also allowed for the spread of Protestant beliefs. In Europe, the Church and state depended on each other to survive; in America, the state recused itself from matters of religion and allowed for free competition among the various churches. Here again, Louisiana serves as an apt example. Following the Louisiana Purchase, Bishop Carroll sought to recommend to Rome a new bishop to oversee the territory, and he requested an opinion of potential nominees from President Jefferson. The President declined to involve the federal government in the appointment, with Secretary of State James Madison articulating the American position: "as the case is

[79] Luis Ignacio Maria de Peñalver de Cardenas, November 1, 1795, in Ellis, *Documents of American Catholic History*, 177–178. The diocese was created in 1793, having been separated by Pope Pius VI from the Havana-based Diocese of St. Christopher.

entirely ecclesiastical it is deemed most congenial with the scrupulous policy of the Constitution in guarding against a political interference with religious affairs, to decline the explanations which you have thought might enable you to accommodate the better, the execution of your trust, to the public advantage."[80] Madison thus described the government's commitment to the separation of church and state. Whereas religious toleration was a threat to the political core of Catholic Europe, it gave the Catholic Church in the United States space to grow.

That growth, however, would have to be American in allegiance, as Madison's eloquently phrased words of encouragement and praise in the letter subtly convey to Bishop Carroll. While the government would not weigh in on the nomination of any specific appointee, the President, Madison wrote, appreciated "The delicacy towards the public authority and the laudable object which led to the enquiry you are pleased to make" and he expressed "perfect confidence in the purity of your views, and in the patriotism which will guide you, in the selection of ecclesiastical individuals, to such as combine with their professional merits, a due attachment to the independence, the Constitution and the prosperity of the United States."[81] With these statements, Madison reminded Carroll the Church was free to conduct its affairs independently within the United States under the protection of Constitutional law, but the government expected national loyalty from the Church in return, especially from its appointed leaders. American Catholics, because of their connection with a global church with a great deal of

[80] James Madison to John Carroll, November 20, 1806, in "Letters from the Archiepiscopal Archives at Baltimore," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 20 (1909): 63.

[81] Madison to Carroll, November 20, 1806, in "Letters from the Archiepiscopal Archives," 63–64.

involvement in European politics, needed to continue to emphasize and demonstrate their loyalty to the United States, to its laws, and to its people.

A consequence of this implicit American emphasis was that Catholicism in the United States developed to be in some ways more similar to American Protestantism than it was to European Catholicism. This was particularly true of church governance and institutional organization at the local level. American religious historian Dr. Patrick Carey analyzes this argument in detail, asserting, "During the antebellum period, American religious leaders tried not only to underscore the fundamental compatibility between their respective religious traditions and the values of American republicanism but also to restructure their religious institutions so that they would reflect more clearly the ideals of American republican government."[82] For Catholics, this republican restructuring took the form of trusteeism, which forms the primary subject of Carey's work.

In the trustee system, groups of lay Catholics owned the property used for religious worship and meetings in trust on behalf of the Church, though how much control the Church hierarchy had over the trustees within each community varied. Father Carroll described the origins of trusteeism in a 1785 report to Rome: "There is properly no ecclesiastical property here: for the property by which the priests are supported, is held in the names of individuals and transferred by will to devisees. This course was rendered necessary when the Catholic religion was cramped here by laws, and no remedy

[82] Patrick W. Carey, *People, Priests, and Prelates: Ecclesiastical Democracy and the Tensions of Trusteeism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 39–40.

has yet been found for this difficulty."[83] Carroll stressed this point because Church canon law dictates the bishop of a diocese holds ownership of the religious property within his ecclesiastic jurisdiction; indeed, the aforementioned Bishop Peñalver included the following at the beginning of his report to Madrid: "On the 2d of August, I began the discharge of my pastoral functions. I took possession without any difficulty of all the buildings appertaining to the church, and examined all the books, accounts, and other matters thereto relating."[84] This legal discrepancy is key to understanding trusteeism, as Catholics in England and in the American colonies had used English property laws as a means to covertly continue worshipping in the Catholic tradition, meaning lay Catholics already owned the infrastructure used for worship and community and thus already had the physical property to transition this individualized system to an incorporated board (usually consisting of other like-minded property owners).

Additionally, the lay Catholics who owned these properties likely had little incentive to surrender the prestige, influence, and control enabled by such ownership. Carey notes the similarities between this system and the organizations of Protestant congregations, and Ellis attributes the controversies in part to "small groups of laymen imbued with the heady wine of their newly won religious freedom, and the example of their Protestant neighbors who had the dominant voice in ruling their congregations".[85] Thus the situation had developed from a necessary deviation of canon law in the lay ownership of structures and places used for clandestine worship during colonial times to

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[83] John Carroll to the Eminent Cardinal Antonelli, March 1, 1785, in Ellis, *Documents of American Catholic History*, 150.

[84] Carroll to Antonelli, March 1, 1785, in Ellis, *Documents of American Catholic History*, 177.

[85] Carey, *People, Priests, and Prelates*, 61 and Ellis, *Documents of American Catholic History*, 150.

a system by which lay Catholics attempted to claim authority over the leadership of Church, putting them at odds with the Catholic hierarchy which could operate openly after the dawn of national toleration.

It is clear the proliferation of Protestant congregation-centric styles of organization influenced Catholic Americans to attempt to retain ownership and control of their houses of worship and of the priorities and character of their religious community. Prior to concerted action by the bishops to regulate the practice in 1829, three general forms of trusteeism were in place throughout the United States: many gave preference to lay initiative and granted little authority to the parish priest, some shared authority with the clergy (usually with the priest on the board of trustees), and others were controlled by the clergy, who decided the makeup of the board.[86] This was a marked difference from the European environment, in which bishops retained ownership over all ecclesiastical property. American Catholic trustees exhibited similarities to their Protestant counterparts in seeking control of their communities, not only with regards to the ownership of their religious infrastructure, but also in the selection of their religious clergymen.

While typically the bishop assigned Catholic priests to a parish, with the parish providing the priest's salary and housing, priests in many parishes in America found themselves serving at the pleasure of trustee boards.[87] Several trustee boards attempted to oust priests from their parishes and elect their own pastors, in processes similar to many Protestant congregations. The example of the Catholic community in New York serves to illustrate how Protestant ideas of church governance influenced post-Revolutionary Catholicism in America.

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[86] Carey, *People, Priests, and Prelates*, 60.

[87] Carey, *People, Priests, and Prelates*, 62.

The first lay-initiated challenge to hierarchical authority came from the trustee board of St. Peter's Church in New York in 1785. Father Carroll, who was at the time still serving as the Superior of the American Mission (meaning that though he was the senior clergyman in the United States, he did not have the full authority and power of a bishop), engaged the errant board in a series of letters to attempt to resolve the conflict. The trustees wrote to Carroll to request he remove their priest, Fr. Charles Whelan, and replace him with another priest, Fr. Andrew Nugent, for reasons of preference, as Carroll describes in a letter to Fr. Nugent, "even the few, who complain of him [meaning Whelan] have no reproach to make against him, or immorality, or inattention to his ministerial functions, but only that his manners are some how [*sic*] unpleasing to them. At least, when repeatedly called upon by me they ownd [*sic*] that this & his not preaching to their satisfaction, were their only grounds of exception to him".[88] Carroll characterized the trustees' position as contending they had "a right not only to choose such parish priest as is agreeable to them, but discharging him at pleasure, and that after such election, the bishop or other ecclesiastical superior cannot hinder him from exercising the usual functions."[89] Carroll refused their request, writing that, should such ideas "become predominent [*sic*], the unity and catholicity of our Church would be at an end; and it would be formed into distinct and independent societies, nearly in the same manner as the congregational Presbyterians of our neighboring New England States."[90] Carroll thus

[88] John Carroll to Andrew Nugent, January 17, 1786, in John Carroll, *The John Carroll Papers*, ed. Thomas O'Brien Hanley (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 1:201. In a bit of self-deprecating humor, Carroll immediately follows that with: "which if they be reasons sufficient for his discharge, I am afraid most of us must be involved in his sentence."

[89] John Carroll to Dominick Lynch and Thomas Stoughton, January 24, 1786, in Carroll, *Carroll Papers*, 1:203.

[90] Carroll to Lynch and Stoughton, January 24, 1786, in Carroll, *Carroll Papers*, 1:204.

clearly associated the concept of a lay-controlled hierarchy with Protestantism. He then articulated this system's primary failing: "A zealous clergyman…would always be liable to be the victim of his earnest endeavors to stop the progress of vice and evil example, and others more complying with the passions of some principal persons of the congregation would be substituted in his room".[91] In other words, Carroll opposed the lay trustees' arbitrary dismissal of their pastor because to do so sets a precedent which could threaten the primary mission of the Church: the salvation of souls.

Ultimately, the board of trustees refused to back down and Fr. Whelan abdicated his position to Fr. Nugent, who in turn insisted he did not need Fr. Carroll's permission to serve in the position due to the trustees electing him.[92] This rendered St. Peter's in schism with the Church for about a year, until the board relented, after which Carroll revoked Nugent's authority and assigned a new priest, Fr. William O'Brien, to the church in 1787.[93] The affair was a direct challenge to Rome's authority over the American clergy—and by extension, its authority over American Catholics—and was shaped by the predominance of Protestant forms of church organization.

In the first several decades of United States history, Catholicism and Protestantism were generally on good terms. The patriotism of Catholics who fought and served in the Revolution as well as the support of Catholic France did much to provoke

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[91] Carroll to Lynch and Stoughton, January 24, 1786, in Carroll, *Carroll Papers*, 1: 204.

[92] As described in Carroll to Nugent, July 18, 1786, in Carroll, *Carroll Papers*, 1:214–216.

[93] John Carroll, "Sermon Suspending Andrew Nugent," October 1787, in Carroll, *Carroll Papers*, 1:262–264. In 1787, just as the New York trustee crisis was ending, another such crisis began in Philadelphia, with German Catholics seeking to found their own separate church and elect their own priest. This controversy also resulted in schism in 1796, with the parish not submitting to ecclesiastical authority until 1802. See also Ellis, *Documents of American Catholic History*, 160–162, John Carroll to Trustees of Albany, January 5, 1802, in Carroll, *Carroll Papers*, 2:372, and Martin I. J. Griffin, "The Church of the Holy Trinity, Philadelphia. Its First Pastor, Rev. John Baptist Charles Helbron," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 21, no. 1 (1910): 1–45.

many Protestants into rethinking their instinctive anti-Catholicism. Relations between the two groups were so good that ministers of Protestantism and Catholicism forged friendships and held some ecumenical services. Lay Catholics were even modeling their religious practices after their Protestant neighbors!

That is not to say Protestant fears regarding Catholicism had disappeared; rather, as historian Jay Dolan writes, "The revolution hardly destroyed the spirit of anti-Catholicism, but it dealt bigotry a severe blow."[94] Dr. Ray Billington, in his seminal analysis of nineteenth-century American anti-Catholicism, provides an apt summary of the American religious environment in the early 1800s: "For the most part the people had been won over to the program of toleration inspired by the Declaration of Independence, the Federal Constitution and the liberal constitutions of many of the states. There were only a handful of Catholics in the country and they were obviously not to be feared, so that those who still harbored nativistic sentiments were motivated more by the remembrance of a dreadful power than by the pretense of instruments of that power."[95] Though no single person can claim to have definitively shaped the trajectory of history alone, much of the success enjoyed by American Catholics is derived from the words and actions of Bishop John Carroll.

Bishop Carroll understood that America was inherently different from Europe, and that American Catholicism, which he was shaping, would have to develop differently from how it had developed in Europe if it were to thrive. He understood further that his mission to nurture the Church in America would enjoy the freedoms guaranteed by the

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[94] Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 97.

[95] Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800–1860: A Study on the Origins of American Nativism* (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1952), 24.

government but could not rely on that government for special protection, favors, or legal enforcement of doctrine as his fellow bishops in Catholic Europe could. He embraced the challenge, and even came to believe the American system of governance was superior to that of the European Catholic monarchs, writing, "I do not think that J. Christ ever impowered [*sic*] his church to recur to the means of force & bloodshed, for the preservation of faith against error."[96] Carroll wanted to establish systems which would enable the small but faithful Catholic communities to grow and spread. He understood the Constitution protected his Church's right to exist and to proselytize. Though he of course maintained the primacy of the Catholic faith, he chose to set a tone of accommodation with Protestants, even mandating prayers for them and their salvation to be included at Sunday Mass as part of the "Prayer for the Civil Authorities of Our Country":

> We recommend likewise, to Thy unbounded mercy, all our brethren and fellow citizens throughout the United States, that they may be blessed in the knowledge and sanctified in the observance of Thy most holy law; that they may be preserved in union, and in that peace which the world can not [*sic*] give; and after enjoying the blessings of this life, be admitted to those which are eternal.[97]

Throughout the trustee controversies which marked the period, he stressed the need for unity within the American Church, especially because of the poor impression and weakness disunity would convey to Protestants. "I leave it to you to consider", he writes to another clergyman in Rome about the New York scandal, "how harmful to the religion this regrettable affair must turn out, especially in a city in which [Catholicism] was established barely three years ago and in which Congress, and consequently many

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[96] Chinniei, "American Catholics and Religious Pluralism," 735.

[97] Peter Guilday, *The Life and Times of John Carroll, Archbishop of Baltimore (1735–1815)* (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, 1922), 432.

persons from each of the States, reside."[98] He did not court controversy and tried to steer the Church in America away from it when he could, such as in 1801 when he chose to act discreetly when approving certain special cases of Catholic marriage which would not be allowed in other denominations.[99] Carroll knew the anti-Catholicism which marked the colonial era could return and made every effort to lead the Church toward steadfast devotion to the Catholic faith as well as loyalty to the secular government. His death in 1815 coincided with the beginnings of profound social change within the country, as Billington ominously describes, "There was every indication in the period before 1820 that the No-Popery sentiment of colonial days had completely vanished. New forces in the next decades were to show that the same intolerant abhorrence of Rome endured beneath the surface, but it was not until those new forces were brought into play that anti-Catholic sentiment again assumed a prominent role in national life."[100]

[98] John Carroll to John Thorpe, November 7, 1787, in *Carroll Papers*, 1:266.

[99] Thomas W. Spalding, *John Carroll Recovered: Abstracts of Letters and Other Documents not Found in the John Carroll Papers* (Baltimore: Cathedral Foundation Press, 2000), 52.

[100] Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 24–25.

IV. TOO CATHOLIC TO BE AMERICAN: ANTI-CATHOLICISM AND NATIVISM, 1820–1861

In 1855, the American (or "Know Nothing") Party was nearly at its zenith in political power. Having scored major victories in state and national elections in the year prior, including almost complete political control of Massachusetts, the governorship of Delaware, and over seventy representatives sent to the U.S. Congress, by 1855 the Know Nothings added effective gains in Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Wisconsin, Maryland, Kentucky, New York, Pennsylvania, California, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.[101] In Virginia, the American Party's popularity was similar to that in other states in the South and among the Border States. Drawing into its ranks nativist Democrats and absorbing many former Whigs, Know Nothings won several important local elections within Virginia in 1854 and 1855 and had garnered enough political support to nominate a candidate for the 1855 gubernatorial election.[102] The American Party was the most coherent political expression of the anti-Catholic and nativist sentiments which had gained traction within the American populace during the early to mid-1800s, as the Party's platform in the 1855 Virginia elections makes clear:

> Determined to preserve our political institutions in their original purity and vigor, and to keep them unadulterated and unimpaired by foreign influence, either civil or religious, as well as by home faction and home demagogism; and believing that an American policy, religious, political and commercial, necessary for the attainment of these ends, we shall observe and carry out in practice, the following principles:…

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[101] Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800–1860: A Study on the Origins of American Nativism* (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1952), 388–389.

[102] John Daniel Schminky, "The Richmond Newspaper Debate over Know-Nothingism: 1854–1855" (MA Thesis, The College of William and Mary, 1979), 2–3 and John David Bladek, ""Virginia Is Middle Ground": The Know Nothing Party and Virginia Gubernatorial Election of 1855," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 106, no. 1 (1998): 51–52.

> 4. That the *American* doctrine of religious toleration, and entire absence of all proscription for opinion's sake, should be cherished as one of the very fundamental principles of our civil freedom, and that any sect or party that believes and maintains that any foreign power, religious or political, has the right to control the conscience or direct the conduct of a freeman, occupies a position which is totally at war with the principle of freedom of opinion, and which is mischievous in its tendency, and which principle, if carried into practice, would prove wholly destructive of our religious and civil liberty.[103]

Many phrases within the American Party's statement take aim at Catholics and Catholicism. The largest "foreign influence" in American politics, according to the Know Nothings, was the Roman Catholic Church, and the "foreigners" targeted were largely Catholic immigrants from Ireland and Central Europe, who arrived to the shores of the United States in droves beginning in the 1820s. Many of these immigrants were of the "poor" and "worthless" kinds the party wished to prevent from coming to America. Proposed restrictions on the franchise and on office-holding were directed at these untrustworthy Catholics as well, and hearken back to the legal discrimination of the colonial era. The American Party's insistence on individual possession of the Bible is another jab at Catholics, who used a different version of the Bible from Protestants; moreover, any incorporation of biblical text during Catholic worship was in Latin, not English, and most Catholics relied upon their clergymen to understand the text. Likewise, the inclusion of an education plank included a threat to Catholics because Catholics had

[103] "Basis Principles of the American Party of Virginia. From the *Richmond Whig*," *New-York Daily Times*, March 23, 1855. The party platform consists of thirteen positions, several of which were aimed at Catholics and immigrants. The first insists that only native-born Americans, "reared and matured under the influence of our institutions", could serve in political office. The second proposes that foreigners be denied the right to vote until they "become acquainted with the principles and imbued with the spirit of our institutions". The third demands increased efforts to restrict "the immigration of the vicious and worthless, the criminal and pauper." The fifth declares that the Bible—that is, the Protestant Bible—should be available to all Americans as it is "the only permanent basis of all true liberty and genuine equality." The sixth takes aim at a separate Catholic education system by seeking a better general education system to preserve "our liberties, civil and religious". The tenth condemns "all sectarian intermeddling with politics or political institutions, coming from whatever source it may," alluding to the Pope's supposed influence over American society and politics. The remaining seven points of the platform focus on issues less directly related to nativism or anti-Catholicism, and generally establish positions which promote electoral and civil service reform, champion states' rights over federal authority, and support individual liberty.

begun to establish their own school systems following incidents of anti-Catholic prejudice within the curriculum of some public schools. Crucially, the nativists turned the idea of toleration on its head, fearing the pope sought to undermine the independence of the United States and dictate its policies by inundating the democratic system with Catholic votes which he would control from afar. In these ways, the American Party's platform elucidated its opposition to Catholics and Catholicism.[104]

How did nativism and anti-Catholicism gain so much support among the American people? What led Americans to change from broadly supporting religious toleration to energizing a political movement so profoundly anti-Catholic in sentiment? How and why did Protestants and Catholics come to once again view each other with animosity? In brief, massive waves of Catholic immigrants traveled to the United States in the early nineteenth century, disrupting the somewhat homogenous Anglo-Saxon ethnic makeup of the country and markedly increasing the population of the Catholic minority. This led to Protestant fears of Catholic supremacy, which nativists fueled and exacerbated through anti-Catholic propaganda. Throughout this period, the issue of slavery became more and more central to American politics and society, and the abolitionist movement rose to prominence amid the sectional strife wrought by slavery. Many of the movement's champions were also anti-Catholic, influencing leading American Catholics to oppose abolition and its adherents. This section will describe these three simultaneous developments while analyzing the impact on the Catholic-Protestant relationship in the United States.

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[104] "Basis Principles of the American Party of Virginia. From the *Richmond Whig*," *New-York Daily Times*, March 23, 1855.

Immigration from Europe resulted in exponential growth for the Catholic Church in America in the early to mid-nineteenth century. In 1785, Father John Carroll estimated the Catholic population in the American nation was about 24,500 persons (or less than 1 percent of the overall population), including English, Irish, German, and Black Catholics.[105] By 1861, this number had swelled to three million (about 10 percent of the overall population) and included over a million Irish immigrants and over 500,000 German immigrants.[106] This massive expansion of Catholic population dramatically reshaped the Church in America along lines of ethnicity, class, and geographic distribution.

Catholics were now much more ethnically diverse, with the majority of the immigrants coming from Ireland and regions of Germany, though another important Catholic minority included enslaved Black Catholics, who numbered around 100,000 by 1861.[107] Most Irish immigrants were decidedly poor and uneducated, coming to America in search of work and to start a new life, while many of the German Catholics were of the middle class, skilled craftsmen and farmers displaced by overpopulation and industrialization.[108] Irish immigrants flocked to urban centers, especially in the Northeast but also along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts in the South; German immigrants generally

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[105] John Tracy Ellis, ed., *Documents of American Catholic History*, 2nd ed. (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1962), 148.

[106] Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 128–130; Patrick Carey, "Civil War Catholics," *First Things*, February 2020, https://www.firstthings.com/article/2020/02/civil-war-catholics (accessed March 29, 2022); Charles E. Curran, *The Social Mission of the U.S. Catholic Church: A Theological Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2010), 4.

[107] Randall M. Miller, "Slaves and Southern Catholicism," in *Masters & Slaves in the House of the Lord: Race and Religion in the American South 1740–1870*, ed. John B. Boles (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 127.

[108] Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 129–130.

settled in more rural areas in the Midwest and Middle Atlantic states, though some German communities thrived in parts of the South.[109] In Virginia, Irish and German immigration helped to nearly double the Catholic population in the Commonwealth from 7,000 persons in 1853 to over 12,000 in 1861; church historian Fr. Gerald Fogarty identifies important Irish communities in Richmond, Norfolk, and in Western Virginia, as well as a German community which exhibited enough vibrancy to merit its own parish in Richmond in 1851.[110]

The organizational structure of the Church expanded as well, with Pope Pius VII adding new dioceses at Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Bardstown, Kentucky in 1808 and at Richmond and Charleston, South Carolina in 1820; subsequent pontiffs would establish over forty additional dioceses throughout the country before the end of the Civil War, each governed by its own bishop. Catholics, though nowhere near a majority population by any means, were nonetheless much more visibly present in American society, a fact made abundantly clear in a letter the American bishops sent to Pope Pius VIII in 1829: "We see so many blessings bestowed by God on these rising churches, such increase given to his vineyard,…The number of the faithful increases daily; churches not unworthy of divine worship are everywhere erected; the Word of God is preached everywhere, and not without fruit".[111] Catholics may not have outnumbered

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[109] Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 137.

[110] *The Metropolitan Catholic Almanac and Laity's Directory, for the Year of Our Lord 1853* (Baltimore: Fielding Lucas, Jr., 1852), 151 and *The Metropolitan Catholic Almanac and Laity's Directory, for the United States, Canada, and the British Provinces. 1861* (Baltimore: John Murphy & Co., 1860), 73. Gerald P. Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism: A History of the Catholic Church in Virginia* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 90–93 and 97.

[111] Joseph Rosati to Pius VIII, October 24, 1829, in Peter Guilday, ed., *The National Pastorals of the American Hierarchy (1792–1919)* (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1954), 18. Though Guilday does not directly attribute the authorship of the letter to Rosati, he is cited as such in Frederick John Easterly,

Protestants, but they were certainly no longer the quiet minority they once were. This provoked a direct challenge to the ideals of religious toleration which had flourished after the Revolution.

As the Church grew due to Catholic immigration and became much more visible in society, many Protestants began to reevaluate the extent to which they could tolerate their increasingly numerous Catholic neighbors. Historian Ray Billington describes this changing mentality: "The preponderant number of papal adherents among the Irish and Germans coming to the United States made Americans wonder again if their land was safe from Popery and fears were current that this immigration was a means by which Romish power could be transferred to America."[112] Exacerbating these fears were several high-profile Catholic events, including the First Provincial Council of Baltimore,[113] ongoing legal disputes between bishops and Catholic trustees, and the rise in pauperism attributed to immigrants. The First Provincial Council met with great fanfare in Baltimore in 1829, bringing together all seven bishops assigned to the U.S. at the time for a series of meetings and discussions which lasted nineteen days. Billington asserts this meeting, though partially intended as a way to respond to the growing threat of nativism, actually made the situation worse by making the Church's growth more apparent.[114]

"The Life of Rt. Rev. Joseph Rosati, C.M., First Bishop of St. Louis, 1789–1843" (PhD Dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1942), 120, n. 41.

[112] Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 36.

[113] In the Catholic lexicon, a council is a meeting of Church leaders to discuss matters of doctrine, theology, administration, discipline, and other such topics. Provincial councils are attended by all bishops within a relatively small geographic area.

[114] Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 37.

Trusteeism, the system by which lay Catholics attempted to exert authority over Church property and even clerical assignments, continued to plague the dioceses in the United States, with trustees engaging diocesan officials in civil courts in New York and Philadelphia.[115] Indeed, the Council took a firm stance against trusteeism, with the bishops writing: "we feel it to be our duty to declare to you, that in no part of the Catholic Church does the right of instituting or dismissing a clergyman…exist in any one, save the ordinary prelate [the bishop] of the diocess [*sic*]" and "that no right of presentation or patronage [meaning ownership] to any one of our churches and missions, has ever existed or does now exist canonically, in these United States".[116] Carey notes Protestant ministers began to reference these legal battles in their preaching against Catholicism, characterizing bishops as corrupt and greedy meddlers sponsored by a foreign power in Rome.[117] Like the tyrannical monarchs of Europe, Catholic bishops in the U.S. were seen as crushing the republican spirit of their congregations in the eyes of many American observers, a situation anticipated by then-Father Carroll during the first trustee crisis in New York: "you make some mention of eventually having recourse to legal means to rid yourselves of Mr Whelan. This insinuation makes me very unhappy. I cannot tell, what assistance the laws might give you; but allow me to say, that you take no step more fatal to that respectability, in which, as a Religious Society, you wish to stand, or more

[115] Patrick W. Carey, *People, Priests, and Prelates: Ecclesiastical Democracy and the Tensions of Trusteeism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 50–55.

[116] James Whitfield, "The Pastoral Letter to the Laity," October 17, 1829 in Guilday, *National Pastorals*, 33.

[117] Carey, *People, Priests, and Prelates*, 50–52.

prejudicial to the Catholic cause."[118] Yet not all Protestant apprehensions centered on Church leaders; poor immigrants posed a threat to American society as well.

Many Protestants viewed Catholic immigrants as unreliable and worthless future citizens. Among the millions of European immigrants who made the voyage to America, many had exhausted what meager resources they had to procure their passage and arrived as destitute paupers. Historian Jay Dolan describes how, even once employed, Irish immigrants continued to face difficulties in supporting themselves, as they generally worked as unskilled laborers earning absolute minimum wages.[119] In 1837, the United States was home to more than 50,000 immigrant paupers, with Congress estimating the cost to support them was in excess of four million dollars.[120] That many of these burdensome immigrants were Catholic only further increased the resentment of many Protestants. Some even feared their country was in the early stages of a complete takeover by Rome, with nativist anti-Catholic Samuel Morse writing in his influential *The Foreign Conspiracy against the Liberties of the United States*:

> The conspirators against our liberties, who have been admitted from abroad through the liberality of our institutions, are now *organized* in every part of the country; they are all subordinates, standing in regular steps of slave and master, from the most abject dolt that obeys the commands of his priest,…and the whole Catholic church is thus prepared to throw its weight of power and wealth into the hands of Austria, or any Holy Alliance of despots who may be persuaded to embark, for the safety of their dynasties, in the crusade against the liberties of a country which, by its simple existence in opposition to their theory of legitimate power, is working revolution and destruction to their thrones.[121]

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[118] John Carroll to Dominick Lynch and Thomas Stoughton, January 24, 1786, in John Carroll, *The John Carroll Papers*, ed. Thomas O'Brien Hanley (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 1:205.

[119] Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 139.

[120] Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 35.

[121] Samuel F. B. Morse, *The Foreign Conspiracy against the Liberties of the United States*, 4th ed. (New York: Van Nostrand & Dwight, 1836), 66–67. Historian Robert Farrell documents Southern

Such works disparaged the Catholic immigrant as a subversive foot-soldier of a global army bent the conquest and destruction of the United States. In his *Plea for the West*, preacher Lyman Beecher urgently warns of the dire consequences for the country should Catholics be allowed to spread into the western frontier: "The opinions of the Protestant clergy are congenial with liberty—they are chosen by the people who have been educated as freemen, and they are dependent on them for patronage and support. The Catholic system is adverse to liberty, and the clergy to a great extent are dependent on foreigners opposed to the principles of our government, for patronage and support."[122] This anti-Catholic tract is significant in that Beecher articulated an understanding that Protestantism meant liberty while Catholicism meant slavery, a concept which had larger implications with the advent of abolitionism.

In the midst of the renewed suspicion and hostility towards Catholicism in the United States, another political force arose which sought to resolve the longstanding sectional conflict over slavery but also opened a new front in the ideological war against Catholicism. The abolitionist movement came to prominence in the early to mid-nineteenth century in parallel with the resurgence of anti-Catholic sentiment as huge numbers of poor immigrants from Catholic Europe reshaped the demographics of the Church in America. Abolitionism and anti-Catholicism proved to be compatible philosophies, and prominent abolitionists were generally also prominent anti-Catholics. American Catholic historian Dr. John McGreevy examines this philosophical marriage

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newspaper coverage which added credence to Protestants' fears of a Catholic conspiracy to seize control of America's political institutions in Robert N. Farrell, "No Foreign Despots on Southern Soil: The American Party in Alabama and South Carolina, 1850–1857" (MA Thesis, University of Southern Mississippi, 2017), 48.

[122] Lyman Beecher, *Plea for the West*, 2nd ed. (Cincinnati: Truman & Smith, 1835), 60–61.

between abolitionism and anti-Catholicism, describing "slavery and Catholicism as parallel despotic systems" in the eyes of antislavery activists. Though McGreevy recognizes that prominent abolitionists, such as William Lloyd Garrison, opposed not only Catholic but also Protestant clergymen who supported slavery, he notes the criticisms of religious figures' proslavery stance varied by denomination: "Protestants who tolerated slavery betrayed their principles, abolitionists believed, while Catholics who tolerated slavery applied them."[123] Abolitionism and anti-Catholicism generally grew into mutually-supportive ideological stances.

Several examples serve to illustrate this point. Congregational minister Edward Beecher, one of Lyman Beecher's sons, was a devoted anti-Catholic before also becoming an antislavery activist in earnest in 1835.[124] In his later anti-Catholic writing, he adopts much of the language of abolitionism when describing the Church's opposition to liberty. For example, when he decries the counter protests of Catholics upset about American religious bigotry, he writes, "They claim that God has given to them the absolute and exclusive right to persecute, and that to restrain them from the free exercise of this right is persecution and an invasion of their inalienable rights. Moreover to write or to say any thing [*sic*] against them is impious slander, deserving the torments of the Inquisition and the stake; for they, and they only, are infallible; they fill the place of God

[123] John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 56–57. Anti-Catholicism and the Church's responses to it in the United States form a central part of McGreevy's sweeping intellectual history of the topic, which spans from the 1840s to the twenty-first century.

[124] Jeanne Gillespie McDonald, "Edward Beecher and the Anti-Slavery Movement in Illinois," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 105, no. 1 (2012): 22.

on earth."[125] With only a few alterations to certain terms, such a statement could easily apply to Southern slaveholders. The Church's proclivity to persecution is a common theme in his writing, and Historian Robert Merideth notes how Edward Beecher viewed the Catholic Church as a symbol for everything wrong with America, including its subjugation of liberty and opposition to freedom.[126]

One of Edward Beecher's friends, Presbyterian minister and St. Louis newspaper editor Elijah P. Lovejoy, was an outspoken anti-Catholic and abolitionist. Convinced Catholicism would corrupt the country if allowed to continue to spread, Lovejoy took a position as editor of the *St. Louis Observer* in order to counter the influence of Popery, as he describes, "The fire that is now blazing and crackling through this city, was kindled on Popish altars, and has been assiduously blown up by Jesuit breath. And now, dear brethren, the question is, shall we flee before it, or stay and abide its fury, even though we perish in the flames? For one, I cannot hesitate."[127] Lovejoy saw himself as a stalwart defender of Protestantism and liberty against the tyranny of Catholicism. He associated Catholicism with slavery, and in a public spat with a Catholic judge, wrote, "There is a burning hatred on the part of the Popish Priests and their minions, which would delight to quench itself in my blood. And nothing would be more convenient for it, than to execute

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[125] Edward Beecher, *The Papal Conspiracy Exposed, and Protestantism Defended, in the Light of Reason, History, and Scripture* (Boston: Stearns & Co., 1855), 410.

[126] Robert Merideth, *The Politics of the Universe: Edward Beecher, Abolition, and Orthodoxy* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968), 120–121. McGreevy references anti-Catholicism in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which Edward Beecher helped to create, in McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 58.

[127] "St. Louis Observer," *Religious Intelligencer*, December 5, 1835, 425. See also John A. Duerk, "Elijah P. Lovejoy: Anti-Catholic Abolitionist," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 108, no. 2 (2015): 103–121.

its purposes under the mask of opposition to *Abolition*."[128] He was far from the only abolitionist to explicitly tie his opposition to slavery with anti-Catholicism.

Antislavery activist Angelina Grimké drew direct comparisons between slaveholding and Catholicism, asserting, "The Catholics are universally condemned, for denying the Bible to the common people, but, *slaveholders must not* blame them, for *they* are doing the *very same thing*, and for the very same reason, neither of these systems can bear the light which bursts from the pages of that Holy Book."[129] Abolitionist rhetoric like Grimké's tied the more-controversial opposition to slavery with the generally-accepted opposition to Catholicism; by painting the Church and slavery in a similar light, abolitionists used the popularly and mass appeal of anti-Catholicism to further their own arguments.

Even Frederick Douglass included references of disdain for Catholics into some of his speeches. In an 1858 address in New York City, Douglass decried the relatively more humane treatment of former slaves in Brazil as compared to the United States, saying, "Protestant and democratic America would do well to learn a lesson of justice and Liberty from Catholic and despotic Brazil."[130] In a lecture he gave in Boston in December 1861, Douglass spoke about the ability of photographs to elicit powerful emotional responses from their viewers, and compared the phenomenon to that of the Catholic Church's manipulations of the hearts and imaginations of men: "The mighty

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[128] Elijah P. Lovejoy to his brother, November 2, 1835, in *Memoir of the Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy; who was Murdered in Defence of the Liberty of the Press, at Alton, Illinois, Nov. 7, 1837*, eds. Joseph C. Lovejoy and Owen Lovejoy (New York: John S. Taylor, 1838), 156.

[129] Angelina E. Grimké, *Appeal to the Christian Women of the South*, 3rd ed. (Shrewsbury, New Jersey, 1836), 18.

[130] Frederick Douglass, *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews, Volume 3, 1855–1863*, ed. John W. Blassingame (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 212.

fortress of the human heart silently withstands the assaults by the rifled cannons of reason but readily falls before the magic power of mystery. Remove from the Church of Rome, her cunning illusions,—her sacred alters [*sic*], her pictures, her images, her tapers, her mitres, her solemn pomp and her gorgeous ceremonies, the mere shades of things and her magical and entrancing power over men would disappear."[131] In an Independence Day speech in 1862, Douglass compared the U.S. government's resistance to criticism of its actions to the Catholic doctrine of papal infallibility: "When the President has avowed a policy, sanctioned a measure, or commended a general, we have been told that his action must be treated as final. I scout this assumption. A doctrine more slavish and abject than this does not obtain under the walls of St. Peter's."[132] Of course, each of these examples from Douglass are much more passive in nature than the direct attacks on the Church itself levied by Lovejoy and the Beechers, but they do serve to illustrate how anti-Catholicism often went hand-in-hand with abolitionism.

The Know Nothing movement became the dominant political expression of the prevailing anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant fears (though its members were divided over slavery), and was the most organized opposition to Catholicism in the United States.

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[131] Douglass, *Douglass Papers*, 462. This statement echoes the thoughts of John Adams, then serving as a delegate to the Continental Congress in 1774, who shared with his wife his experience attending Mass in Philadelphia: "This afternoon's entertainment was to me most awful and affecting; the poor wretches fingering their beads, chanting Latin, not a word of which they understood; their pater nosters and ave Marias; their holy water; their crossing themselves perpetually; their bowing to the name of Jesus, whenever they hear it; their bowings, kneelings and genuflections before the altar. The dress of the priest was rich white lace. His pulpit was velvet and gold. The altar-piece was very rich, little images and crucifixes about; wax candles lighted up. But how shall I describe the picture of our Saviour in a frame of marble over the altar, at full length, upon the cross in the agonies, and the blood dropping and streaming from his wounds! The music, consisting of an organ and a choir of singers, went all the afternoon except sermon time, and the assembly chanted most sweetly and exquisitely. Here is everything which can lay hold of the eye, ear, and imagination — everything which can charm and bewitch the simple and ignorant. I wonder how Luther ever broke the spell. Adieu." John Adams to Abigail Adams, October 9, 1774, in Ellis, *Documents of American Catholic History*, 133.

[132] Douglass, *Douglass Papers*, 532.

While northern anti-Catholic attacks focused in part on the Church's support to slavery, southern nativists blamed Catholic immigrants for supporting abolitionist policy and sought to limit foreign immigration—as well as enact stiffer naturalization laws—to prevent the spread of abolitionism.[133] Thus, Know Nothings in different parts of the country simultaneously blamed Catholics for both supporting and opposing slavery! The root of this divergence stemmed from the inability of the nativists to coalesce (in a national sense) around a clearly defined stance in favor of or against slavery. While Know Nothings across the country agreed they ought to oppose the Catholic Church and its influence, the justification for that opposition reflected regional interests with regards to slavery. Northern nativists appealed to antislavery constituents by tying the Catholic Church to American slavery, while Southern nativists used antislavery sentiments of foreign Catholics as a reason to indict foreign Catholic immigrants with abolitionist intent. In so doing, both wings of the nativist movement appealed to the anxieties among native-born Americans about the massive influx of immigrants and its implications for the national sovereignty and character of the United States.

The prominence of the Know Nothings peaked in the mid-1850s, with nativist politicians garnering significant support in local, state, and national elections across the country in 1854 and 1855, including sweeps in Kentucky and Maryland; Maryland, the home of American Catholicism, would go on to be the only state carried by the American Party in the 1856 presidential election, and Know Nothings continued to dominate

[133] Farrell, "No Foreign Despots," 54, 68–72. Ultimately, the debate over slavery between the Northern and Southern wings of the Know Nothings led to the implosion of the nativist American Party after the 1856 election.

Baltimore politics through the start of 1860.[134] During these elections, anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic agitation led to mob violence in several cities, including Baltimore, St. Louis, and New Orleans. The violence was particularly bad in Louisville, Kentucky. Twenty people were killed and hundreds wounded during the Bloody Monday Riot on August 6, 1855, during which a mob murdered Catholics and set fire to several houses and businesses owned by Catholics.[135] Historian Andrew Stern highlights the recurring sectarian violence which became "a fact of life" in New Orleans on election days through 1858.[136] The threat to Southern Catholics was very real, and leaders of Catholic congregations sought to avoid becoming the next victims of an angry mob.

The 1855 Know Nothing campaigns in Virginia exhibited the nativist and anti-Catholic trends which had become so common throughout the country in the first half of the nineteenth century. In his analysis of the Democratic and Know Nothing battles in the press during the election, historian John Daniel Schminky showcases American Party accusations that immigrants were unreliable, worthless, and subversive, and that Virginian Catholics had co-opted the Democratic Party and were planning the takeover of the government on behalf of the pope.[137] However, despite winning some municipal elections and more than a few General Assembly races, the American Party lost overall to

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[134] Thomas T. McAvoy, *A History of the Catholic Church in the United States*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), 169–170; Agnes Geraldine McGann, "The Know-Nothing Movement in Kentucky," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 49, no. 4 (1938): 326; Benjamin Tuska, "Know-Nothingism in Baltimore 1854–1860," *The Catholic Historical Review* 11, no. 2 (1925): 225–227.

[135] Raymond L. Cohn, "Nativism and the End of Mass Migration of the 1840s and 1850s," *The Journal of Economic History* 60, no. 2 (2000): 374; McAvoy, *History of the Catholic Church*, 170–171; and Betty Carolyn Congleton, "George D. Prentice and Bloody Monday: A Reappraisal," *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 63, no. 3 (1965): 225.

[136] Andrew H. M. Stern, *Southern Crucifix, Southern Cross: Catholic-Protestant Relations in the Old South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 172–173.

[137] Schminky, "Richmond Newspaper Debate," 12–44.

the Democrats in the 1855 elections. Democratic gubernatorial candidate Henry Wise defeated Know Nothing Thomas Flournoy by about 10,000 votes and the American Party secured only one congressional seat.[138] However, multiple historians have undertaken studies which reveal this defeat was not inevitable and that several factors specific to this election contributed to the American Party's defeat.

Though the Democratic victories over the Know Nothings at the polls appear on the surface to have been decisive, some historians contend the elections were much closer than the raw data indicates. Historian W. Darrell Overdyke, in his analysis of the rise and fall of the southern Know Nothings, credits the victory to Wise's unusually active campaign across the state, which, combined with a late nomination of Flournoy, put the American Party on the defensive early in the campaign and sapped much of the support the Know Nothings expected from the old Whig party adherents.[139] Historian John Bladek concurs with Overdyke, adding that Flournoy's reticence played a huge part in the Know Nothing defeat; in contrast to Wise, whose "nonstop speaking tour covered most of the Old Dominion". Bladek noted Flournoy "wrote a letter of acceptance following his nomination and then retired to his front porch for the remainder of the campaign."[140] Yet he diverges from Overdyke in asserting voter turnout was record-breakingly high, and Flournoy would have won had turnout rates stayed as they had been for previous elections.[141] Thus, the electoral results, though decidedly opposed to the Know Nothing

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[138] W. Darrell Overdyke, *The Know-Nothing Party in the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950), 95.

[139] Overdyke, *Know-Nothing Party*, 91–95.

[140] Bladek, "Virginia Is Middle Ground", 55.

[141] Bladek, "Virginia Is Middle Ground", 59.

cause, do not necessarily reflect the attitude of Virginians as completely tolerant towards Catholics and immigrants.

Still, the fact remains that nativists and anti-Catholics did not rise to power in Virginia in 1855, and the actions of the Church across the decades did in fact play a large part in their defeat. By the dawn of the Civil War, Catholics had learned time and again that American society harbored hostility towards their faith, and success in America would require accommodation and compromise. The Civil War tested the limits of this willingness to accommodate in ways American Catholics had never before experienced. Indeed, Southern Catholics who supported the rebellion compromised their adherence to Catholic doctrine through their support of slavery.

V. TOO AMERICAN TO BE CATHOLIC: SLAVERY AS A THEOLOGICAL FAULT LINE

In 1899, Pope Leo XIII issued his letter *Testem Benevolentiae Nostrae* to the American bishops, rebuking them for the recurring instances of doctrinal and practical exceptionalism they and their predecessors had repeatedly insisted was required for the Church to exist and operate in the United States. Referring to this as the heresy of "Americanism," he wrote:

> The underlying principle of these new opinions is that, in order to more easily attract those who differ from her, the Church should shape her teachings more in accord with the spirit of the age and relax some of her ancient severity and make some concessions to new opinions. Many think that these concessions should be made not only in regard to ways of living, but even in regard to doctrines which belong to the deposit of the faith. They contend that it would be opportune, in order to gain those who differ from us, to omit certain points of her teaching which are of lesser importance, and to tone down the meaning which the Church has always attached to them.

He took particular issue with the idea that, because American Catholics were in a majority-Protestant country, they ought to have different standards and expectations as Catholics: "there are among you some who conceive and would have the Church in America to be different from what it is in the rest of the world." Leo flatly rejected that notion: "the true Church is one," he wrote, not only in doctrine but also in hierarchical governance, and he firmly encouraged his bishops to fall back in line with Rome before any further damage to the unity of the Church could be done.[142]

One of the most significant instances of theological division between the Church in the United States and Catholic teaching as promulgated by Rome was the moral understanding of slavery. While Catholics in the antebellum American South (and,

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[142] Leo XIII, *Testem Benevolentiae Nostrae: Concerning New Opinions, Virtue, Nature and Grace, with Regard to Americanism*, Papal Letter, January 22, 1899, https://www.papalencyclicals.net/leo13/l13teste.htm (accessed February 2, 2022).

indeed, throughout the United States) were not opposed to slavery, the Catholic Church had stated its opposition to the practice. Catholic teaching on the immorality of slavery (as defined by the popes) was not greatly enforced in the United States, and Catholic bishops were increasingly out of step with the papacy of the nineteenth century on a variety of issues, including slavery. This chapter will examine the evolution of the Church's position on the morality of slavery over time as well as explore how and why the American bishops, including the bishops of Richmond, developed a divergent view of slavery.

Though initially not opposed to slavery, the popes began a gradual process of restricting and regulating the morality of the practice as European slavery became more racialized. Slavery in the ancient Mediterranean was primarily based on circumstances of life (such as debt or being a captive in war) rather than race. While the early Church did not object to this form of slavery, it did work to regulate the practice; for example, St. Gregory the Great (née Pope Gregory I) coordinated financial efforts to purchase the freedom of Christians taken as slaves after barbarian attacks, even going so far as to use the Church's own resources to pay ransom money.[143] Prominent Black Catholic historian Cyprian Davis describes the idea of slavery in the Roman world thusly: "The underlying principle was taken from the Roman law dictum that by natural law all persons are free;

[143] Jeffrey Richards, *Consul of God: The Life and Times of Gregory the Great* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 99–100. St. Gregory even made the extraordinary decision to sell religious objects used at Mass, many of which were made of precious metals, to generate the funds required, as Richards writes, "If bishops were short of ready cash and there had been a heavy loss of prisoners during a Lombard attack, Gregory authorized the disposal of the plate….He believed very strongly that the ransom of Catholics was a proper use of church money, and he constantly urged bishops not only to ransom their flock but to repay people who had ransomed themselves."

by the law of the nations some are slaves."[144] Thus, even from the earliest decades of Christianity, the Church understood and recognized the basic humanity of enslaved persons.

The process by which the papacy shifted positions to impose restrictions on (and eventually condemn) slavery was not a smooth one by any means, as some popes tolerated, encouraged, or even participated in the institution of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Many papal bulls issued through the fifteenth century worked to support the imperial expansion of Catholic powers into Africa, with some popes justifying the resulting conflict (and enslavement) as part of a holy war with Muslims. However, this work will not spend time discussing those teachings and actions in detail. While it is important to note the papacy was inconsistent in its teaching for several centuries, the historical record can identify and trace an increasingly consistent antislavery message from the moral authorities in the Catholic Church beginning in the fifteenth century.[145]

The process of Catholic restriction of racialized slavery began in 1435. As the Christian world expanded beyond Europe, the papacy's missionary efforts to spread Christianity to Western Africa, Asia, and the Americas were at times both helped and hindered by the imperial interests of the European monarchies. Papal action to set a moral precedent against slavery began with Pope Eugene IV's bull *Sicut Dudum* in 1435. In that document, the pope admonished Christians who had been enslaving baptized Black

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[144] Cyprian Davis, *Henriette Delille: Servant of Slaves, Witness to the Poor* (New Orleans: Sisters of the Holy Order, 2004), 87.

[145] See Pius Onyemechi Adiele, *The Popes, the Catholic Church and the Transatlantic Enslavement of Black Africans 1418–1839* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2017) for a much more detailed and comprehensive view of this complicated history.

natives of the Canary Islands and exhorted them to restore these fellow Christians to freedom immediately: "These people are to be totally and perpetually free, and are to be let go without the exaction or reception of money."[146] This was the first answer by the head of the Church on the question of whether or not converted natives could be slaves, and, importantly, the pope indicated the moral significance of the bull's directive by threatening to excommunicate anyone who ignored or defied the order. Though *Sicut Dudum* addressed a situation limited only to the Canary Islands, future popes would apply this precedent on a much wider geographic scope.

Subsequent popes expanded on this initial statement against slavery. In 1537, Pope Paul III issued the bull *Sublimus Dei* after receiving reports from missionaries indicating rampant abuse and exploitation of American Indian peoples: "the said Indians and all other people who may later be discovered by Christians, are by no means to be deprived of their liberty or the possession of their property, even though they be outside the faith of Jesus Christ; and that they may and should, freely and legitimately, enjoy their liberty and the possession of their property; nor should they be in any way enslaved".[147] Unlike *Sicut Dudum,* this bull applied to the whole Church throughout the world, and further restricted which forms of slavery remained morally acceptable. Pope Gregory XIV's 1591 bull *Cum Sicti* added papal support to the Spanish King Philip II's edict outlawing the enslavement of natives in the Spanish Philippines, and included a significant acceptance of moral responsibility for past sins: "the deprivation of the

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[146] Eugene IV, *Sicut Dudum: Against the Enslaving of Black Natives from the Canary Islands*, Papal Bull, January 13, 1435, https://www.papalencyclicals.net/eugene04/eugene04sicut.htm (accessed January 12, 2022).

[147] Paul III, *Sublimus Dei: On the Enslavement and Evangelization of Indians,* Papal Bull, May 29, 1537, https://www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul03/p3subli.htm (accessed January 12, 2022). Paul III also took several other actions in 1537 and 1542 to reinforce his condemnation of American Indian enslavement, as discussed in Adiele, *Transatlantic Enslavement,* 373.

Indians [at the hands of the Spaniards] was wrong".[148] Likewise, Pope Urban VIII, prompted by reports from Jesuit missionaries that buccaneers from São Paolo were enslaving Brazilian natives, issued the bull *Commissum Nobis* in 1639 which condemned once again the enslavement of natives in the West Indies. Urban explicitly detailed his expectation that the Catholic Portuguese officials would "severely prohibit anyone from reducing to slavery, selling, buying, exchanging, giving away, separating from wives and children, despoiling of their property, taking away to other places, depriving of liberty in any way and keeping in servitude said Indians."[149] *Cum Sicti* and *Commissum Nobis* are similar to *Sicut Dudum* in that they each applied to a narrow geographic area, yet they constitute in practice the continuation of the idea espoused in *Sublimus Dei* of the immorality of the enslavement of native peoples. However, despite reforms implemented (to varying degrees of success) in colonies governed by Catholic powers, none of these bulls directly addressed the developing transatlantic slave trade from Africa—the rise of which was a direct consequence of the depopulation of the American Indian peoples.[150]

Rome took the first step toward directly opposing African slavery in 1686. The Holy Office[151] under Pope Innocent XI responded to a petition from Lourenço da Silva de

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[148] Gregory XIV, *Cum Sicti,* Papal Bull, April 18, 1591, quoted in Adiele, *Transatlantic Enslavement,* 374; see Adiele, *Transatlantic Enslavement,* 530–531 for the full Latin text of the bull. "Indians" here refers to the indigenous peoples of the Philippines.

[149] Urban VIII, *Commissum Nobis,* Papal Bull, April 22, 1639, quoted in Adiele, *Transatlantic Enslavement,* 375–377. For the full Latin text, see Adiele, *Transatlantic Enslavement,* 531–532. Additionally, Pope Benedict XIV issued the bull *Immensa Pastorum* in 1741, again decrying the continued practice of Christians in Brazil enslaving natives. See Benedict XIV, *Immensa Pastorum,* Papal Bull, December 20, 1741, quoted in Adiele, *Transatlantic Enslavement,* 377-378; full Latin text in Adiele, *Transatlantic Enslavement,* 532–534.

[150] A point made clear in Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300–1589* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 187–188.

[151] The Holy Office (now known in its modern form as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) is a body of Church officials who pass judgement on questions of doctrine and morality.

Mendouça, an Afro-Brazilian lay Catholic who represented several confraternities of Black Catholics in Lisbon and Madrid. Lourenço da Silva sought clarification from the Holy Office to distinguish "just" slavery (as a legal punishment or as a result of capture in war) from "unjust" slavery, which he and his confrères contended constituted the preponderance of the transatlantic slave trade.[152] The Capuchin Franciscan missionaries in Kongo, horrified by the treatment of their fellow Christians at the hands of Western enslavers, joined the petition to Rome.[153]

The Holy Office condemned the unjust enslavement and fraud of "Negros and other natives," required anyone purchasing slaves to ensure they had been enslaved for just reasons, ordered the emancipation of anyone enslaved unjustly, and forbade slaveholders from endangering, hurting, or killing the slaves in their care.[154] Unlike previous papal instructions, the Holy Office did not consider the religious status of the slave, only the conditions under which he or she was enslaved. This decision implied a sense of a shared humanity which crossed religious boundaries, as Africanist historian Richard Gray writes, "Taken as a whole, the memorandum was a skillful and radical plea for justice against a massive violation of basic human rights."[155] However, while the Holy Office directed clerics at all levels to enforce the stipulations of this decision, it failed to ensure the compliance of the European Catholic monarchs, who resisted what

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[152] Richard Gray, "The Papacy and the Atlantic Slave Trade: Lourenço da Silva, the Capuchins and the Decisions of the Holy Office," *Past & Present,* no. 115 (1987): 63.

[153] French historian Guillaume Aubert notes that the Capuchins' first objections to Rome regarding the slave trade began in the 1640s and continued through the century. Guillaume Aubert, ""To Establish One Law and Definite Rules": Race, Religion, and the Transatlantic Origins of the Louisiana Code Noir," in *Louisiana: Crossroads of the Atlantic World,* ed. Cécile Vidal (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 25–26.

[154] Gray, "The Papacy and the Atlantic Slave Trade," 63–66.

[155] Gray, "The Papacy and the Atlantic Slave Trade," 64.

they perceived as an imposition on their rights and nullified the order by refusing to comply.[156] The Holy Office made their decision at a time when papal power to act unilaterally was waning and popes increasingly had to rely on the political will of Catholic monarchies for temporal support, as Gray describes, "The Holy Office could define questions of ethics, but the enforcement of its decisions depended on clerics and laity whose immediate ecclesiastical, and ultimate political, loyalties lay elsewhere."[157] Consequently, Pope Innocent XI did not try to force the issue with a bull or some other more vigorous act. Though Lourenço da Silva's efforts did not spark immediate practical change, they did pave the way for such change by documenting a shift in the moral calculus of slavery. The Holy Office's ruling was binding and on the record, and Rome would refer to this decision to respond to future questions about slavery's morality.

Thus, the formation of what would become American Catholicism in 1634 occurred at a time when Rome had begun to oppose African slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, but had not yet fully committed to that opposition. That the original American Catholics were primarily English only further exacerbated the issue, as the group's cultural and societal ties to Rome were significantly weaker than those of their continental coreligionists. A brief comparison of the slave codes used by the French in Louisiana and the Spanish in Florida with the code used in Maryland highlights how the relative lack of Roman influence impacted the behavior of English Catholics.

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[156] Gray, "The Papacy and the Atlantic Slave Trade," 66. Aubert contrasts the African-based Capuchins' disgust at the barbarism of enslavement with their Dominican and Jesuit counterparts in the Americas: "While the latter had insisted that conversion to Christianity should procure Africans with the double benefit of eternal salvation and temporal freedom, the former saw enslavement as a precondition to Africans' salvation. Aubert, "To Establish One Law," 26–27.

[157] Gray, "The Papacy and the Atlantic Slave Trade," 66.

African slaves in Florida and Louisiana were subject to slave codes applied to them by their Catholic imperial governments. Florida, founded with the Spanish settlement at St. Augustine in 1565, adhered to *Las Siete Partidas*, a legal digest which required slaveholders to uphold certain responsibilities and provided some rights to slaves, including the right to sue their owners in court if abused as well as the provision of *coartación*, a means by which a slave could purchase his or her own freedom.[158] In Louisiana, ruled by both the French and the Spanish at varying times following its founding by the French in 1682, the Code Noir of Louisiana governed slave society, and was designed to "establish a law and certain regulations for the maintenance of the discipline of the Catholic Apostolic, and Roman Church and to ordain what concerns the situation and quality of the slaves". The Code Noir protected some basic rights of enslaved persons while also legalizing harsh punishments for certain infractions (during the periods of Spanish rule, the slave code became *Las Siete Partidas*, which was less restrictive than the Code Noir).[159] There were legally codified avenues for slaves to gain their own freedom in both systems, and some communities of free Blacks lived in both

[158] Davis, *Henriette Delille*, 87. For some examples of the practice of *coartación* in neighboring Spanish Cuba, see William C. Van Norman, Jr., *Shade Grown Slavery: The Lives of Slaves on Coffee Plantations in Cuba* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2013), 116–119.

[159] Louis XV, "The Code Noir or Edict of the King, Serving as Regulations for the Government and Administration of Justice, Police, Discipline and Commerce of Negro Slaves, in the Province and Colony of Louisiana," March 1724, quoted in Cyprian Davis and Jamie Phelps, eds., *"Stamped with the Image of God" African Americans as God's Image in Black* (New York: Orbis Books, 2003), 6–12. For examples of rights granted to slaves, the Code Noir: forbade work on Sundays and Feast Days for both enslaved and free subjects; forbade masters to marry slaves against their will; forbade the breakup of a slave family being sold to remit the debts of a deceased owner and forbade the sale of children under fourteen away from their parents for any reason. For examples of the legalization of harsh punishments and the restriction of slave rights, the Code: forbade the practice of any non-Catholic religion; forbade interracial marriage; and established standard punishments for various offenses, including congregating with another master's slaves (whipping and branding), striking a master or a member of his family (death), attempting to run away (physical disfigurement), and harboring fugitives (fines for a slave who did so and a return to servitude for a free black). Aubert notes that the ban on interracial marriages was the first to be included in a Code Noir of the French Empire. Aubert, "To Establish One Law," 23.

Spanish Florida and French Louisiana; Davis describes how St. Augustine, already populated by enslaved and free African Catholics, came to include a substantial population of free Blacks living in a *palenque* northeast of the town, while geographic historian Dr. Amy Sumpter centers her study of antebellum New Orleans on the communities of free persons of color which thrived there during the colonial period.[160] The coexistence of free people of color alongside Black slaves and Whites was much more common in the French and Spanish colonies of the Americas than in the English ones. This was due in large part to the dual influences of Roman law and Catholic tradition, including the Code Noir and *Las Siete Partidas*, both of which "conferred legal and moral personality on slaves."[161] Though to be clear, slavery as inflicted upon Africans under Spanish and French rule was still cruel and inhumane. While the Church had a tempering influence on some of slavery's inherent excesses, the system remained a corrupting "moral quicksand,"[162] completely antithetical to the love of neighbor demanded by the Christian religion.

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[160] Davis, *The History of Black Catholics*, 30; Amy R. Sumpter, "Segregation of the Free People of Color and the Construction of Race in Antebellum New Orleans," *Southeastern Geographer* 48, no. 1 (2008): 19–37. Davis also notes, "This first all-black settlement in what is now the United States was a Catholic town. The only white person in the community of roughly a hundred people was the Franciscan chaplain." Cyprian Davis, "God of Our Weary Years," in *Taking Down Our Harps: Black Catholics in the United States*, eds. Cyprian Davis and Diana L. Hayes (New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 21. The Spanish encouraged the settlement of free Blacks as a means of destabilizing English colonies in the region; indeed, the primary purpose of the Florida settlement was to project Spanish power northward in order to protect the more lucrative Spanish colonies in the Caribbean, as described in Elena A. Schneider, *The Occupation of Havana: War, Trade, and Slavery in the Atlantic World* (Williamsburg: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture and Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 101–102.

[161] Alejandro de la Fuente and Ariela J. Gross, *Becoming Free, Becoming Black: Race, Freedom, and Law in Cuba, Virginia, and Louisiana* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 8. De la Fuente and Gross provide an excellent comparative study of legal interpretations of race and freedom which gives insight into this marked difference between the sort of slavery that developed in the Iberian and French colonies and the chattel slavery of the United States. See also Davis, *The History of Black Catholics*, 20.

[162] Davis, *The History of Black Catholics*, 37.

Maryland's Catholics, however, set laws in place which lacked even the modicum of restraint shown in the Spanish and French slave codes. During the second period of codified religious toleration, Maryland's Assembly enacted laws regulating the institution of slavery within the colony. Some slaves may have arrived with the original settlers, with church historian Thomas McAvoy noting the establishment of a Jesuit manor and describing the wealth of Catholic colonists; historian Leslie Woodcock Tentler indicates the majority of the initial laborers were White indentured servants, but that Jesuits bought African slaves and owned almost 200 enslaved persons by 1765.[163] In 1664, the (largely-Catholic) Assembly passed the first slave code in the English colonies in North America, "An Act Concerning Negroes & other Slaves," which established all enslaved persons, both currently residing within the colony and any imported into the colony in the future, would serve for life, as would their children; moreover, to discourage interracial relations (specifically between White women and Black men), the act punished any free White woman who married a Black slave by impressing her into the service of the slave's master until her husband's death and by defining any offspring from the union as the slaves of their father's master.[164] American Catholics had participated in bringing racialized, perpetual slavery into what would become the United States. The influence of

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[163] Thomas T. McAvoy, *A History of the Catholic Church in the United States*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), 10–12, and Leslie Woodcock Tentler, *American Catholics: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 48–49.

[164] "An Act Concerning Negroes & other Slaves," *Assembly Proceedings, 1664*, 533–534, Maryland State Archives. https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000001/html/am1--533.html (accessed March 3, 2022). While this was the first Assembly Act to detail the laws regarding slaves, the presence of slaves in the colony were numerous enough to warrant mention of them in acts as early as 1639: "all the Inhabitants of this Province being Christians (Slaves excepted Shall have and enjoy all such rights liberties immunities priviledges [*sic*] and free customs within this Province as any naturall [*sic*] born subject of England". "An Act for the liberties of the people," *Assembly Proceedings, February–March 1638/9*, 41, Maryland State Archives. https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000001/html/am1--41.html (accessed April 4, 2022).

Roman law exhibited in the slave codes in Florida and Louisiana was notably absent, as the Assembly excluded means by which a slave could become free and defined the Black slave on racial terms alone without recognition of the slave's personhood.

After American independence, the bishops appointed to lead the Church in the United States demonstrated their support for slavery and were enslavers themselves. The first American prelate, Bishop John Carroll (Diocese of Baltimore, 1789–1815), owned and traded slaves, contrary to his representations to a friend in 1813: "We in Maryland have certainly some slaves on our estates, but I individually hold not a single one: the servts. who wait on me, are one lent to me by my sister, one free person hired by me."[165] His own church records and correspondence contradict this claim. In 1800, a woman named Elizabeth, "slave of Bishop Carroll," was a witness at the baptism of another slave's "natural daughter" at St. Peter's Church in Baltimore.[166] In 1805, he directed an agent to pay off Church debts by "The sale of a few unnecessary Negroes three or four, and stock".[167] Sometime in mid-1806, Carroll sold Alexis, a personal slave Carroll described as a "drunken" and "depraved young man who has banished from himself happiness & comfort."[168] In his will, Carroll listed several assets and properties he wished to give to his nephew, and specified, "I bequeath to him my black servant Charles, to be however manumitted within twelve months after my decease," but also insisted Charles live in Washington and "make a prudent use of his emancipation;"

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[165] John Carroll to Charles Plowden, December 12, 1813, in John Carroll, *The John Carroll Papers*, ed. Thomas O'Brien Hanley (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 3:247.

[166] Thomas W. Spalding, *John Carroll Recovered: Abstracts of Letters and Other Documents not Found in the John Carroll Papers* (Baltimore: Cathedral Foundation Press, 2000), 216.

[167] John Carroll to Francis Neale, November 12, 1805, in Carroll, *Carroll Papers*, 2:497.

[168] John Carroll to James Barry, July 21, 1806, in Carroll, *Carroll Papers*, 2:521.

Carroll also allocated fifty dollars to Charles "in testimony of his faithful services."[169] Bishop Carroll owned and sold slaves, even up to the moment of his death.

Despite engaging in the system personally, Carroll was uncomfortable with slavery. In 1794, he gave advice to Father John Thayer, a priest assigned to Virginia who struggled with ministering to Catholics who treated their Black slaves inhumanely—enslaved Blacks who were likely Catholics themselves. Carroll wrote, "You may act freely,…in remedying the abuses of slavery; and when you have done your duty, if all the good effect possible & desirable does not ensue from your endeavors, you must bear that, as every pastor must bear the many disorders, which will subsist in spite of his most zealous exertions."[170] Here, Carroll recognizes slavery can beget evil and encourages Fr. Thayer to move his congregants towards more moderation, but he also reassures the priest he does not view slavery as contrary to Catholic doctrine. Indeed, in the same letter he compares the abuse of Black enslaved persons to other sins ("infidelity, profane swearing, the sins of the flesh &c") which priests must not condone and must oppose morally, yet they need not engage in any action to stop the behavior, as that is the job of the penitent Christian himself. However, Carroll does concede he is uneasy about the preponderance of abuse: "I am as far, as you, from being easy in my mind at many things I see, and know, relating to the treatment & manners of the Negroes. I do the best, I can to correct the evils I see; and then recur to those principles, which, I suppose, influenced the many eminent & holy missioners in S. America & Asia, where slavery equally

[169] John Carroll, Last Will and Testament, November 22, 1815, in Carroll, *Carroll Papers*, 3:371.

[170] John Carroll to John Thayer, July 15, 1794, in Carroll, *Carroll Papers*, 2:123.

exists."[171] In this way, Carroll admits his own hesitation about the morality of slavery, an institution which is innately violent and oppressive, but rationalizes his fears away by considering how widespread slavery is. Lack of papal action to fully espouse and support the Holy Office's decision of 1686 left room for Church leaders across the world to continue to perpetuate the evils of slavery, even at the expense of enslaved Catholics. The papacy took more direct action to shift Catholic teaching in the early nineteenth century.

Pope Pius VII reinvigorated papal opposition to African slavery by appealing to individual European rulers to fight the slave trade. He worked to include a condemnation of the slave trade at the Congress of Vienna in 1814, during which he wrote to the French King Louis XVIII, pleading, "Therefore act, my dear son in Christ, in the sense of piety, which is inherent in the blood of the Bourbons: put aside and restrain the shameful lust of these slave dealers, who are committing crime against humanity and justice: uproot radically the infamous slave trade, this persistent cause of wars, strife, and nefarious deeds of all kind, wherever it is in your power."[172] The pope's efforts contributed to the condemnation of the trade by the Congress in 1815. In 1823, Pius VII wrote to King John VI of Portugal, requesting he also combat the slave trade: "To our great sorrow, we have learned that the slave trade, which we thought has been uprooted by reason of the great humanity and wisdom of the Christian Ruler, is still being operated even stronger than before, in some of your areas of influence." He continued, "the miserable manner in

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[171] John Carroll to John Thayer, July 15, 1794, in Carroll, *Carroll Papers*, 2:123. Father John Thayer was a very colorful former Congregational minister whose dramatic conversion experience in Rome in 1783 led him to the Catholic priesthood. Though one of the few Catholics to publicly oppose slavery, his religious career was marred by scandal and insurmountable personal problems, as described in C. Walker Gollar, "Father John Thayer: Catholic Antislavery Voice in the Kentucky Wilderness," *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 101, no. 3 (2003): 275–296.

[172] Pius VII to Louis XVIII, *Inter Tot Ac Tantas*, September 20, 1814, quoted in Adiele, *Transatlantic Enslavement*, 391. See Adiele, *Transatlantic Enslavement*, 534–535 for the full Latin text of the letter.

which these heartless slave traders deal with the slaves is against the humanity of all,…we, like our predecessors, who were distinguished by wisdom, no less than piety, had advised before, how we can eradicate this shameful human traffic, which is contrary to religion and humanity."[173] This second letter indicates Pius viewed his action as following from the moral pronouncements and legal interpretations of previous popes. The letters were widely circulated and signaled Rome's commitment to openly oppose slavery and the transatlantic trade. However, America's bishops continued to own and engage in the personal trade of slaves.

Bishop Edward Fenwick (Diocese of Cincinnati, 1822–1832) owned slaves most of his life, used the labor of enslaved persons to establish a Dominican community in Kentucky, and raised money to build a cathedral in Cincinnati by selling slaves.[174] That he was aware of Pope Pius's actions and the Holy Office's stance towards slavery is apparent by his behavior during a European fundraising tour in 1823, when Bishop Fenwick intentionally downplayed his own connections to slavery in order to procure funds from missionary groups.[175]

Bishop Louis William DuBourg (Diocese of New Orleans, 1815–1825) purchased numerous slaves for his diocese and for religious orders operating in Louisiana, and frequently used his slaves as collateral in financial dealings.[176] Fr. Davis's archival research revealed he did so despite being most certainly aware of the Church's

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[173] Pius VII to John VI, *Etsi Perspecta*, March 15, 1823, quoted in Adiele, *Transatlantic Enslavement*, 396. See Adiele, *Transatlantic Enslavement*, 535–536 for the full Latin text of the letter.

[174] C. Walker Gollar, "Edward Fenwick: First Bishop of Cincinnati and Slaveholder," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 38, no. 1 (2020): 145–162.

[175] Gollar, "Edward Fenwick," 158.

[176] Davis, *The History of Black Catholics*, 43.

disapproval of the practice. In archives in both Rome and the University of Notre Dame, Davis found a document which includes requests for clarification regarding slavery's morality that the bishop sent to Rome:

> The document, which is unsigned and undated, is handwritten in Latin and contains four *dubia*, or problems, offered by Bishop DuBourg. The first query is whether the missionary should "disturb the consciences" of slaveholders "regarding the possession of their slaves" and whether these can "purchase and possess slaves for their service according to the norms of civil law, since it is impossible to find others, except slaves," for domestic work.[177]

These questions indicate Bishop DuBourg was aware of the Church's intolerance of slavery, as he sought to determine if the immorality is serious enough that clergymen should preach against the practice; moreover, he also attempted to provide a means to justify the use of enslaved persons, namely a lack of other available labor. In so doing, the bishop shows he comprehended the immorality of slavery as understood by the Church, yet he sought relief from Rome by citing extenuating circumstances in his diocese in order to secure an exception or exemption from the moral guidelines.

Bishop Benedict Joseph Flaget (Diocese of Bardstown, 1810–1848) owned at least one slave whom he sold to afford travel from Baltimore to Bardstown.[178] Upon his arrival in Kentucky, he took ownership of Clem, an enslaved Black man, as well as other slaves donated or bought from fellow Catholics; American and Black Catholic church historian Dr. C. Walker Gollar documents Bishop Flaget's use of slave labor to construct

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[177] Davis, *The History of Black Catholics*, 42 and n. 51. Davis describes the remainder of the document as including questions about whether slaves can work on Sundays and about the validity of slave marriages.

[178] Benedict Flaget to Stephen Badin, 1811, quoted in Stephen Theodore Badin, "Origin and Progress of the Mission of Kentucky" (translation of *Origine et Progrès de la Mission du Kentucky*), *The Catholic World*, September 1875, 832. On April 21, 1815, Flaget also sold "One Negroe Girl named Henney, about 16 or 17 years" to a Kentuckian man in Nelson County. Benedict Flaget, "Bill of Sale," quoted in W. J. Howlett, ed. "Bishop Flaget's Diary," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 29, no. 1. (1918): 38.

not only diocesan buildings, but the bishop's personal residence as well, and emphasizes the bishop's focus on slaves' productivity at the expense of their spiritual welfare.[179] In his diary, Flaget expresses approval that Ohio abolished slavery in its constitution, though not because of the law's recognition of basic human rights: "They had the wisdom in Ohio not to allow slavery. Just now hired help is costly, but with the present increase of the population this inconvenience will not last long, and they will be delivered from a race that might become a danger."[180] While his peers certainly maintained a mindset of ill-conceived paternalism towards the Black people they owned, Flaget sets himself apart by revealing a proclivity for White supremacy. Though of course the bishop's poor example of Christian brotherhood is appalling by modern standards, at least one contemporary took a dim view of Flaget's treatment of and attitude towards Black Americans, as a Bardstown priest named Fr. Stephen Badin refused to transfer his enslaved persons to Flaget along with the other diocesan property he held, instead ceding each of them to their White Catholic godparents.[181] Flaget's views of African Americans, as expressed in his own words and revealed through his behavior, would have profound implications on the course of events in the decades to come, especially because they certainly left an impression on a young John McGill, the future Bishop of Richmond.

John McGill's formative years were among Catholic slaveholding societies. The eldest son of Irish immigrant James McGill and Philadelphia native Lavinia Dougherty,

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[179] C. Walker Gollar, "The Role of Father Badin's Slaves in Frontier Kentucky," *American Catholic Studies* 115, no. 1 (2004): 21.

[180] Benedict Flaget, "Journal of my Trip to Baltimore," in Howlett, "Bishop Flaget's Diary," 246. Flaget does not list a specific date, but based on its location in the diary and the content of this especially long entry, he wrote this sometime in late October or early November (no later than the 16th) 1812. Though Ohio's Constitution did abolish slavery, the State also established Black Codes to dissuade free Black Americans from settling there.

[181] Gollar, "Father Badin's Slaves," 23.

he was born in that city on November 4, 1809 and likely observed slavery among the Catholic community there.[182] When he was nine years old, his family moved to Bardstown, and he spent the rest of his childhood among slaveholding Catholics in Kentucky. There James McGill became a successful businessman and a respected lay leader in the community, noted for his skills as an apologist (a defender of Catholic teaching) and his kindness toward the clergy; though no records explicitly indicate whether or not John McGill's father owned slaves, it is likely he did, as a contemporary describes the man's wealth and that he possessed "a hospitality that was as free as it was bountiful."[183] The elder McGill worked alongside the slaveowning Bishop Flaget in Bardstown, and John McGill would have interacted with the bishop not only by way of religious functions, but on numerous social occasions as well. At age eleven, McGill was one of the first three students to enroll in St. Joseph's College, the school established by Flaget—and built by Black enslaved laborers—for the diocese.[184] This means the bishop would have had influence over McGill's primary education in addition to the personal influence he already enjoyed with the young man. As a student, McGill excelled,

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[182] Richard H. Clarke, *Lives of the Deceased Bishops of the Catholic Church in the United States* (New York: Richard H. Clarke, 1888), 3:81 and Ben. J. Webb, *The Centenary of Catholicity in Kentucky* (Louisville: Charles A. Rogers, 1884), 64. Though Philadelphia had outlawed slavery in 1780, the law provided for gradual emancipation and slavery certainly still existed (outright and in the form of minor indentured servitude) by the time of McGill's birth. This follows from the stipulations of the law, found in Pennsylvania General Assembly, *An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery*, 5th Assembly, Regular Session, 1780, Act 881. The two authors cite a difference with regard to Dougherty's national origin. Clarke claims she and James McGill married before travelling together to Philadelphia from Ireland; Webb asserts that McGill, Sr. immigrated first, met Lavinia in Philadelphia, and married her after settling in the United States. I side with Webb, given that he married Sarah, one of James and Lavinia's daughters. Webb, *Catholicity in Kentucky*, 64.

[183] Webb, *Catholicity in Kentucky*, 64. Of his father-in-law, James McGill, Webb writes, "He was a man of excellent natural abilities, and of much and varied acquired knowledge. So well was he informed in dogmatic theology that he was not only able to defend the principles of his own faith, but to expose, also, the inconsistencies and absurdities of opposing systems of religion." James McGill was a devoted member of the Bardstown congregation until his death in 1850.

[184] Clarke, *Lives of the Deceased Bishops*, 3:82.

graduating with "distinguished honor" in 1828, and his first career as a lawyer took him briefly to the legal bar in New Orleans for several months before he returned to practice law in Bardstown.[185] Once back in Kentucky, McGill, possibly encouraged by Flaget, decided to enter the diocesan St. Thomas Seminary in Bardstown (built and supported by the labor of Black slaves), receiving his holy orders in 1835.[186] Thus, by the time of his ordination at the age of twenty-five, McGill had witnessed racialized slavery firsthand for his entire life: possibly within his own family, certainly as practiced by his fellow Catholics in Philadelphia and Bardstown, likely on a professional basis as a lawyer in Louisiana and Kentucky, and most notably by his primary religious mentor, Bishop Flaget.

It is clear Fr. McGill continued to maintain a friendly relationship with the bishop, as he was selected in 1838 for a year-long European tour alongside Flaget, despite still being quite a junior priest in the diocese.[187] In Europe, McGill was reportedly impressed by the good reputation Flaget possessed, as well as the bishop's skill at appealing to European Catholic financial donors to support the needs of the diocese. A contemporary historian, Benjamin Webb, surmises McGill's mindset at the time: "It was something for the young priest to know that he was one of the comparatively few who owed direct spiritual allegiance to a bishop who was generally looked upon as a saint, and whose

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[185] Webb, *Catholicity in Kentucky*, 320–321. Clarke notes McGill was an effective lawyer and impressed many with his argumentative skill, Clarke, *Lives of the Deceased Bishops*, 3:82.

[186] Webb, *Catholicity in Kentucky*, 321.

[187] The young priest's fluency in several languages may have been a factor in his selection. Clarke describes this characteristic, though he claims that McGill's health "was impaired by confinement to his studies." and attributes his selection to that factor. Clarke, *Lives of the Deceased Bishops*, 3:83. McGill himself corroborates this, referencing the issue in a letter to his father: "The Rev. P. Kenrick will accompany us to Europe being like myself a seeker after health." John McGill to James McGill, June 13, 1838, in John McGill, "Rev. John McGill [Later Bishop of Richmond] To His Father, James McGill, Describing the City and Churches of Philadelphia," *The American Catholic Historical Researches* 15, no. 1 (1898): 43.

name was on the tongue of almost every one he met."[188] McGill viewed Flaget with reverence and respect; the bishop was a role model to the priest.

It is also clear the future Bishop of Richmond shared some of his role model's racist views, as the priest wrote to his father in 1838:

> Philadelphia while I was there was in great excitement, on account of the *Blacks*, the Quakers have become abolitionists, and a few weeks ago a mob burned the Pennsylvania Hall where the meetings were held, since that two whites have been assassinated by two different black men, the first black man was a lunatic, but the second, a deliberate villian [*sic*], owing to present excitement they almos [*sic*] had a row during Sunday and Monday nights, thousands were collected in the streets and the Military out, &c.[189]

McGill seems to scorn the Quakers' new stance, particularly the emphasis he places on "*Blacks*." He also references the destruction of Pennsylvania Hall, a venue in Philadelphia built by the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society and intended for use primarily by abolitionists, which was torched by a mob on May 17, 1838, only four days after it opened. The major protests began on May 16, with protesters crowding, shouting, and heckling outside the building during the day's various meetings of different antislavery activists; that evening, the mob escalated to sobering acts of violence, lobbing "several volleys of stones at the windows" and assaulting Black attendees seeking to depart the building following the antislavery meeting.[190] In the subsequent days, crowds attempted to set fire to the Shelter for Colored Orphans and attacked the African

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[188] Webb, *Catholicity in Kentucky*, 322.

[189] John McGill to James McGill, June 13, 1838, in McGill, "Describing the City," 44.

[190] Quote from *History of Pennsylvania Hall, which was Destroyed by a Mob, On the 17th of May, 1838* (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1838), 148. See also Ira V. Brown, "Racism and Sexism: The Case of Pennsylvania Hall," *Phylon* 37, no. 2 (1976): 130. Brown quotes a colonel in the state militia who was proud of the "pummelling" the crowd gave Black activists.

Methodist Mother Bethel Church as well.[191] McGill does not highlight any of these events, instead choosing to focus his attention on two unrelated murders of White men at the hands of "the *Blacks.*"[192] Nor does he express any shame at the fact that many members of these mobs were Irish immigrant dockworkers and shipwrights, and thus likely included many Catholics as well.[193] McGill's expressed racial animus towards Black Americans, likely already present in a general sense given the circumstances of his upbringing, was encouraged by the example of Bishop Flaget, his professional mentor and religious model.

These men—Carroll, Fenwick, DuBourg, and Flaget—were among the first bishops to serve in the United States, and, as in the case of John McGill, they set the precedents for their successors to follow. In an institution as hierarchically-centralized and tradition-focused as the Catholic Church, precedent is a very powerful tool to maintain continuity and inhibit change. The example set by the bishops encouraged the rest of the American hierarchy and lay Catholics to freely participate in the system of human bondage, even though the Church had already expressed reservations about the institution, as Miller contends, "The Catholic church was made up of slaveholders. Throughout the South individual priests, religious orders, and bishops, as holders of

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[191] "More Violence," *Public Ledger, and Daily Transcript*, May 19, 1838, and Brown, "The Case of Pennsylvania Hall," 132.

[192] The *Ledger* reported both of these murders. Henry Moore, a mentally-ill Black man, reportedly escaped from the "lunatic department" of the local alms-house and beat seventy-year-old John Batts to death on June 8, 1838. "A Dreadful Murder," *Public Ledger, and Daily Transcript*, June 9, 1838. Two days later, a Black man named James Williams murdered Francis McKearney over a dispute about a debt Williams owed. In the ensuing court case, Williams was found guilty of murder in the first degree. "Another Murder," *Public Ledger, and Daily Transcript*, June 11, 1838; "Court of Oyer and Terminer," *Public Ledger, and Daily Transcript*, September 24, 1838; and "The Verdict," *Public Ledger, and Daily Transcript*, September 24, 1838.

[193] Brown, "The Case of Pennsylvania Hall," 131.

diocesan property, owned slaves. They were personally involved in slavery on a daily basis."[194]

The argument made in this study could very well be considered reductionist—Catholics owned slaves and supported slavery, therefore Catholics approved of all the abuses inherent in American racial slavery. This would not be true, as lay and ordained Catholics opposed certain practices which were common experiences for slaves in America. For example, Catholic leaders and Catholic law codes generally insisted on the validity of slave marriages and likewise generally argued against the breakup of families (that Catholics violated those principles at times is also an important distinction). However, such an analysis would require a level of nuance beyond the scope of this study. As Miller notes, "Whatever the individual circumstances of slaveholding, the collective experience bound the church to the master class."[195] Fr. Davis's reflections on Catholic slaveholding in America are equally applicable, describing it as an inhumane snare "that sooner or later trapped everyone who participated in the ownership and buying and selling of human beings."[196] The leaders of the Church in America opened the door to a theological rift between their actions in favor of slavery and the pope's opposition to it. While Rome had taken some steps to provide moral guidance and instruction to its hierarchical leaders throughout the world to oppose slavery, it had yet to formally and publicly issue a definitive denunciation of the practice. By 1839, that was no longer the case.

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[194] Randall M. Miller, "Slaves and Southern Catholicism," in *Masters & Slaves in the House of the Lord: Race and Religion in the American South 1740–1870*, ed. John B. Boles (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 128.

[195] Miller, "Slaves and Southern Catholicism," 128.

[196] Davis, *The History of Black Catholics*, 37.

Convinced the papacy needed to make a more forceful statement against slavery and the still-ongoing transatlantic trade, Pope Gregory XVI issued his bull *In Supremo Apostolatus* in 1839. *In Supremo* sparked immediate controversy as various elements of American society argued whether the pope condemned only the slave trade or slavery itself.[197] Indeed, historians continue to debate the precise object (or objects) of Gregory's condemnation today.[198] However, a careful read of *In Supremo* reveals a papal condemnation which applies much more broadly than only the transatlantic trade.

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[197] American ethnic and religious historian Dr. John Quinn describes this controversy succinctly: "Gregory's pronouncement set off a debate both within and without the Catholic community in the United States. During the 1840's and '50's, it twice surfaced during presidential campaigns, was hotly debated by supporters of the Irish Repeal movement, and was hailed by the abolitionist leader Wendell Phillips. Even the Catholic bishops, who were very wary about making political pronouncements, were drawn into the fray. Indeed, as the Church's ranks swelled through immigration from Ireland and to a lesser extent from German states and made it America's largest religion, arguments raged over what it really taught about slavery. All the way up until the Civil War, abolitionists repeatedly put forward Gregory's letter when trying to make the case that the Catholic Church opposed slavery while most American Catholic leaders sought to interpret it in a narrow fashion so as to minimize its significance." John F. Quinn, "'Three Cheers for the Abolitionist Pope!': American Reaction to Gregory XVI's Condemnation of the Slave Trade, 1840–1860," *The Catholic Historical Review* 90, no. 1 (2004): 67–68.

[198] Several historians assert, as I do here, Gregory intended to condemn slavery as well as the slave trade. Some examples include: Davis, *The History of Black Catholics*, 40; Quinn, "Three Cheers," 71; Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440–1870* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 666; Robert Emmett Curran, *Shaping American Catholicism: Maryland and New York, 1805–1915* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 92; Suzanne Krebsbach, "Rome's Response to Slavery in the United States," *The Catholic Historical Review* 105, no. 2 (2019): 327–344; Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 115; and Claudia Carlen, *Benedict XIV to Paul VI*, vol. 1 of *Papal Pronouncements, A Guide: 1740–1978* (Ann Arbor, MI: The Piernan Press, 1990), 27.

Historical arguments which assert the pope went beyond a condemnation of the slave trade but stopped short of a full condemnation of slavery include: Maria Genoino Caravaglios, *The American Catholic Church and the Negro Problem in the XVIII–XIX Centuries*, ed. Ernest L. Unterkoefler (Rome: Caravaglios, 1974), 133–135; Kenneth J. Zanca, ed., *American Catholics and Slavery, 1789–1866: An Anthology of Primary Documents* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 27; and Ronald Lamarr Sharps, "Black Catholics in the United States: A Historical Chronology, 1452–2020," in *Black Catholic Studies Reader*, ed. David J. Endres (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 32.

Arguments against any interpretation of Gregory's condemnation beyond the slave trade include: Adiele, *Transatlantic Enslavement*, 398–405; John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 50; Richard R. Duncan, "Catholics and the Church in the Antebellum Upper South," in *Catholics in the Old South: Essays on Church and Culture*, eds. Randall M. Miller and Jon L. Wakelyn (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1983), 87; Andrew H. M. Stern, *Southern Crucifix, Southern Cross: Catholic-Protestant Relations in the Old South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 149; and Gracjan Kraszewski, *Catholic Confederates: Faith and Duty in the Civil War South* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2020), 8.

Pope Gregory XVI organizes *In Supremo Apostolatus* along four main lines of discussion. The first two sentences of the bull establish the two main points of the pope's message: slavery is inhumane and Catholics must cease participation in the trade of slaves. "We have judged" he wrote, "to turn away the Faithful from the inhuman slave trade in Negroes and all other men." This certainly seems to apply only to the trade; however, he indicated the immorality of slavery itself with the next sentence: "these miserable people, who in such great numbers,…fell into very cruel slavery". Cruelty and goodness being incompatible, the pope's characterization of racialized slavery as cruel is morally significant. Gregory then recounted a brief history of the cultural understanding of slavery within the Church from the times of the Apostles to the Middle Ages and described how this tradition had changed from tolerating slavery as a societal necessity to viewing it as an archaic and un-Christian system. He postulated, since "Our Lord Jesus Christ had declared that He considered as done or refused to Himself everything kind and merciful done or refused to the small and needy, it naturally follows, not only that Christians should regard as their brothers their slaves…but that they should be more inclined to set free those who merited it."[199] Indeed, he further argued the slavery of former times was a product of paganism and barbarism and that once Christianity had "dissipated" and "softened" (respectively) these disordered influences, Europeans ceased to enslave other Europeans, because they viewed themselves as Christian brothers. In so doing, he primes the reader to consider that African slaves, the majority of whom are baptized, are the images of Christ and are the Christian brothers of their owners. Furthermore, he implies that to oppose such an understanding is to side with the ideology

[199] Gregory XVI, *In Supremo Apostolatus: Condemning the Slave Trade*, Papal Bull, December 3, 1839, https://www.papalencyclicals.net/Greg16/g16sup.htm (accessed January 12, 2022).

of the pagan and the barbarian. He illustrated this by describing as "unworthy" the actions of those Christians who, "shamefully blinded by the desire of sordid gain," are guilty of enslaving "Indians, negroes and other wretched peoples," as well as "instituting or developing the trade in those who had been made slaves by others."[200] Once again, Gregory takes aim not only at the slave trade, but at avaricious slave owners as well.

The pope then summarized the various papal actions against slavery, including each of those cited above. He agreed with his predecessors in blaming "this way of acting as dangerous for the spiritual welfare of those engaged in the traffic and a shame to the Christian name". Though this statement seems to be restricted to the trade itself, it is easily applicable to the ownership of slaves as well. Gregory then chose to paraphrase *Commissum Nobis* of Pope Urban VIII, recounting in his own words that Urban forbade Christians not only from forcing American Indians into slavery, but also declared it morally wrong:

> to sell them, buy them, exchange them or give them, separate them from their wives and children, despoil them of their goods and properties, conduct or transport them into other regions, or deprive them of liberty in any way whatsoever, retain them in servitude, or lend counsel, succour, favour and co-operation to those so acting, under no matter what pretext or excuse, or who proclaim and teach that this way of acting is allowable and co-operate in any manner whatever in the practices indicated.[201]

Gregory's recapitulation of Urban's statement is especially noteworthy as that is the only other bull from which the pope directly quotes in his own writing. Additionally, consider the way in which Pope Gregory reminds the reader his predecessor had condemned Indian slavery: rather than merely stating that fact, he chooses to identify in detail the specific illicit and immoral practices which the Church opposed. Given the shift in focus

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[200] Gregory XVI, *In Supremo*.

[201] Gregory XVI, *In Supremo*.

from American Indian slavery to African slavery, this adds credence to the interpretation Gregory was not limiting his condemnation to the slave trade alone. He summarized the previous papal actions by asserting Rome had done much "to protect the Indians and the other people mentioned against the cruelty of the invaders" while also acknowledging this success remained incomplete.

The final thrust of *In Supremo* is Gregory's summation of the preceding arguments and his directives to the Church. "Desiring to remove such a shame from all the Christian nations," Gregory wrote, let no one "dare to vex anyone, despoil him of his possessions, reduce to servitude, or lend aid and favour to those who give themselves up to these practices, or exercise that inhuman traffic". Once again, Gregory mentions the slave trade separately from other descriptions of slavery itself. The pope then explicitly recognized the dignity and humanity of Africans, writing that slavery treats them "as if they were not men but rather animals," and the institutional parameters of slavery—that is, being "bought, sold, and devoted sometimes to the hardest labour"—are by their nature and "without any distinction, in contempt of the rights of justice and humanity". Finally, Gregory denounced slavery and the slave trade in two distinct declarations:

> We reprove, then, by virtue of Our Apostolic Authority, all the practices abovementioned as absolutely unworthy of the Christian name. By the same Authority We prohibit and strictly forbid any Ecclesiastic or lay person from presuming to defend as permissible this traffic in Blacks under no matter what pretext or excuse, or from publishing or teaching in any manner whatsoever, in public or privately, opinions contrary to what We have set forth in this Apostolic Letter.[202]

In Supremo Apostolatus was the most strongly-worded and harshest attack against slavery to come from the papacy. It sent shockwaves through the Catholic hierarchy in

[202] Gregory XVI, *In Supremo*.

America, as the bishops in the United States had developed an intertwined relationship with slavery, which was at all times political and in some cases personal as well.

As the papacy became more explicit in its disapproval and condemnation of slavery, American bishops became more defensive in their support of it, exacerbating the theological divide. Bishop John England (Diocese of Charleston, 1820–1842) provided a rebuttal to Pope Gregory XVI's *In Supremo* by way of a series of letters to the U.S. Secretary of State; the letters were originally published in *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*, England's diocesan newspaper, but were collected together and republished following the bishop's sudden death in 1842.[203] Eventually writing eighteen letters in total, Bishop England's letters formed the dominant theological justification for American Catholic support of slavery, and represent the intellectual foundation of the divergent theology of slavery adopted by Southern Catholics. The bishop uses a selective read of *In Supremo* in his counterargument, enabling him to focus his attacks on certain parts of the letter while ignoring others. The first two letters form the core of England's rebuttal.[204]

In the first letter, written September 29, 1840, England contended Pope Gregory, and the preceding popes whose writings Gregory referenced, wrote about the transatlantic slave trade alone and not about domestic slavery within individual countries. England

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[203] John England, *Letters of the Late Bishop England to the Hon. John Forsyth, on the Subject of Domestic Slavery: to Which are Prefixed Copies, in Latin and English, of the Pope's Apostolic Letter, Concerning the African Slave Trade, with Some Introductory Remarks, etc.* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1844). On August 29, 1840 Forsyth had given a speech in Georgia as part of President Van Buren's re-election campaign, during which he castigated the Whigs under William Henry Harrison as an antislavery threat to southerners. In addition to the domestic political forces arraying against "those domestic institutions with which are inseparably connected the harmony of the union," Forsyth also identified several foreign efforts to act against slavery, including Pope Gregory XVI's bull. John Forsyth, "Address to the People of Georgia," *Niles' National Register*, September 26, 1840.

[204] The remaining sixteen letters consist of an ambitious, eloquent, and, ultimately, unfinished defense of slavery on canonical and historical grounds, from the time of Abraham of old through the year 1000 in Europe. The compiled letters also include the full text of *In Supremo* in both Latin and English. England died of illness before completing the project, which he intended to extend through contemporary times.

asserted there was a "distinction between the "Slave Trade," as prohibited in the United States,…and the continuance of "domestic slavery" in any of the states by the authority of that state,…The Pope neither mentions nor alludes to this latter in his Apostolic letter which is directed, as were those of his predecessors, solely and exclusively against the former.[205] In this he is of course partially correct, as Gregory did condemn the transatlantic trade quite explicitly in the bull. However, England is wrong about the previous popes, who generally focused on local and regional forms of enslavement while laying the moral foundation for Gregory's condemnation of African slavery. Furthermore, in his references to *In Supremo,* England omitted or discounted Gregory's more general emphasis on slavery's evils. When, for example, Gregory condemned those who "sell them [meaning enslaved persons], buy them, exchange them or give them, separate them from their wives and children,"[206] England interpreted that as limited to "the African chieftains" who captured those "persons previously free," and thus not applying to the "domestic slaves" already present in the United States.[207] When the pope condemned those who "despoil [slaves] of their goods and properties…or deprive them of liberty in any way whatsoever,"[208] England rebutted that slaves in America have no possessions from which they could be despoiled and no liberty from which they could be deprived, for it was illegal for slaves to own property and American slaves were never

[205] England, *Letters of the Late Bishop England*, 16.

[206] Gregory XVI, *In Supremo*.

[207] England, *Letters of the Late Bishop England*, 17–18.

[208] Gregory XVI, *In Supremo*.

free, as they were born into slavery.[209] By narrowly interpreting certain portions of *In Supremo,* Bishop England re-characterized Pope Gregory's disavowal of slavery as a condemnation of the slave trade alone.

In the second letter, England asserted Gregory's condemnation did not apply to slavery in the United States, and the bishop defended American racialized slavery as morally acceptable using biblical and historical references. The bishop argued the pope's letter was really directed against the governments of Spain and Portugal, who continued to engage in the transatlantic trade long after most other countries had outlawed it.[210] Gregory's words do not support this assertion, however, as he specified the entire Church as his audience in the bull multiple times.[211] Bishop England then urged his audience to consider that *In Supremo* was read and accepted by the American bishops at the Fourth Provincial Council of Baltimore earlier that year, yet none of the thirteen bishops present (including the seven who owned slaves themselves or shepherded Catholics who did) expressed any dissent with Gregory's position, which England maintained was against the transatlantic trade alone.[212] This, he argued, indicated those responsible for leading the faithful and who were, moreover, the experts of Catholic doctrine, saw no qualms about continuing to support American slavery after reading *In Supremo.* England's

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[209] England, *Letters of the Late Bishop England*, 17. "because in the canon law as well as in the civil law, the *maneipium* or "domestic slave," had no property or possession, except what was permitted to him as a *peculium* or allowance."

[210] England, *Letters of the Late Bishop England*, 21.

[211] Three such examples include (emphasis added): "We have judged that it belonged to Our pastoral solicitude to exert Ourselves to turn away *the Faithful*"; "We warn and adjure earnestly in the Lord *faithful Christians of every condition*"; "We prohibit and strictly forbid *any Ecclesiastic or lay person* from presuming to defend". Gregory XVI, *In Supremo*. This is also in sharp contrast to other papal actions against slavery, which popes addressed to specific bishops or other persons of authority.

[212] England, *Letters of the Late Bishop England*, 19–20.

reference to the recent council is particularly shrewd, as he was partially responsible for the bishops' quiet acceptance of the papal bull.

Historian John Quinn demonstrates England worked with other Southern bishops to neutralize any potential controversy around the bull; during the council, the letter was merely read (in Latin) at the end of a requiem Mass for a deceased bishop with no time allocated for open discussion of the bull, and England himself delivered five sermons throughout the week-long council—including one prior to the reading of *In Supremo* "on the unchanged and unchangeable doctrine of the Church."[213] Thus, Bishop England's reference of the council's acquiescence to the bull as proof of Gregory's focus only on the slave trade does not convey to his public audience that the letter was never discussed by the bishops at the council at all, and that, when the bishops did listen to the reading of the Pope Gregory's bull, they did so in Latin and at the end of a long funeral Mass, further dissuading any spontaneous discussion about the contents of the bull.

Having warded off the applicability of *In Supremo* to what he terms "domestic slavery," Bishop England initiated an open defense of the American system of racialized slavery. Using scriptural and theological references, he relayed to his reader the Catholic tradition which allowed "voluntary slavery," or the sacrificing of one's own freedom, and

[213] Peter Guilday, *A History of the Councils of Baltimore (1791–1884)* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932), 122. This is a historical connection also made by historian Dr. Joseph Capizzi in his important dissertation, "A Development of Doctrine: The Challenge of Slavery to Moral Theology" (PhD Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1998), 224. Quinn demonstrates that, prior to the council, Archbishop Samuel Eccleston of Baltimore (responsible for the slave states of Maryland and Virginia), was concerned about the bull's impact on Southern Catholics. Quinn, "Three Cheers," 74. Eccleston met with several Southern bishops in a private meeting the day before the council. Guilday, *Councils of Baltimore*, 121. Eccleston set the schedule of events, including giving England an unusually large amount of preaching time and avoiding discussion of *In Supremo*. Quinn, "Three Cheers," 75.

asserted since the Church allowed this form of slavery, the Church cannot be antislavery.[214] He extended his argument further by citing the "benefits" of slavery:

> The situation of a slave, under a humane master, insures to him, food, raiment and dwelling, together with a variety of little comforts; it relieves him from the apprehensions of neglect in sickness, from all solicitude for the support of his family, and in return, all that is required is fidelity and moderate labor. I do not deny that slavery has its evils, but the above are no despicable benefits.[215]

By characterizing American racialized, perpetual slavery as beneficial, Bishop England discounted Pope Gregory XVI's descriptions of slavery as "cruel" and "inhuman," as well as the pope's insistence on "the rights of justice and humanity" Africans possess.[216] Bishop England's letters espoused what became the established position of the American hierarchy, that slavery was not only morally licit, but it could even be beneficial.

The theological divide with Rome deepened as the country inched closer to Civil War. Bishop Francis Patrick Kenrick (Diocese of Philadelphia, 1842–1851 and Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1851–1863) asserted the morality of American slavery in his *Theologia Moralis*, a moral philosophy textbook first published in 1841: "Indeed they sin who by force take unwilling men as slaves, but it does not seem unjust to hold the descendants of these slaves in slavery, namely, a condition in which they were born and which they are not able to leave."[217] Building upon these foundations, Bishop Augustin Verot (Diocese of Savannah, 1861–1870 and Diocese of St. Augustine, 1870–1876) defended the moral righteousness of slavery in a sermon on January 4, 1861, claiming: "it

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[214] England, *Letters of the Late Bishop England*, 22.

[215] England, *Letters of the Late Bishop England*, 23.

[216] Gregory XVI, *In Supremo*.

[217] Francis Patrick Kenrick, quoted in Hugh J. Nolan, *The Most Reverend Francis Patrick Kenrick, Third Bishop of Philadelphia: 1830–1851* (Philadelphia: American Catholic Historical Society, 1948), 242. See also Joseph D. Brokhage, *Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1955), 235–243.

is domestic Slavery which we advocate to be lawful, and to have the sanction of God himself".[218] Bishop Auguste Martin (Diocese of Natchitoches, 1853–1875) went further, arguing in a letter to his flock in August 1861 it pleased God to see Black people in bondage: "The manifest will of God is that, in exchange for a freedom which they [slaves] are unable to defend and which will kill them, and in return for a lifetime of work, we must give these unfortunate people not only the bread and the clothes necessary to their material life but also, and especially their just share of truth and of the goods of grace".[219] The leaders of the Catholic hierarchy in the United States had developed a divergent view of the morality of slavery in spite of the condemnation from the pope, a view which originated in Catholic bishops' participation in the slave system, which developed alongside the growth of Catholicism in the country, and which was defended by prominent clergymen in publicized theological arguments.

Not only were bishops supporters of (and participants in) slavery as a practice, they also actively opposed the American abolitionist movement. Abolitionists were often steadfast opponents of the Catholic Church, and bishops felt no draw to antislavery arguments from the same people who denounced them as participating in a "fraudulent, treacherous, cruel, malignant, and diabolical system that is conspiring against this country

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[218] Augustin Verot, *A Tract for the Times. Slavery & Abolitionism, being the Substance of a Sermon, Preached in the Church of St. Augustine, Florida, on this 4th Day of January, 1861, Day of Public Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer* (New Orleans: Catholic Propagator, 1861), 15–16.

[219] Davis and Phelps, *"Stamped with the Image of God"*, 35–38. Ironically, it was only after the publication of Verot's and Martin's inflammatory remarks that the Holy Office issued an opinion on American slavery. In 1864, Rome advised the offending bishops that racial differences are irrelevant on a moral scale, slavery was a violation of natural law, and American chattel slavery was just as immoral as the original enslavement of Africans. The Holy Office cited Pope Gregory XVI's *In Supremo* in their responses to the bishops. Krebsbach, "Rome's Response to Slavery," 342–343.

and against humanity".[220] Catholic immigrants had little reason to support abolition as well, not only because they believed free Blacks would compete with them for precious jobs, but also as a reaction to the anti-Catholic bigotry so prevalent in the movement. Quinn asserts Irish immigrants in particular were fearful of workforce competition.[221] A Catholic periodical described the antipathy of Irish immigrants toward abolitionists:

> The Irish did *not* fraternize with the Democratic party because a large number of the leaders and supporters of it were slave holders; but on account of its friendship for them, its enmity towards their enemies. When has the Whig, Anti-slavery or Republican party treated the Irish-born citizens with ordinary courtesy? The organs of these parties persistently abused them for their ignorance, and slandered the Church of their fathers. They were never safe from calumny, and still they were expected to vote and shout for those who erected a barrier between themselves and the Irish.[222]

More wealthy lay Catholics (particularly Southern slave owners) saw no reason to deviate from the *status quo* as well, particularly in light of the defense of slavery's morality provided by American clergymen. In general, White Catholics across the country were wary about upsetting the established social order.[223] Whatever merit Catholics may have seen in the moral arguments of abolitionism was drowned out by the

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[220] Edward Beecher, *The Papal Conspiracy Exposed, and Protestantism Defended, in the Light of Reason, History, and Scripture* (Boston: Stearns & Co., 1855), 108–109.

[221] Quinn, "Three Cheers," 92–93.

[222] "The Irish and Slavery," *The Catholic Telegraph*, May 4, 1864, 148.

[223] I make the racial distinction here, as Black Catholics likely had much stronger opinions against slavery than their much more numerous White brothers and sisters in faith. Noll makes an insightful argument that Catholics were averse to supporting abolition because of its inherent opposition to the law, which they associated with Protestant radicalism in Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, 103. As another historian describes, with regards to slavery: "Most bishops occupied a middle ground that valued peace over justice". David J. Endres, "Rectifying the Fatal Contrast: Archbishop John Purcell and the Slavery Controversy among Catholics in Civil War Cincinnati," *Ohio Valley History* 2, no. 2 (2002): 26.

anti-Catholic rhetoric of many abolitionists, and, ultimately, most American Catholics viewed slavery as a political issue first and a moral issue second.[224]

Virginia's Catholics had no qualms about supporting slavery, upholding the rights of enslavers in their congregations, and opposing the abolitionist movement. In 1835, Richmond's Catholics listened to an evening sermon given by Jesuit Fr. James Ryder, who spoke on slavery and abolition. Ryder insisted the two systems were incompatible, and challenged any would-be Catholic abolitionists:

> I would ask them, what possible advantage they can anticipate from the spread of their favorite system of Abolition? Can they hope to better the condition of the slave? Let them look to the disgusting state of morals among the colored free in the Northern cities—where they are, for the greater part, a nuisance to the white population in almost every department of life; and then let them look to the peaceful, and contented, and secure condition of the Southern slave, under the gentle sway of an upright master. Here the slave has a home—he is clothed, maintained, and protected by his master, who looks upon him as a portion of his family—in sickness he is attended with medical aid, and frequently solaced by the maternal kindness of his compassionate mistress. His sickness and sufferings are a loss to his owners, and it is their interest to relieve him if they can. Nothing of this falls to the lot of the freed man of color, who must depend on his own resources for the sustenance of life. Where, then, is the humanity of driving the slave to seek for misery by a change of condition?[225]

The prelates assigned to Virginia reflected the attitudes of their congregations. Bishop Richard Whelan (Diocese of Richmond, 1841–1850 and Diocese of Wheeling, 1850–1874) likely used slave labor in his efforts to expand Church infrastructure throughout the commonwealth, with one source noting Whelan's "labors in building up

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[224] Miller makes a similar but distinct point in his study of Catholicism and slavery in the South: "American Catholic churchmen deemed slavery a political, rather than a moral, issue." Miller, "Slaves and Southern Catholicism," 130. It is not clear that clergy examined slavery exclusively as a matter of politics. There is ample evidence to show that Catholic leaders viewed slavery in moral terms, but Miller is correct in that those views were shaped by political realities. Additionally, while Miller does note the characteristics of Catholic sympathy towards slavery in America, he does not emphasize how the position of the institutional Church had changed to abandon its previous support of the practice. A brief inclusion of Gregory XVI's *In Supremo* and its implications in his chapter would have alleviated this shortcoming.

[225] James Ryder, untitled remarks, *Richmond Enquirer*, September 4, 1835. This could be the same Jesuit Fr. Ryder that Father McGill references in his letter to his father in 1838, who gave a sermon at a special evening service at St. Mary's. John McGill to James McGill, June 13, 1838, in McGill, "Describing the City," 43. See Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 68–69 for more information on Fr. Ryder.

Catholicity and erecting churches, schools, and asylums" while also recognizing the bishop's diocese relied heavily on slave labor.[226] On the eve of the Civil War, Whelan wrote to Archbishop Hughes (Archdiocese of New York, 1842–1864) to encourage him to keep Catholics out of the Union army; in their correspondence, Whelan argues Catholics should not sacrifice their lives for the sake of "their most deadly enemies, abolitionists".[227]

Bishop Whelan's successor in Richmond, Bishop John McGill (Diocese of Richmond, 1850–1872), maintained the rights of Catholics to own slaves as well as the morality of the institution itself, and also opposed abolitionism. McGill was well-versed in Catholic theology; indeed, he wrote two major works about the Church and its teachings and did not shy away from public debate regarding the Catholic Church.[228] He was involved in at least two debates between Catholics and Protestants, including a conflict with Rev. James Craik about the origins of the Church of England and as a member of a group of Catholic leaders who opposed a Protestant "anti-popery League" in 1844. Fogarty attributes the prominence of these debates and McGill's skill in defense of Catholicism as a contributing factor in his selection as a bishop.[229]

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[226] "Death of Bishop Whelan," *The Pilot*, July 18, 1874.

[227] Charles P. Connor, "The Northern Catholic Position on Slavery and the Civil War: Archbishop Hughes as a Test Case," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 96, no. 1/4 (1985): 39–40.

[228] In *The True Church,* McGill offers a defense of the Catholic Church as morally and theologically superior to the various Protestant denominations; see John McGill, *The True Church, indicated to the inquirer* (Louisville: B.J. Webb & Brother: 1844). In *Our Faith, the Victory,* the bishop provides an analysis of the entirety of Catholic doctrine itself; see John McGill, *Our Faith, the Victory: or, a Comprehensive View of the Principal Doctrines of the Christian Religion* (Baltimore: Kelly & Piet, 1865).

[229] Robert Gorman, *Catholic Apologetic Literature in the United States (1784–1858)* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of American Press, 1939), 128, and Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 101.

McGill would have undoubtedly followed the theological discussion surrounding the interpretation of Pope Gregory XVI's *In Supremo,* including the arguments of Bishops England and Kenrick. Given his own intellectual ability and his formative upbringing amidst slavery, it is no surprise he threw his support alongside his fellow Catholic clergy to defend the morality of slavery. As one historian notes, "Bishop McGill was prominent in the South as a fearless leader of Catholic thought, a veritable intellectual giant, being exceeded in depth of mind and general learning possibly by only one of the American bishops before his time—the renowned Bishop John England, of Charleston (1786–1842), whom he also resembled in many other respects."[230]

By the start of the American Civil War, the Catholic Church had taken a moral stance against slavery, yet in the United States, Catholic leaders opposed this position and supported the American system of racialized slavery. Bishops, including Virginia's bishops, led by example in both word and deed to demonstrate their belief in the morality of the institution. "Justice is on the side of the South" McGill wrote to a fellow bishop in May, 1861.[231] Having established a moral defense of slavery, Bishop McGill and his fellow American prelates had sanctioned a theological divide between themselves and the Supreme Pontiff in Rome. The discrepancy on the slavery question was one of several major issues of ideological and theological conflict between American prelates and the pope which had developed over time but which was becoming more frequent, more serious, and more apparent by the mid-1800s. Rome had been taking notice and took

[230] Joseph Magri, "Catholicity in Virginia during the Episcopate of Bishop McGill," *The Catholic Historical Review* 2, no. 4 (1917): 415. This is obviously a sentiment very sympathetic to the views of both McGill and England, but it is noteworthy due to the historical recognition of Bishop McGill as a sort of intellectual successor to Bishop England.

[231] Quoted in Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism,* 147–148.

action before the end of the century with Pope Leo XIII's *Testem Benevolentiae Nostrae.* Rome's actions, however, would not take place until decades after the end of the Civil War, and thus came far too late to influence Southern support for the Confederacy. This examination will now turn to how the American Catholic moral justification of slavery enabled Catholics to demonstrate their patriotism and loyalty to their Protestant neighbors in the South.

VI. "PRACTICAL PATRIOTISM" IN A TIME OF REBELLION

In May 1852, American bishops met in Baltimore for the country's first plenary council.[232] The council took place over the course of eleven days, during which the prelates discussed matters of Church administration relating to the massive increase in Catholic immigrants, including standardizing the various practices and liturgical customs brought from Europe and resolving to develop the parochial school system, among others. At the conclusion of the council, the assembled bishops wrote a unified pastoral letter to all the congregants within their dioceses, summarizing the results of their deliberations together. Included in that letter was an exhortation that Catholics would demonstrate their loyalty as American citizens:

> Show your attachment to the institutions of our beloved country by prompt compliance with all their requirements, and by the cautious jealousy with which you guard against the least deviation from the rules which they prescribe for the maintenance of public order and private rights. Thus will you refute the idle babbling of foolish men, and will best approve yourselves worthy of the privileges which you enjoy, and overcome, by the sure test of practical patriotism, all the prejudices which a misapprehension of your principles but too often produces.[233]

The shepherds of the Church in the United States wanted to be clear: American Catholics have to work harder to overcome suspicion and prejudice, and patriotism is the remedy for anti-Catholicism.

The bishops had ample reason to encourage their flocks in this manner. In the mid-nineteenth century, massive waves of European immigrants—many of whom were poor and Catholic—arrived in the United States, sparking renewed anti-Catholicism

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[232] Plenary councils include bishops from several provinces and usually encompass an entire country.

[233] Francis Patrick Kenrick, "The Pastoral Letter of 1852," in *The National Pastorals of the American Hierarchy (1792–1919)*, ed. Peter Guilday (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1954), 192.

throughout the country. Therefore, by the time of the Civil War, many Catholics in America saw the opportunity to fight as a litmus test of their patriotism and a chance to prove their loyalty to the country. Just as American bishops had provided a moral framework with which to endorse slavery, so too did they rally their congregations to support the South in the name of patriotism.

While the anti-Catholic threat had taken on a new face and political vibrancy (in the forms of the Know Nothings and the American Party) by the 1850s, Southern bishops had become adept at accommodating with local society as much as they could, which proved instrumental in defusing potentially volatile incidents. Throughout the middle of the century, prelates urged the Catholics within their dioceses to represent themselves well as citizens, with instructions similar to the bishops' letter at the start of this section. Archbishop Samuel Eccleston (Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1834–1851) issued pastoral letters from several provincial councils to the Catholics of the United States in the decades preceding the Civil War which reinforced that theme. In 1837, he wrote, "we owe civil and political allegiance to the several States in which we reside, and also, to our general government."[234] Catholics were to be model citizens, and so by their example refute the arguments which attacked their faith and their loyalty. In 1840, Eccleston advised further that Catholics "avoid the contaminating influence of political strife, keep yourselves aloof from the pestilential atmosphere in which honor, virtue, patriotism and

[234] Samuel Eccleston, "The Pastoral Letter of 1837," in Guilday, *National Pastorals,* 90–91. Eccleston, writing for the assembled bishops, continues, "When, therefore, using our undoubted right, we acknowledge the spiritual and ecclesiastical supremacy of the chief bishop of our universal church, the Pope or bishop of Rome, we do not thereby forfeit our claim to the civil and political protection of the commonwealth; for, we do not detract from the allegiance to which the temporal governments are plainly entitled, and which we cheerfully give; nor do we acknowledge any civil or political supremacy, or power over us in any foreign potentate or power, though that potentate might be the chief pastor of our church." Guilday suspects that this letter, though signed first by Eccleston, may have actually been written by England. Guilday, *National Pastorals*, 150.

religion perish; and be assured that our republic never can be respected abroad, nor sustained at home, save by an uncompromising adherence to honor, to virtue, to patriotism and to religion."[235] Here, the bishops exhort the faithful to refrain from inciting political controversy; the prelates even exemplified this directive in their conduct during the council when they bypassed discussion and debate on Pope Gregory XVI's antislavery bull, *In Supremo Apostolatus*.

Archbishop Eccleston, Bishop England, and the other Southern bishops had good reason to anticipate controversy in the United States over the pope's bull. Following the failure of Nat Turner's 1831 slave rebellion, Virginia's Catholics were suspected of supporting abolitionist efforts. At the request of the Committee of Vigilance, Richmond's Catholics met at their parish church of St. Peter's to issue a response to the allegation, reassuring their fellow Americans "That we hold as an enemy to this Commonwealth, any and every individual, who directly or indirectly, aids in this unholy crusade against the rights of property and the sanctity of the social order."[236] The parishioners further stipulated "That while we view slavery in the abstract, as an evil, we hold it to be our first duty as Christians and citizens, to support the civil institutions of our country."[237] Richmond's Catholics chose to publicly display their loyalty to the slaveholding cause, demonstrating to their Protestant neighbors their worthiness as Americans and Southerners.

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[235] Eccleston, "The Pastoral Letter of 1840," in Guilday, *National Pastorals,* 143. Here again, Guilday theorizes England may have written this letter. Guilday, *National Pastorals,* 150.

[236] John A. Chevallié and James Herron, "Meeting of the Roman Catholic Congregation of the city of Richmond and county of Henrico," *Richmond Enquirer*, September 4, 1835.

[237] Chevallié and Herron, "Meeting of the Roman Catholic Congregation," *Richmond Enquirer*, September 4, 1835. Fr. Ryder's sermon against abolition occurred after this meeting.

In the summer of 1835, a proslavery mob threatened to destroy the Catholic church and convent in Charleston, South Carolina, and even kill Bishop England because he had opened a diocesan school for free Black Americans earlier that year. England closed the school to appease the rioters, and even successfully lobbied for a Protestant school for free Blacks to close as well.[238] To Southerners, this incident demonstrated England's loyalty to the South and its institutions, and reassured them the Church supported the racial hierarchy of the slave society.[239] *In Supremo* had the potential to realign the political allegiance of the American Catholic Church definitively away from slaveowning interests. Southern nativists were keenly aware of this threat. One newspaper, after (erroneously) noting all the bishops in attendance at the council were European-born, issued a dire warning:

> Thus we perceive that a tremendous and overshadowing foreign hierarchy have taken possession of our land, with millions of foreign fanatics under their absolute control, and that each of these Papal dignitaries is sworn to exercise implicit obedience to the papal mandate, and that according to the papal Bull which we published in our last paper, *that* mandate is to put down slavery in all lands. What have they to do but to wave that fearful edict, (which we doubt not has been concocted to foster the sectional divisions in our country on the subject of slavery,) and thus to promote the success of the foreign conspiracy against our republican government, to which we have so often alluded.[240]

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[238] Dennis C. Rousey, "Catholics in the Old South: Their Population, Institutional Development, and Relations with Protestants," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 24, no. 4 (2006): 11. Bishop England, seeking to secure equitable treatment with Protestants, insisted that the Protestant schools for former slaves and freemen also be closed down.

[239] To Black Catholics, of course, England's betrayal was a sharp reminder that in the eyes of their Church, they were Black first and Catholic second. As a further insult, England even *thanked* the state government for allowing him to open up an additional convent and another school following his closure of the school for Black children: "But we owe special acknowledgment to the Legislature of South Carolina, for having, at the very crisis of this delusion, and disregarding the cabals of our opponents, done us the justice of incorporating those two institutions to which I have drawn your attention." John England, "Address to the Thirteenth Convention of S. Carolina," January 22, 1837, in *The Works of the Right Rev. John England, First Bishop of Charleston*, ed. Ignatius Aloysius Reynolds (Baltimore: John Murphy & Co., 1849), 4:362.

[240] "Fourth Provincial Council of the Papal Bishops of the United States," *The Baltimore Literary and Religious Magazine*, August, 1840, 388. The magazine was quoting the New Orleans *Native American*

The bishops understood that Southerners, already suspicious of the foreign influence and immigrant character of the Church, would turn against Catholics if they abandoned slavery. The American hierarchy had invested so much effort towards defending human bondage in practical and theological terms because overtly expressed support for slavery was a basic requirement to participate in Southern politics. To withdraw that support, the cornerstone of the Catholic-Southern alliance, would confirm Catholics were indeed the disloyal, foreign-born, and villainous papists anti-Catholic nativists frantically warned about for over a decade.

The bishops attempted to navigate these waters by encouraging their flocks to be quiet patriots and loyal Americans who follow the laws. They wrote in 1843 that the lay Catholic is the key to the ultimate defeat of nativism: "Your strict integrity in the daily concerns of life,…your obedience to the laws, your respect for the public functionaries,…in fine, your sincere virtue will confound those vain men whose ingenuity and industry are exerted to cast suspicion on our principles, and evoke against us all the worst passions of human nature."[241] They repeated the exhortation in 1846: "Continue to practise [*sic*] justice and charity towards all your fellow citizens; respect the magistrates, observe the laws, shun tumult and disorder…Thus you will put to shame the calumniators of our faith, and vindicate it more effectually than by any abstract

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newspaper, but the Maryland editor added his own comment: "We believe Mr. Eccleston is an American; as to the rest, the *Native American* is right enough." This indicates the presence of nativist influence even within decidedly Catholic strongholds such as New Orleans and Baltimore. As a corrective note, the nativist press also misidentified as "foreigners" Bishops Benedict Fenwick of Boston and Pius Miles of Nashville, who were both born in Maryland.

[241] Eccleston, "The Pastoral Letter of 1843," in Guilday, *National Pastorals*, 154.

profession or disclaimer."[242] The faithful Catholic, in the bishops' view, was the loyal Catholic.

Bishops' efforts to morally justify slavery were critical in blunting the effectiveness of anti-Catholic movements in the South; in fact, their work was directly cited by several high-profile Southern Protestants who stepped forward to defend Catholics from nativist attacks. In 1854, former U.S. President John Tyler wrote to his son, Robert, about the Know Nothings: "The Catholics seem especially obnoxious to them, whereas that sect seems to me to have been particularly faithful to the Constitution."[243] This is a reference to the Church's support of Southern slavery, a point future Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens made more directly in an 1855 address: "as a church they have never warred against us or our peculiar institutions. No man can say as much of the New England Baptists, Presbyterians or Methodists; the long role of abolition petitions with which Congress has been so much excited and agitated for years past come not from the Catholics; their pulpits in the North are not desecrated every Sabbath with anathemas against slavery."[244] Catholic apologetics produced during this time, particularly those of Bishop Martin John Spalding (Diocese of Louisville, 1850–1864 and Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1864–1872), also served to counter anti-Catholic misinformation and, unlike the intra-Church pastoral letters of the bishops, were

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[242] Eccleston, "The Pastoral Letter of 1846," in Guilday, *National Pastorals*, 166. The bishops also remind their flocks: "the obedience due to the Vicar of the Saviour [that is, the Pope] is in no way inconsistent with your civil allegiance, your social duties as citizens, or your rights as men….we have always taught you to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, to God the things that are God's. Be not, then, heedful of the misrepresentations of foolish men, who, unable to combat the evidences of our faith, seek to excite unjust prejudice against that authority which has always proved its firmest support."

[243] Quoted in Gerald P. Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism: A History of the Catholic Church in Virginia* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 122.

[244] Alexander Stephens, quoted in John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 65.

addressed to the general public of the United States.[245] Thus, the Catholic Church had diligently worked for decades to demonstrate the loyalty and patriotism of its congregants to the citizens of the American South.

Indeed, by the time of the nativist attacks in the 1850s, Virginia's Catholics had acquitted themselves in the eyes of their fellow Virginians so well that a prominent Richmond newspaper, in the process of refuting Know Nothing fearmongering about Catholic conspiracies to overthrow the government, published the following:

> So far from displaying the intolerant and aggressive spirit which an insolent pride of power always engenders in church establishments, the American Catholics are reduced to the necessity—if we give them credit for no better motive—of purchasing immunity from assault by a quiet and conciliatory policy. Instead of conspiring the overthrow of religious liberty and freedom of conscience, they cling to these principles as their only security against persecution.[246]

The Enquirer was not a Catholic-owned paper, and this defense of Catholics did not constitute a defense of Catholicism on the part of the predominately-Protestant Democratic press in Richmond, a point historian John Daniel Schminky makes clear through multiple references in his study of the nativist and Democratic press battles in Richmond.[247] Nevertheless, this example shows how well-integrated Richmond's Catholics had become in their society, having earned the loyalty of such a notable Protestant newspaper.

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[245] Historian Robert Gorman highlights the three most important contributions Spalding made: *Review of D'Aubigné* (1844), a critical examination of the Reformation and its impact on society worldwide; *Evidences of Catholicity* (1847), in which Spalding argues that the Christian Church established by Christ is the Catholic Church; and *Miscellanea* (1855), in which the bishops directly refuted Know Nothing and other nativist attacks on the religious, political, cultural, and social positions of the Church. Robert Gorman, *Catholic Apologetic Literature in the United States (1784–1858)* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of American Press, 1939), 97–122.

[246] "European Influence in America," *Richmond Enquirer*, October 9, 1854.

[247] John Daniel Schminky, "The Richmond Newspaper Debate over Know-Nothingism: 1854–1855" (MA Thesis, The College of William and Mary, 1979), 54–56.

Of course, Richmond's Bishop John McGill did not content himself with allowing the Democratic press to fight his battles for him. In response to a Know Nothing critique of an address he had given, the bishop wrote an editorial critical of the movement, arguing, "*Know-Nothingism* wages war upon our Church, under the shelter of secret oaths, wrapped up in the folds of the flag of our country, for which our people, in common with other citizens, expended their treasures and blood, and in the name of American freedom".[248] He later expounded on that assertion, insisting the "words and acts [of Catholics] have uniformly manifested a fidelity as true and trustworthy as that of any other class of citizens."[249] In these statements, McGill stresses the unity and shared patriotism that motivates both Catholics and Protestants, binding the adherents of two divergent faiths together as Americans.

An accomplished apologist—having not only published *The True Church*, a major defense of Catholicism as compared to Protestantism, but also helped Bishop Spalding produce his *Evidences of Catholicity*—McGill applied his skills as an author and debater to further deconstruct the Know Nothing attack while also reiterating the patriotism and loyalty of America's Catholics, who, he wrote, have "declared that they owe and pay no civil or political allegiance to the Pope in Rome; that their allegiance to him is purely spiritual, as to the head of their Church; and that their true civil allegiance is due and paid to the government under which they live."[250] He then rephrases with surprising forcefulness: "They [that is, Catholics] expect and receive nothing from the Pope in

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[248] John McGill, "To the Editor of the National American," *Richmond Enquirer*, September 14, 1855.

[249] John McGill, "Letter from Bishop McGill," *Richmond Enquirer*, September 25, 1855.

[250] See Gorman, *Catholic Apologetic Literature*, 111, for a brief description of McGill's collaboration with Spalding. Quote is from McGill, "Letter from Bishop McGill."

Rome, to make them sacrifice truth, conscience and their country. As a man, the Pope is to them of no more importance than any other man, that they should wish to extend his temporal power".[251] In these remarks, the bishop went beyond a simple refutation of a common anti-Catholic trope; instead, he chose to heavily emphasize the loyalty of Catholics to their country and even downplayed the role of the pope as the leader of the Catholic hierarchy. In so doing, McGill portrayed the Catholics of his diocese as fellow citizens—as equals who were just as reliable and patriotic as any other American—while simultaneously inviting his reader to conceive of the Supreme Pontiff as being not all that dissimilar from any other political leader. He highlighted the unity of Catholics and non-Catholics by appealing to a shared patriotism and, using language crafted to appeal to American egalitarianism, recasts the senior clergyman of the Catholic Church as a type of "everyman." Virginia's Catholics were not only willing to publicly support slavery and oppose abolition, but their senior prelate also went out of his way to demonstrate the loyalty of his congregants by exalting their American patriotism and minimizing their distinctiveness as Catholics.

Almost immediately following the end of the contentious gubernatorial election and the Know Nothing hysteria it spawned, Catholics in Virginia showed their loyalty to their fellow citizens during an outbreak of yellow fever in 1855. From June to October of that year, over 4,000 people died from the disease in the port cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth.[252] That the actions of Catholics did much to earn the respect of their

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[251] McGill, "Letter from Bishop McGill."

[252] *Encyclopedia Virginia*, s.v. "Epidemic, The Norfolk and Portsmouth Yellow Fever (1855)," https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/epidemic-the-norfolk-and-portsmouth-yellow-fever-1855/ (accessed April 13, 2022). "An estimated 3,000 people died in Norfolk, about one-third of the entire population, while more than 1,000 died in Portsmouth."

Protestant neighbors is even more noteworthy because of the overwhelming support the Know Nothing American Party had received from the cities in that year's state and local elections.[253]

Fr. Francis Devlin, who at the time was the pastor of St. Paul's Church in Portsmouth, helped care for the sick, minister to the needy, and tend to the dead. Devlin aided doctors by visiting homes throughout the city and carrying sick persons to the hastily constructed hospital.[254] He was a regular at the hospital, not only providing spiritual care to Catholics sick with the disease (many of whom were poor Irish), but also conversing with patients and delivering money, medicine, clothing, and much-needed food to all, Catholic and Protestant alike. Devlin even helped dig graves for and bury the bodies of the epidemic's victims.[255] In this way, he earned the admiration and respect of his neighbors.

Fr. Devlin's daily exposure to the disease took its toll, and twice he took ill from the fever, beginning in early August. Determined to continue his pastoral care, he defied medical advice after recovering from both episodes and returned to serving his community. These bouts of fever, however, weakened Devlin. Though his work became easier when another priest, Jesuit Fr. Joseph Ashwander of Georgetown, joined in his ministrations on 30 August, Fr. Devlin caught the fever again, and finally succumbed to a

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[253] In Portsmouth, voters had elected the entire Know Nothing ticket in their April 1855 elections, including the mayor and all thirteen city councilmen. "Another Know Nothing Victory!", *Richmond Whig and Public Advertiser,* April 10, 1855. The same article alludes to a similar sweep during municipal elections in Norfolk earlier that year. See also, John David Bladek, ""Virginia Is Middle Ground": The Know Nothing Party and Virginia Gubernatorial Election of 1855," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 106, no. 1 (1998): 56–57, which shows a photocopy of a county-by-county tally of votes written after the gubernatorial election in 1855.

[254] Bailey, *A History of the Diocese of Richmond*, 111.

[255] Joseph Magri, "Catholicity in Virginia during the Episcopate of Bishop McGill," *The Catholic Historical Review* 2, no. 4 (1917): 418.

third infection on October 7, 1855.[256] He had earned the respect of his fellow Virginians, including non-Catholics. One Petersburg newspaper described him: "He was an excellent man, as his determination not to leave the place, fully proves."[257] The *Portsmouth Transcript* went even further in its praise, publishing an announcement in his honor. It began, "The Rev. Francis Devlin, a holy priest of the Church of Rome, who had the pastoral care of St. Paul's church in this place expired yesterday." Note the careful and respectful language used by the author, who describes the priest as "holy" and of "the Church of Rome." This is in stark contrast to the slurs commonly applied to Catholics and Catholicism in the press—"papist," "Romanism," "popery," and the like. The *Transcript* continued:

> From the commencement of the sad times from which we are emerging up to the period of his attack, he had been actively and faithfully engaged in ministering to the sick and dying, since which time he has been mostly confined to his bed.—He was an exemplary, mild, humble and godly man, and has no doubt gone to reap the reward of his firm adherence to duty under the most appalling circumstances. His course formed an example worthy of all imitation, and it affords us sincere gratification, as it enables us to exercise a sweet privilege, thus to do homage to a character which we have always esteemed.[258]

The *Richmond Whig,* which spent much of the previous year running articles favorable to the Know Nothing anti-Catholic cause, printed the full text of the *Transcript* article without omission or commentary. Several months before Fr. Devlin's death, the *Whig* described Catholic clergymen as "despotic," "selfish," and "autocratic" agents seeking to "slyly and clandestinely" tighten the Pope's menacing grip on the country.[259] For the

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[256] Bailey, *A History of the Diocese of Richmond*, 112–113.

[257] "Special Correspondence of the Petersburg Express," *The Richmond Enquirer*, October 12, 1855.

[258] *Richmond Whig*, October 16, 1855.

[259] "Catholic Usurpation," *Richmond Whig*, February 16, 1855.

same publication to refer to a priest with such reverence and respect indicates the impact Fr. Devlin had on his fellow Virginians.

Fr. Devlin's service made a profound impression on the people of Portsmouth. This was demonstrated in a distinct way by the marker built in his honor near St. Paul's church, which reads, "ERECTED by the citizens of **Portsmouth** in the memory of **Rev. Francis Devlin** the humble priest, the faithful pastor who sacrificed his life in the cause of charity, *during the plague of 1855.* He was a native of Longford, Ireland. Died on the 7th of October in the 41st year of his age."[260] That Fr. Devlin's sacrifice had demonstrated the loyalty of Catholics is even more notable give his status as an immigrant, as is the willingness of the people of Portsmouth—who had only recently expressed significant support for a nativist, anti-Catholic cause—to etch that fact in stone.

Meanwhile, in Norfolk, Catholics responded with courage to the challenge of the outbreak. Fr. Matthew O'Keefe served his community with the same fortitude and selflessness as his counterpart in Portsmouth: "The praise of Mr. O'Keefe, the Catholic pastor of St. Patrick's Church, is on the lips of every one. Protestants as well as Catholics join together in paying deserved tribute to his untiring exertions in nursing and attending to the wants of the sick and dying, of every class and persuasion."[261] In a remarkable show of good faith and interdenominational amicability, Fr. O'Keefe and Presbyterian Rev. George Armstrong made a pact that, if either man died during the epidemic, the other would perform the funeral. Both men survived, though O'Keefe did catch the fever

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[260] James Thomson, "Rev. Francis Devlin," *The Historical Marker Database*, February 2, 2021, https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=36939 (accessed April 13, 2022).

[261] "The Clergymen of Norfolk," *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, August 27, 1855. *Encyclopedia Virginia* notes that O'Keefe worked alongside gravediggers.

twice.[262] As more people became infected, lay Catholic heiress (and slaveowner) Ann Behan Plume Herron transformed her mansion home into a hospital staffed by the women religious Daughters of Charity; when she died from the disease on September 27, she left the sisters her house to use as a hospital on a permanent basis.[263] In 1856, this became the city's first hospital, the Hospital of St. Vincent de Paul. During the epidemic, Virginia's Catholics had acquitted themselves well in the eyes of their neighbors through their courageous care for the sick and dying in Norfolk and Portsmouth.

When the Civil War began, many Catholics viewed the decision to join the rebel cause as another means by which they could gain and maintain the respect of their fellow countrymen; as historian Dr. Gracjan Kraszewski puts it: "Southern Catholics jumped at the opportunity to become committed Confederates."[264] Irish Catholics, seeking to prove their loyalty, eagerly formed companies in New Orleans and Charleston; indeed, about 70 percent of the 139,000 Irish Americans living in the South served in the Confederate

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[262] Bailey, *A History of the Diocese of Richmond*, 113. Fogarty states that O'Keefe did conduct the funeral for Armstrong when the minister died decades later, but he does not cite a source for the claim. Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 128. Primary source evidence contradicts this. One (front-page) article detailing Rev. Armstrong's funeral credits Presbyterian minister Rev Edward Mack as the officiant, and does not mention O'Keefe's presence in any official capacity, neither as a representative of another faith nor as a pallbearer. "Earth to Earth," *Virginian-Pilot*, May 14, 1899. Curiously, Armstrong does not mention this pact in his account of the crisis, George D. Armstrong, *The Summer of the Pestilence. A History of the Ravages of the Yellow Fever in Norfolk, Virginia, A.D. 1855*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1856).

[263] Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 129–130.

[264] Gracjan Kraszewski, "Devout Catholics, Devoted Confederates: The Evolution of Southern Catholic Bishops from Reluctant Secessionists to Ardent Confederates," *The Catholic Historical Review* 106, no. 1 (2020): 82. This insightful article provides a detailed examination of Southern bishops and their demonstrations of loyalty to the Confederacy. The eagerness with which Kraszewski characterizes the Catholic response brings to mind Stern's description of how military service in the Mexican-American War enhanced the social reputation of Catholics. Andrew H. M. Stern, *Southern Crucifix, Southern Cross: Catholic-Protestant Relations in the Old South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 27–29. There may very well have been a push from the previous generation of immigrants who had "earned their spurs" in the 1840s to their sons and to their younger, more recently-immigrated friends, encouraging them to do the same when the opportunity presented itself.

military.[265] Catholics across the South enlisted in the Confederate armies, responding to the emphatic requests from their bishops. Many priests became chaplains, religious orders of Catholic sisters established hospitals and served as nurses, and one bishop even lent himself to the diplomatic service of the South.

In December 1860, Bishop Patrick Lynch (Diocese of Charleston, 1857–1882) wrote in his diocesan newspaper that South Carolina "has sole right to our allegiance." He encouraged his congregants to fight for their independence and give their "whole, undivided loyalty" to their new nation.[266] Even more direct was Louisiana's Bishop Auguste Martin (Diocese of Natchitoches, 1853–1875), who wrote in August 1861: "every man capable of bearing arms and free to dispose of himself must be a soldier."[267] Bishop Richard Whelan, who had preceded McGill as Bishop of Richmond before moving west to lead the new diocese of Wheeling in 1850, was a vocal supporter of the Confederacy and the Southern cause. In May 1861, the bishop chastised his New York counterpart, Archbishop John Hughes, for supporting the enlistment of Catholics into the Union army. He defended Virginia's secession, noting Hughes was condoning the subjugation of the Commonwealth and "the very people whose general sense of right & honor prompted them to stand up for Catholic & foreigner".[268] Whelan no doubt recalled the recent defeat of the Know Nothings in the 1855 gubernatorial election as part of this

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[265] Earl F. Niehaus, *The Irish in New Orleans, 1800–1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), 160–162, and Gracjan Kraszewski, *Catholic Confederates: Faith and Duty in the Civil War South* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2020), 26.

[266] Patrick Lynch, quoted in Kraszewski, "Devout Catholics," 77.

[267] Auguste Martin, quoted in Davis, *History of Black Catholics*, 51.

[268] Richard Whelan to John Hughes, May 3, 1861, quoted in Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 145.

loyal characterization of Virginia's citizens.[269] Catholics rallied to the Southern cause, and their actions paid off, as historian Dennis Rousey notes, "During the war, respect for Catholics increased among southerners of all classes, especially men who fought alongside Catholic soldiers and who saw the selfless work of Catholic priests and nuns in the face of hardship and danger."[270] In answering their new country's call to serve in the war, Catholics demonstrated their patriotism as Southern Confederates.

Catholics in Virginia, like their fellow adherents across the South, eagerly joined the ranks of the Confederacy. On Sunday, April 21, 1861, Father John Teeling, pastor of St. Peter's Church and diocesan vicar general, preached about the righteousness of secession, earning the approval of the Richmond press: "Mr. T. exhorted his hearers to stand firm in the assertion of their rights against their oppressors."[271] His congregants responded with enthusiasm. Irish Catholics in Richmond joined the Montgomery Guard, a company-size unit within the First Virginia Regiment, and the Emmet Guards, which included one company each in the 15th and 17th Infantry Regiments.[272] Other predominately-Irish Catholic units included the O'Connell Guards (Company I, 17th Virginia Infantry Regiment), Petersburg City Battalion's Company A, and the 27th Virginia Infantry Regiment's Company D.[273] Many of North Carolina's Irish Catholics also flocked to Virginia to join the fighting, with one missionary reporting back to his

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[269] The majority of the counties which comprised Western Virginia voted for Wise in the 1855 election. Bladek, "Virginia Is Middle Ground", 56–57.

[270] Dennis C. Rousey, "Catholics in the Old South: Their Population, Institutional Development, and Relations with Protestants," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 24, no. 4 (2006): 4.

[271] "Local Matters," *The Daily Dispatch*, April 22, 1861.

[272] Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 148–149 and Bailey, *A History of the Diocese of Richmond*, 148.

[273] Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 151 and Bailey, *A History of the Diocese of Richmond*, 148.

bishop that there were few left to whom he could proselytize, as "the great bulk of the Irish Catholics have volunteered & gone to Virginia."[274] Many of these Catholics sought to fulfill their duties as citizens of the South, such as John Dooley, a member of the Montgomery Guards who wrote of his motivation to join: "I resolved at once to enter the field where I considered it the imperative duty of every young man to be."[275] Similarly, students at the Jesuit-run Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. abandoned their studies to take up arms for the rebellion, some of whom cited the need to return home to answer the call of "all that we have most dear on earth, our Country (the South)".[276] In joining the rebellion, Catholics expressed their loyalty and patriotism as Virginians.

Priests from across the Commonwealth sought to answer the call of their countrymen and serve as military chaplains. Richmond's Fr. Teeling became a chaplain in the First Virginia Regiment.[277] Norfolk's Father Matthew O'Keefe, pastor of St. Patrick's Church, was particularly creative in his (ultimately futile) attempts to display his zeal for the Southern cause. He first applied to the bishop to join the army as a soldier and then again as a chaplain, but McGill refused both requests as Fr. O'Keefe was needed in Norfolk. Undeterred, the priest did secure an appointment as a chaplain to an infantry brigade directly from Confederate Secretary of War George Wythe Randolph in April 1862, but his service proved to be little more than a stint when he was recalled to Norfolk

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[274] Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 151.

[275] John Dooley, *John Dooley, Confederate Soldier: His War Journal*, ed. Joseph T. Durkin (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1945), 2.

[276] J. T. Durkin, *Glimpses of Old Georgetown* (Washington: 1939), 43, quoted in Dooley, *John Dooley, Confederate Soldier*, 1. Dooley was also a student at Georgetown at the time of the incident cited by Durkin, but he did not leave the university for another year on account of his age.

[277] Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 149. Fr. Teeling was originally the Regimental chaplain, but was demoted to serve the predominately-Catholic Company C following complaints from Protestant soldiers.

following its occupation one month later. O'Keefe, described at his death as an "unreconstructed Confederate," seized the opportunity to insult General Benjamin Butler when the latter requested the clergyman pray for the Union authorities. After sending a rude response, O'Keefe thought he would be arrested, but never was. When he and Butler happened to meet years later, Butler recalled the incident and said he nearly did arrest the priest. O'Keefe replied: "I was anxious that you should arrest me. I wanted to get to the front, but the vow of obedience to my Bishop prevented me. If I had been arrested I might have had an opportunity to have gone there."[278]

Fr. O'Keefe was not the only Virginian Catholic clergymen to find himself at risk of arrest for his Southern views. Bishop Richard Whelan of Wheeling declared his "private" support for Virginia's secession in an 1861 letter to Archbishop Francis Kenrick of Baltimore, yet his support must have been more public than he professed.[279] Wheeling was a city of divided loyalties between North and South and included a large pro-Union movement; the Catholic community in the city was similarly divided.[280] Whelan articulated his Southern sympathies during sermons often enough that he aroused the suspicions of Union authorities. In 1862, President Lincoln intervened to prevent the

[278] Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 154–155 and "Priest, Kept From War, Dies Unreconstructed: Father O'Keefe of Baltimore was Friend of Davis and Lee," *The New York Times*, January 29, 1906.

[279] Richard Whelan to Francis Kenrick, April 28, 1861, quoted in Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 145.

[280] Wheeling formed the nucleus of the pro-Union movement which eventually created West Virginia as a distinct state; the city was the capital of the new state. Some Catholic families supported the Confederacy, while many of Wheeling's Irish and German immigrants were for the Union. Barbara J. Howe and Margaret A. Brennan, "The Sisters of St. Joseph in Wheeling, West Virginia, during the Civil War," in *U.S. Catholic Historian* 31, no. 1 (2013): 30.

bishop's arrest by Major General John C. Frémont, commander of the Mountain Department.[281] Whelan remained in his position unmolested (and unarrested).

Less fortunate was Fr. Thomas Becker of Martinsburg. The local Union army commander detained the priest, describing him thusly: "I have examined Mr. Becker in person. Find him a thorough secessionist who prayed in his church for Jeff. Davis and the Confederacy but will not pray for the President and authorities of the United States."[282] Becker had also passed some tactical intelligence along to local Confederate forces, but there is no mention of his doing so in the government records.[283] Though no doubt popular with his congregation, Fr. Martin was nonetheless removed from his parish and sent to the Old Capitol Prison in Washington, D.C. for his flagrant support of the Southern cause; St. Joseph's church became a Union stable.[284]

One Jesuit priest on assignment to St. Mary's in Alexandria, Father Joseph Bixio, was so dedicated to the rebellion that he volunteered his services as a sort of "freelance" Confederate chaplain. Born Giuseppe Bixio in Genoa in 1819, Bixio began studying to become a Jesuit in his 20s and migrated to Maryland to avoid persecution following the Revolutions of 1848. After being ordained in 1851, he worked first among immigrants in Virginia and then arranged for a transfer to the missions in California by the mid-1850s. However, as the storm clouds of war approached, Bixio managed to get himself

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[281] Edwin M. Stanton to Major-General Frémont, May 21, 1862, in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898), 3:560.

[282] Robert C. Schenck to Edwin M. Stanton, April 10, 1863, in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1899), 5:458.

[283] Bailey, *A History of the Diocese of Richmond*, 161.

[284] Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 178, and Bailey, *A History of the Diocese of Richmond*, 161.

reassigned to Virginia, seeking to serve in the coming conflict. During the war, while serving as an unofficial chaplain for the Confederacy, he passed himself as an itinerant pastor of several parishes in northern and western Virginia, enabling him to move between Union- and Confederate-controlled regions with relative freedom.[285] Bixio, dressed in his Jesuit black cassock rather than a military uniform, crossed over the lines of battle between the Union and Confederate armies multiple times during the war, sometimes even actively participating in covert affairs on the behalf of the South. In 1861, he provided some sort of tactical intelligence to Confederate Generals Joseph Johnston and P.G.T. Beauregard which one observer claims helped the rebels win the First Battle of Manassas.[286] In 1864, he acquired the uniform of a Union chaplain—a Franciscan from Connecticut, Fr. Leo Rizzo da Saracena, who was sick with typhoid at the time—and surreptitiously moved military supplies from Union-controlled Winchester to Confederate-controlled Staunton, much to the consternation of Union General Philip Sheridan.[287]

Most of the priests serving in the rebel armies in Virginia, however, were chaplains assigned to units from other states in the South, with Bishop McGill providing support and some coordination for their activities within his diocese.[288] While many Jesuit chaplains retained the attire of their order, such as Fr. Bixio and Fr. Louis-Hippolyte Gache (a chaplain serving in Virginia assigned to the Tenth Louisiana

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[285] While there is much that remains a mystery about this colorful priest, some details can be found in Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 158–161 as well as Cornelius Michael Buckley, "Joseph Bixio, Furtive Founder of the University of San Francisco," *California History* 78, no. 1 (1999): 14–25.

[286] *Battle-Fields of the South: from Bull Run to Fredericksburg; With Sketches of Confederate Commanders, and Gossip of the Camps* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1863), 280.

[287] Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 159–160.

[288] Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 152–163.

Regiment), others chose to don the military uniforms of the Confederate Army as symbols of their devotion to the cause.[289]

The service of these priests, even those from outside the Commonwealth, had a definite impact on the opinions of Protestants within Virginia, as Fogarty notes, "Chaplains among the Confederate forces may have been the first priests some Southerners had seen."[290] One observer attached to the Army of Northern Virginia noted Catholic priests were much more disciplined and true to their own teaching than the majority of the Protestant ministers serving as chaplains; "Roman Catholic priests" he writes, "were remarkably zealous: their services were conducted every morning in tents set apart for the purpose; and on Sunday large crowds of the more southern soldiery were regular in their attendance and devout in their behaviour; and I have not unfrequently seen General Beauregard and other officers kneeling with scores of privates at the Holy Communion Table."[291] Conyngham corroborated this observation, detailing how Fr. Gache's efforts to revitalize the faith of Catholic Confederates serving in Virginia changed the perception of Catholics among their Protestant brothers-in-arms: "At first, those who attended their duties [that is, praying daily and going to Mass and confession regularly], were laughed and sneered at as cowards by their comrades; but when they found that these men were the bravest in action, a better feeling prevailed."[292] Redemptorist Father James Sheeran, a chaplain serving in the 14th Louisiana Regiment,

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[289] Fogarty describes several such chaplains, including Fr, Joseph Prachensky of Alabama and Fr. Darius Hubert of Louisiana, in Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 152–154.

[290] Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 153.

[291] *Battle-Fields of the South*, 279–280.

[292] David Power Conyngham, *Soldiers of the Cross, the Authoritative Text: The Heroism of Catholic Chaplains and Sisters in the American Civil War*, eds. David J. Endres and William B. Kurtz (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), 252.

concurred with Gache: "I had learned by personal observation, that no men fight more bravely than Catholics who approach the sacraments before battle".[293] Fr. Sheeran also described numerous occasions where he willingly shared the hardships of the soldier's life, including one night where he declined to use his privileged position to secure better sleeping arrangements:

> The place where we were now encamped was one of the roughest and most uncomfortable of the campaign. We were on the side of a gravelly hill or mountain whose bare bounds the bank of the Monocacy. It was impossible to find a space of even half of 6 ft 2 whereon to repose for the night. As the sun was about bidding us farewell, I was strongly tempted to bid farewell to the camp for this night, as I had something of a repugnance to a bed made of rocks. But motives of prudence compelled me to remain. General orders had been received to permit only a certain number from each regiment to be absent at a time. Seeing the wisdom and necessity of these orders, I endeavored to have them enforced, so to be consistent, I had to remain with the boys and cheerfully take the gravelly bed.[294]

The men in Sheeran's unit respected him, despite many of them not sharing his Catholic faith. For example, during a movement through Frederick, Maryland in 1862, many Confederate soldiers availed themselves of the supplies abandoned by the retreating Union army. Several of Sheeran's fellow soldiers took special care to get the priest anything he needed from the former Federal depot.[295] Catholic priests and chaplains demonstrated their loyalty to the Southern cause through their conduct in the war, earning the respect of their fellow Southerners.

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[293] James Sheeran, *The Civil War Diary of Father James Sheeran: Confederate Chaplain and Redemptorist*, ed. Patrick J. Hayes (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 23.

[294] Sheeran, *Civil War Diary*, 62. At another point, Sheeran describes how he considers these uncomfortable nights as opportunities for spiritual growth through physical mortification. He compares his sufferings to those of the saints, such as St. Rose of Lima, who frequently accepted physical sacrifices for spiritual gain. However, Sheeran respects the sacrifices of his fellow soldiers even more, writing: "I considered these very mortifications merely as child's play, compared with what Confederate soldiers had to endure…Just think of it! A sharp fence rail under your head and rocks from the size of an egg to that of a cannon ball under your wearied body." Sheeran, *Civil War Diary*, 22.

[295] Sheeran, *Civil War Diary*, 60.

Religious sisters distinguished themselves as loyal Americans as well. Women religious staffed or administered about 30 hospitals in the United States before the war, and thus many religious communities already had the training to be wartime nurses.[296] Twelve different orders of sisters provided no fewer than 580 women religious nurses to aid both armies, comprising about twenty percent of the total female nurses serving during the war).[297] Two such groups of sisters, the Maryland-based Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul and The Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy in South Carolina, each sent sisters to support the war effort in Virginia as nurses. The Daughters of Charity had a well-established reputation for compassionate and effective nursing before hostilities began, including during the yellow fever epidemic in Norfolk.[298] At the request of the Confederate government in 1861, the sisters took over or established several hospitals in Richmond to care for the sick and wounded from the battlefield; by the end of the war they had expanded their operations to include eight hospitals across the Commonwealth.[299]

Women religious stood out due to their compassionate care for the sick and wounded Confederate soldiers in Virginia. Fr. Gache relays the experience of a veteran soldier he encountered: "before the war I was strongly prejudiced against Catholics. I looked on them as little better than infidels and heathens; but since I have changed my

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[296] Margaret M. McGuinness, *Called to Serve: A History of Nuns in America* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2013), 93.

[297] John J. Fialka, *Sisters: Catholic Nuns and the Making of America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003), 61.

[298] Betty Ann McNeil, "Daughters of Charity: Courageous and Compassionate Civil War Nurses," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 31, no. 1 (2013): 53–54.

[299] In addition to several facilities in Richmond, the sisters operated hospitals in Harper's Ferry, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Danville, as detailed in McNeil, "Daughters of Charity," 56–60.

opinion….Just think how the Sisters of Charity attended the poor fellows in hospitals. I tell you boys, but for them I would not be alive today."[300] Decades of anti-Catholic preaching and sensational news coverage had ingrained ideas of papist plots and Catholic conspiracies into the minds of many Confederate soldiers. A particularly pernicious subgenre of early nineteenth-century anti-Catholicism was the "convent exposé." These typically featured a nun or nuns who had allegedly "escaped" their convents and supposedly laid bare the lurid details about that which occurred within their cloistered homes—typically including tales of lecherous priests and stories of infant bodies buried under the floorboards. Several examples include *Female Convents. Secrets of Nunneries Disclosed* (1834), the infamous (and best-selling) *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* (1836), *The Protestant Girl in a French Nunnery* (1846), and *The Escaped Nun* (1855).[301] During the Civil War, Southern soldiers came face to face with real sisters, not the fictional portrayals of shoddy journalism and risqué literature. The experience was both shocking and transformative.

The compassion of women religious made a difference in the lives of the Confederate soldiers they helped. Fr. Gache, who frequently had occasion to visit the hospitals administered by the sisters, described their excellent nursing: "no body [*sic*] except those who have seen it, can imagine how efficient was the presence and the conduct of the sisters to soften those rough nature[s], and to cheer and console them

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[300] Louis-Hippolyte Gache, quoted in Conyngham, *Soldiers of the Cross*, 257.

[301] Scipio de Ricci, *Female Convents. Secrets of Nunneries Disclosed* (New York: D. Appleton & Co.: 1834); Maria Monk, *Awful Disclosures by Maria Monk of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal, Revised with an Appendix* (New York: Hoisington & Trow, 1836); Rachel MacCrindell, *The Protestant Girl in a French Nunnery* (Philadelphia: H. Hooker, 1846); and Josephine Bunkley, *The Escaped Nun; or, The Disclosures of Convent Life; and The Confessions of a Sister of Charity* (New York: DeWitt & Davenport, 1855). An excellent analysis of the larger gender issues at work in anti-convent literature is Cassandra L. Yacovazzi, *Escaped Nuns: True Womanhood and the Campaign Against Convents in Antebellum America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

during their attendance at the hospitals of Danville, Lynchburg, and Richmond, Virginia."[302] The priest related an example of this capacity for connecting with their patients:

> A young Tennessee soldier, who knew very little about religion, and who probably never attended any place of worship, was one day brought into a hospital under the charge of the Sisters of Mercy in Montgomery, White Sulphur Springs, Virginia. The sisters received him with their usual kindness and bestowed upon him all the attentions his condition required. While one of them was dressing the wound, he burst into tears. "Did I hurt you?" she asked. "No, no," he replied. "Then, why do you cry?" "I cry," said the poor boy, "because for the last six months I have not had a kind word spoken to me."[303]

This simple story, at once both heartwarming and tragic, encapsulates the impact of the sisters in the lives and minds of those whom they served. Father Francis Burlando, the chaplain assigned to serve the Daughters of Charity at their motherhouse in Emmitsburg, explains the significance of the sisters' compassionate care: "Men [for] whom the horrors of war has as it were brutified [them] felt themselves moved at the sight of a Sister of Charity in the performance of her duty. The remembrance of a mother, a wife, a sister was presented to their mind with all the charm of virtue, and their eyes, which the cruelties of war seemed to have dried forever, flowed again with tears of tenderness."[304] Sisters showed their loyalty to the soldiers of the Confederacy through their heartfelt and effective nursing.

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[302] Gache, quoted in Conyngham, *Soldiers of the Cross*, 254.

[303] Gache, quoted in Conyngham, *Soldiers of the Cross*, 255. A war correspondent who visited this hospital in 1864 remarked of the Sisters of Charity: "I must admit that their kindness and attention is worthy of all the praises so worthily merited by their works. Modest, unpretending, and with a singleness of purpose in doing good, these good sisters devote their whole existence in ameliorating the suffering of the soldiers, and act as ameliorating agents to their wants." "Bishop Lynch," *The Wilmington Journal*, March 31, 1864.

[304] Francis Burlando, quoted in Kraszewski, *Catholic Confederates*, 99.

Even as the women religious proved their loyalty as Catholics by nursing their soldiers, they earned the loyalty of their patients as well. Gache told of a Texan regiment which was so impressed with the care of the sisters that the command established its own recovery ward on the premises of the St. Francis de Sales infirmary in Richmond (operated by the Sisters of Charity). Gache overheard some of the men from this unit talking one night; when the conversation turned to religion and then against Catholicism, one man spoke up, protesting, "Stop, stop, friends! I do not know what Catholics are. I know nothing of their creed, but from the time I have seen the Sisters of Charity, at St. Francis de Sales infirmary and been nursed by them, I have felt myself bound in duty not to allow anyone to speak against them or their religion. So I beg of you not to abuse the sisters or their church."[305] Women religious earned the loyalty of their patients through kind and capable battlefield care.

Sisters demonstrated courage in continuing to minister to their patients in battlefield hospitals, even when combat put them in danger. Sister Juliana Chatard described her work at a field hospital near Richmond, where she triaged and cared for wounded men arriving directly from the ongoing Seven Days Battle: "The bombs were bursting and reddening the heavens. While the Reserve Corps ranged about three hundred yards from our door. While these days lasted, our poor Sisters in the [Richmond] City Hospitals were shaken by the cannonading…the entire city trembled as if from earthquake during the whole week".[306] However, this proximity to the fighting did not deter the sisters' efforts, as Sister Euphemia Blenkinsop wrote, "our poor sisters, though

[305] Gache, quoted in Conyngham, *Soldiers of the Cross*, 258.

[306] Juliana Chatard, quoted in McNeil, "Daughters of Charity," 58–59.

the shells were flying around them, did not even interrupt their duties."[307] This quiet determination impressed and encouraged their patients, as Blenkinsop continued, "The soldiers asked one another: 'How is it that the sisters do not tremble? As for us, we are used to the noises of cannon and shells, but they are very different, and yet they go about as if nothing were the matter.' Others asked the sisters what we should do if the enemy should reach us in triumph! 'We should remain at our post!'"[308] The sisters' courage under fire, their simple attention to duty, and their quiet determination to continue caring for the wounded, sick, and dying in the midst of the battlefield carnage surrounding them helped calm and encourage the soldiers they served. At another time, Sister Blenkinsop boldly exhorted her patients to be courageous, saying, "Fear not for us, good friend. God is watching over us, and even if we were to die, have we not an eternity of happiness as our reward?"[309] The calm and confident behavior of the sisters may have even inspired some soldiers to exert greater internal efforts to regain their courage. Battle-hardened male warriors would likely have second-guessed their actions (and maybe even rediscovered their fortitude) after showing fear before female members of a religious order of sisters.[310] Confidence such as Sr. Blenkinsop's no doubt helped heal the scarred minds of the wounded soldiers even as the sisters worked to heal their bodies.

Though the character of the sisters' service was much less partisan towards the Southern cause, sisters still had a profound impact on the perception of Catholics as loyal

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[307] Euphemia Blenkinsop, quoted in McNeil, "Daughters of Charity," 59.

[308] Blenkinsop, quoted in McNeil, "Daughters of Charity," 59.

[309] Euphemia Blenkinsop, quoted in Kraszewski, *Catholic Confederates*, 100.

[310] A more powerful example of this particular gender dynamic in action is an analysis of Joan of Arc and how her ability to inspire led to French military and political victories, in Thomas D. Richardson, "The Power of Inspiration: How Joan of Arc Turned the Tide of the Hundred Years' War," *Report: West Point Undergraduate Historical Review* 2, no. 1 (2011): 49–78.

Confederates. Fr. Gache reports this effect: "the greater good perhaps effected by the presence of the Catholic chaplains and Sisters of Charity or Mercy in the army, was the removal of sectarian prejudices from the minds of thousands who had never seen Catholics before, and knew nothing of them, but what they had heard from Protestant preachers, or read in Protestant books."[311] The sisters' work and example during the war surprised many Confederates and helped reinforce the loyalty and virtue of the women and the Church to which they were so devoted.

The most devoted Catholic Confederate in Virginia, at least in terms of public and private expressions of loyalty for the Southern cause, was the senior clergyman in the Diocese of Richmond, Bishop John McGill. He was an outspoken supporter of the Confederacy, and used his position of leadership to demonstrate the Church's loyalty to the South. His actions set the tone for the rest of the Catholics within his diocese.

Bishop McGill actively supported secession and the Confederate rebellion, both personally and as a leader of the Catholic Church. Immediately following Virginia's vote to secede, McGill changed the text of the "Prayer for the Civil Authorities of Our Country." Archbishop John Carroll, the first American bishop, wrote that prayer in 1791 and specified its recitation at the end of every Mass. McGill removed the supplications for the President of the United States and other references to the U.S. from the prayer, replacing them with prayers for the Confederacy and its leaders.[312] These expressions of loyalty were heartfelt—the bishop believed in the righteousness of the Southern cause.

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[311] Gache, quoted in Conyngham, *Soldiers of the Cross*, 256. One young man who was surprised to learn that the sisters who took such great care of him were Catholic declared, "I thought the Catholics were the worst people in the world."

[312] Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 147. Carroll's original prayer can be found in Peter Guilday, *The Life and Times of John Carroll, Archbishop of Baltimore (1735–1815)* (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, 1922), 432.

He indicated this in a May 1861 letter to a fellow bishop: "I feel that the party in power has shown no disposition to respect the just claims of the south. They seek to humble & subjugate her. I can myself endure all this knowing that the present time is short and eternity all that it is important to secure. But I cannot be blind as to which side seeks to domineer and oppress, and which presents just claims".[313] McGill channeled this devotion to the justice of the South by encouraging Catholics to join the fight to defend their homeland.

Bishop McGill used his position and the diocesan resources at his disposal to support the Confederacy. The bishop spoke about military service as a "solemn and pressing duty" for Catholic men, and he often exhorted the men of his congregations to enlist if they were at all able.[314] In April 1861, the Montgomery Guard, an Irish Catholic unit in Richmond, paraded through the streets of the city bearing weapons which McGill had blessed.[315] In November 1861, he compiled *The Angel of Prayer,* a book of Catholic prayers and devotions for distribution throughout the armies and cities of the Confederacy which included his version of Carroll's prayer.[316] McGill often preached about the justice of the Confederate cause, at one point insisting, "if our cause was not

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[313] John McGill to Patrick Lynch, May 15, 1861, in Willard E. Wight, "War Letters of the Bishop of Richmond," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 67, no. 3 (1959): 262.

[314] Magri, "Catholicity in Virginia," 422 and Bailey, *A History of the Diocese of Richmond*, 148.

[315] Bailey, *A History of the Diocese of Richmond*, 145. One local paper was impressed with the showing of the Guard, writing that its Irish members "have espoused the cause of their adopted State with the devoted earnestness characteristic of the generous-hearted people of which they are the representatives. As a general thing, no matter where located, the South has ever found true friends in Irishmen." "Thriving Company," *Daily Dispatch,* April 23, 1861.

[316] John McGill, *The Angel of Prayer. With a Selection of Devotions for Christians* (Richmond: J.W. Randolph, 1861), 183–186.

just, we could not appeal to the throne of mercy to sustain it."[317] The bishop was not averse to allowing the use of Church property to further the war effort, either. Beginning in 1862, McGill consented to turning the mission church of St. Mary's in Fredericksburg into a commissary, even arranging to remove the pews from the site.[318] In 1863, he consented to the temporary incarceration of an accused Union spy ("Mrs. Allan, of Ohio married abroad to Patrick Allan") within a Catholic convent in Richmond.[319] Bishop McGill was an ardent supporter of the Confederacy.

As the war dragged on, McGill continued to insist on the nobility of the South's cause, even as hopes of Southern victory dwindled. He contributed to the Confederate self-identification as victims of unjust Northern aggression. In *Our Faith, the Victory*, the bishop described the Civil War as a "deplorable and sanguinary war" and laments the blockade of the South.[320] With the tides of war turning against the Confederacy, McGill warned the war was "the scourge of God," because Southern slaveowners did not respect the sanctity of slave marriages.[321] In 1864, he had so impressed the Confederates of

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[317] John McGill, quoted in "Prayers for Peace," *Charleston Mercury*, November 30, 1863.

[318] Bailey, *A History of the Diocese of Richmond*, 152. Other bishops went even further in their donation of Church property. Archbishop Jean Marie Odin "sent word to Gen. [P.G.T.] Beauregard that the bells of every Catholic church in New Orleans are at his disposal, to be recast into cannon." *Memphis Daily Appeal*, April 2, 1862.

[319] "Detection and Arrest of Alleged Female Spy of Northern Birth," *Daily Richmond Examiner*, July 20, 1863. McGill did protest the Confederate government's unilateral action to house the accused women in the home of the Sisters of Charity, but wanted "to make all due allowance for the embarrassed position, [in which] the extraordinary circumstances of the case placed the authorities," provided the accused could move to more suitable housing as soon as possible.

[320] McGill, *Our Faith*, v.

[321] McGill, *Our Faith*, 314. "He is not likely to leave long unpunished in a nation, the palpable and flagrant contempt of his holy laws, such as is evinced in this neglect or refusal to respect in slaves, the holiness, the unity, and the indissolubility of marriage. It would appear, that by the present convulsions, his Providence is preparing for them at least a recognition of those rights as immortal beings, which are required for the observance of the paramount laws of God. And if citizens desire to see the nation prosper

Richmond that one paper used McGill as a sympathetic example in a story about the hypothetical outrages an occupying Union force would impose on the citizens of Richmond. In the thought experiment, the faithful bishop is interrogated by the rabidly anti-Southern Union forces and, when he refuses to give the name of a fellow Southern sympathizer, McGill is imprisoned, condemned to work on a "gang of street-sweepers."[322] McGill was a loyal Southerner who devoted himself and his Church to the Confederate cause.

Virginia's Catholics overwhelmingly demonstrated their patriotism for the Confederacy and their loyalty to the Southern cause. As soldiers, chaplains, and nurses, Catholics served their new country with zeal and vigor; as the spiritual and hierarchical leader of Catholicism in the Old Dominion, Bishop McGill supported the South and directed institutional expressions of devotion to the Confederacy. In so doing, the Catholics of Virginia lived up to the ideals expressed by their forbears at St. Peter's church in Richmond in 1835: "The Catholic feels his obligations to his country, and is willing to prove his gratitude whenever an occasion occurs. He knows that love of country is a sacred and holy passion, which reason and religion approve; that his altars and his country's rights are identified; and that he cannot be faithful to his God, if deficient in fidelity to his country".[323] Virginia's Catholics showed their fidelity to their new country. Indeed, they did so with such ferocity that at times this devotion superseded the unity which supposedly existed between them and Northern Catholics.

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and enjoy the blessing of God, let all unite to procure from the civil government, for the slaves, that their marriages be esteemed as God intends, and not be dealt with in future as they have been hitherto."

[322] *Daily Richmond Examiner*, March 30, 1864.

[323] Chevallié and Herron, "Meeting of the Roman Catholic Congregation of the city of Richmond and county of Henrico."

VII. FATHER AGAINST FATHER: SKETCHING AN INTRA-DENOMINATIONAL CIVIL WAR

In September 1865, Bishop Patrick Lynch of Charleston, South Carolina, found himself stranded in Rome. He had journeyed to the Eternal City in the spring of 1864 to enlist the aid of Pope Pius IX by procuring the Supreme Pontiff's diplomatic recognition of the Confederate States of America. Bishop Lynch's mission proved fruitless, and when the war ended he was unable to return to the United States immediately; the bishop did not receive amnesty under President Andrew Johnson's proclamation of May 29 because he had served as a "foreign agent of the pretended Confederate government" and because he was "absentee from the United States for the purpose of aiding the rebellion."[324] Working through Augustin Cochin, an antislavery associate in Paris, Lynch appealed to John Bigelow, the American Minister to France, for support in receiving amnesty from the President. Cochin wrote, "now that the war is ended, and that it has become desirable to reconcile the disaffected, to relieve the destitute and protect the enfranchised, the return of the bishop of Charleston to that city, so justly but so severely punished, appears to be desirable….He is a loyal, intelligent, charitable man, worthy of respect and confidence."[325] In this way, Lynch sought to bypass a formal appeal for amnesty by characterizing himself as a blameless and neutral observer simply trying to return to his religious duties.

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[324] Andrew Johnson, "Proclamation 134—Granting Amnesty to Participants in the Rebellion, with Certain Exceptions," May 29, 1865, *The American Presidency Project,* https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-134-granting-amnesty-participants-the-rebellion-with-certain-exceptions (accessed April 18, 2022).

[325] A. Cochin to John Bigelow, September 2, 1865, quoted in John Bigelow, "The Southern Confederacy and the Pope," *The North American Review* 157, no. 443 (1893): 472.

Bigelow issued a very blunt refusal. He rejected outright Cochin's depiction of Lynch as an innocent bystander. After reminding Cochin the bishop should swear the oath of loyalty before a U.S. official and then make a written application to the President for amnesty, the American minister advised:

> However, I may as well assure you now that nothing will go so far towards propitiating the pardoning power, in my opinion, as evidence that the Bishop is himself conscious of and sincerely regrets having betrayed his country and degraded his church by prostituting his sacred functions to the service of a foul and unnatural conspiracy against his country and government….While the President may be persuaded to consent to Bishop Lynch's return to Charleston upon proper evidence of his contrition, I beg you will not remain under the impression that the Bishop's influence over any class of our population is in the least degree necessary to our people or government. Happily, Bishop Lynch's place in the Church can be readily supplied by men whose influence with their flock has never been weakened by treason, or by the denial to a part of the human race of the right which the great Head of the Church died to secure to all.[326]

Bigelow's rebuttal, though primarily concerned with upholding the political directives of President Johnson, also sheds light on the fractures which had developed within the Catholic Church during the Civil War. In describing the bishop's conduct, Bigelow boldly asserted Lynch's political actions had a detrimental impact on the integrity of the Church. The minister's writing provides an outsider's perspective of an internal war which engulfed the Catholic Church in America as a consequence of the larger American Civil War.

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[326] John Bigelow to A. Cochin, September 5, 1865, quoted in Bigelow, "The Southern Confederacy," 472–473. Cochin had included in his appeal that the minister consider "Should Irish emigrants be invited thither [to Charleston] to reorganize labor, collisions may occur between them and the blacks which would render the presence of this prelate particularly useful." Bigelow responded: "Permit me also to suggest that, in setting forth his claims to the clemency of the President, Bishop Lynch will do well not to give prominence to the importance of his presence in America to prevent collisions between the Irish immigrants and the blacks. I cannot refrain from saying to you, my dear Mr. Cochin, that it is precisely such prelates as Bishop Lynch, partisans at once of slavery and treason, that have planted in the breasts of many of our Irish adopted citizens prejudices against the blacks, which have proved one of our most serious obstacles to the suppression of the late rebellion".

Nearly all historians who write about the Catholic Church describe its ability to remain united, not only throughout the contentious antebellum decades, but also during and after the Civil War itself. This was not the case for several other Christian denominations which fractured along regional lines based on disagreements over slavery, including the Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists. Church historian Thomas McAvoy claims the Catholic hierarchy remained neutral during the war.[327] Historian Leslie Woodcock Tentler admits to the presence of "considerable internal tension" with the Church during the war, but quickly adds "the American church did not suffer division in any formal sense".[328] Historian Gracjan Kraszewski provides the most nuanced examination in his book *Catholic Confederates*, detailing the "Confederatization" of Southern Catholic bishops, priests, sisters, and laypersons while still interpreting some cross-regional efforts as indicative of religious unity.[329] Social historian Jay Dolan avoids the Civil War altogether. These historians are correct in that the Catholic Church never experienced a formal schism over slavery and the northern and southern dioceses in the Church did continue to operate as one after the war. However, the lack of formal separation does not indicate complete unity. Beneath the veneer of universal Catholicism was a concerted campaign on the part of Southern Catholics to portray themselves as authentically Catholic and their political opponents in the North as having been co-opted or corrupted by the Union cause. Although this sectional disunity was indeed repaired

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[327] "In the period of decision, the Catholic hierarchy restrained itself from all pleadings except for peace and for prayers for peace and for the observance of law and order." Thomas T. McAvoy, *A History of the Catholic Church in the United States*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), 185.

[328] Leslie Woodcock Tentler, *American Catholics: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 122.

[329] Gracjan Kraszewski, *Catholic Confederates: Faith and Duty in the Civil War South* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2020), 77.

after the war, there is ample evidence to demonstrate that, under the surface, the Church was not united during the conflict.

In Virginia, this internal Catholic war played out primarily through the actions of the clergy. Bishop McGill led the effort, setting a tone of harsh sectionalism towards the thousands of Union Catholics within his diocesan borders and seeking to carve out more autonomy for Southern Catholics. Priests—in civilian posts, on the front lines, or behind Union lines—echoed the bishop's divisive tone and behavior.

Bishop McGill viewed the war in moral terms, with the North an unjust aggressor seeking to conquer and subdue the righteous South. In May 1861, a month after the Virginia Convention voted for secession, he wrote to Bishop Lynch about the morality of military service in the war, arguing, "Is not the party in power organized on principles *unconstitutional*; and can a person, without sin formal or material, volunteer into the army called out by Mr. Lincoln?"[330] McGill was not the first Southern bishop to oppose Catholic participation in the Union army; Bishop Richard Whelan of Wheeling had already challenged Archbishop Hughes of New York for supporting the enlistment of Catholics, arguing Catholic soldiers would be wasting their lives fighting for the interests of many decidedly anti-Catholic political movements.[331] What makes McGill's argument noteworthy is that its parameters are moral rather than pragmatic. In his estimation, Catholics who answered the Federal government's call for soldiers did not merely

[330] John McGill to Patrick Lynch, May 15, 1861, in Willard E. Wight, "War Letters of the Bishop of Richmond," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 67, no. 3 (1959): 262.

[331] Richard Whelan to John Hughes, May 3, 1861, quoted in Gerald P. Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism: A History of the Catholic Church in Virginia* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 145.

support an illegal or misguided government action; rather, those soldiers' military service itself was sinful.

Bishop McGill continued to believe in the immorality of the unjust war against the South even after the war's bloodshed began in earnest. On October 10, 1863, McGill preached a sermon at a Mass for Union prisoners in Richmond, choosing as the topic "No man can serve two masters." This references Jesus's admonition to His disciples that they cannot profess to love God while also acting sinfully. Though the text of sermon is unknown, given the composition of McGill's congregation at the prison Mass and his previously espoused conception of the moral nature of the conflict, it is likely the bishop used the biblical reference to challenge his listeners to consider the incompatibility of their devotion to the Almighty with their unjust attempt to subjugate the South. Further evidence in support of this assertion is that a local Confederate paper approved of the homily, with the author writing, "the tendency of the discourse was most appropriate."[332] In this way, McGill tied the political to the spiritual; he claimed that, since the war is unjust, any effort to oppose the South militarily must be offensive to God.

This moral quandary was even more serious for Catholic chaplains serving in the Union army, as McGill contended, "Priests come from the North as Chaplains with Catholic volunteers, is it *more for the good of souls* to leave these chaplains as they stand by the general laws of the church and the teachings of theologians; or to give them the faculties which they solicit from us, into whose land they come as officials of an invading army."[333] Here, McGill's argument tests the unity of American Catholicism by using his hierarchical position as a means to further the war effort. Catholic bishops must give

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[332] "Religious Exercises at the Libby," *Daily Richmond Examiner*, October 10, 1863.

[333] John McGill to Patrick Lynch, May 15, 1861, in Wight, "War Letters," 262.

permission to priests to administer the sacraments—most frequently by celebrating Mass and by hearing confessions—within the geographic boundaries of their diocese. McGill asserted priests in "the army called out by Mr. Lincoln" were unjustly invading Virginia, and he could not grant those priests faculties to offer sacraments without condoning their immoral behavior. The bishop wrote these words in mid-May 1861, before any major battle had taken place in Virginia, and so these statements can be interpreted as theoretical in nature as McGill analyzed the implications of the coming conflict (or as he puts it at the end of the letter, "a mere expression of thoughts which force themselves on my mind."[334]). Nevertheless, McGill's threat must have attracted the attention of Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick of Baltimore, the senior American prelate, who successfully garnered permission from Rome to authorize Union Catholic chaplains to perform their sacramental duties when unable to communicate with the local bishop.[335] Kenrick's actions on behalf of Catholic unity received the support of Rome, yet McGill continued to insist on the righteousness of his divisive position.

Despite Rome's intervention, Bishop McGill continued to refuse to grant Union Catholic chaplains sacramental faculties. Several priests attached to the Army of the Potomac, including Jesuits Fr. Peter Tissot and Fr. Joseph O'Hagan, as well as Fr. Thomas Scully of Boston, were captured during the Peninsular Campaign and held prisoner in Richmond.[336] Fr. Tissot noted how several Southern priests remained distant

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[334] John McGill to Patrick Lynch, May 15, 1861, in Wight, "War Letters," 262.

[335] John P. Marschall, "Francis Patrick Kenrick, 1851–1863: The Baltimore Years" (PhD Dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1965), 357.

[336] The Confederate government allowed the priests to serve their time as prisoners in a form of house arrest within the residence of the bishop, as described in Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 156–157 and in David Power Conyngham, *Soldiers of the Cross, the Authoritative Text: The Heroism of*

with him because of their Confederate loyalty and he even had to tread carefully in conversations with Bishop McGill.[337] When Tissot was exchanged, the priest requested faculties of McGill, who initially declined to do so. Undeterred, Fr. Tissot insisted he had a pastoral duty to administer the sacraments, as he described, "[McGill] granted me faculties for the Northern soldiers, but did not seem inclined to give them to civilians (Southerners). This did not satisfy me. I explained how I might be in some place where there might be Catholics living. Why could I not hear their confessions? "Well, you may," he said, "provided you do not talk to them against the South.""[338] Here, Tissot shows the absurdity of the bishop's position, in that McGill applies an arbitrary regional restriction on the traditions of an (ostensibly) universal Church. Indeed, even after protest, Tissot still did not receive the full support of the bishop, who imposed parameters on his faculties within the Richmond diocese. In this way, Bishop McGill weaponized his ecclesiastical authority by putting his Southern politics ahead of his religious duties as a Catholic bishop. He was not the only Southern bishop to do so. Archbishop of New Orleans Jean Marie Odin disciplined one of his own diocesan priests, Fr. Claude Paschal Maistre, for espousing antislavery views; the bishop further censured Maistre when the priest officiated at the funeral Mass of Captain André Cailloux, a Black Catholic officer killed in the Siege of Port Hudson.[339] In eyes of prelates like McGill and Odin, priests had to be Southern in spirit if they were to administer the sacraments.

Catholic Chaplains and Sisters in the American Civil War, eds. David J. Endres and William B. Kurtz (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), 156.

[337] Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 156–157.

[338] Peter Tissot, quoted in Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 157.

[339] As described in Stephen J. Ochs, "A Patriot, A Priest, and A Prelate: Black Catholic Activism in Civil War New Orleans," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 12, no. 1 (1994): 49–75 and Drew Gilpin Faust, *This*

Bishop McGill showed how deeply his Southern partisanship damaged Catholic unity through attempts to manipulate the selection of bishops to fill vacant sees in both the South and North. In 1861, he wrote to another Southern bishop, seeking his advice on who they should recommend to Rome as a nominee to lead the Diocese of Savannah, Georgia.[340] After identifying and rejecting several previously proposed candidates for reasons of education, piety, and other factors of suitability, McGill noted in a letter to Bishop Lynch that any candidate must be a political (and theological) ally to the rebel cause: "It is difficult for me to think of any Southern priest upon whom you might place this burden of the mitre of Savannah….Would it not do to transplant Rev. Jas. O'Connor [of the Diocese of Pittsburgh] to Georgia? He was spoken of for Pittsburgh, and might be acceptable to the clergy of Savannah, unless he be too Northern in his views and feelings. What his views are I do not know."[341] In this letter, McGill sought to attach a political litmus test to the determination of a Catholic bishop. In his mind, a bishop "too Northern in his views" would not be suitable to lead a Southern diocese. Pope Pius IX may have been aware of this particular fracture in American Catholic unity, as in July 1861 he

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Republic of Suffering (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 49–51. For a contemporary view of the funeral and the intra-diocesan conflict, see "The Funeral of Captain Andre Cailloux." *Harper's Weekly*, August 29, 1863, 551.

[340] Bishop John Barry had only been in charge of Savannah for two years before his untimely death from illness in 1859. Richard H. Clarke, *Lives of the Deceased Bishops of the Catholic Church in the United States* (New York: Richard H. Clarke, 1888), 3:103.

[341] John McGill to Patrick Lynch, April 25, 1861, in Wight, "War Letters," 261. McGill rejects other candidates for much more religiously applicable reasons: "I do not think Rev. Mr. P. [Joseph Plunkett] of Portsmouth would suit at all. It is sometime, nay *years*, since I have met Rev. Mr. [H. V.] Brown of Tenn. What he has been doing since I do not know. *Then* he did not seem to me to have the necessary science, and also he was but a recent convert. Your visitor Dr. C. [J. W. Cummings of New York] has the talent and information. — The judgment of the Bp. of Buffalo [John Timon] is not to be lightly esteemed. — The Dr is by many considered *too much* a man of the world. For my part I have been but seldom in his society and can scarcely be justified in coming to a conclusion as to whether the Holy Ghost wishes "to place him as a bishop to rule the church of God." I have no reason to decide for the affirmative as yet….Some formerly spoke to me highly of Rev. Mr. [William] Quin of St. Peter's Church, New York. You might make some inquiries about him, and find out whether he would suit."

selected a reliable Southern prelate, Bishop Augustin Verot, to assume the diocesan leadership of Savannah as an addition to his episcopal jurisdiction over Florida.[342] McGill was undoubtedly satisfied as to the political qualifications of Verot, who had only recently published his *Tract for the Times*, in which he joyfully proclaimed, "the dismemberment of the Union is already consummated, and the faint hopes of a permanency of the Union, which existed yet when the first pages of this paper were written, have altogether vanished, and the new flag of the Southern Confederacy is now given to the breeze, and waves under my eyes."[343] If nothing else, Verot was certainly Southern in his "views and feelings."

Bishop McGill, apparently pleased with his efforts to maneuver the makeup of the American hierarchy, made another attempt to do so following the sudden passing of Baltimore's Archbishop Kenrick.[344] Within a fortnight of Kenrick's death, McGill wrote to Cardinal Alessandro Barnabò in Rome to request no one fill the vacant Archbishopric of Baltimore, as he described in a letter to Bishop Lynch: "In our present circumstances, the war continuing, and its result undiscoverable, I am of opinion it will be advisable for numerous reasons, to leave his successor unappointed till after the termination of the war." He then expounded on these reasons: "At least, it will be difficult to find a successor for ABp Kenrick, and while the province is so divided between North & south

[342] Verot was already the Vicar Apostolic—the equivalent of a bishop, but assigned to a location with a sparser population of Catholics—of Florida.

[343] Augustin Verot, *A Tract for the Times. Slavery & Abolitionism, being the Substance of a Sermon, Preached in the Church of St. Augustine, Florida, on this 4th Day of January, 1861, Day of Public Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer* (New Orleans: Catholic Propagator, 1861), 22.

[344] Kenrick died in his sleep on July 8, 1863. His heart may have failed; Marschall posits that Kenrick may have suffered a mild heart attack just three months earlier. Marschall, "Francis Patrick Kenrick," 367. The author goes on to describe the bishop's final night: "he went to bed, crossed his hands over the scapular on his breast, and awoke in eternity." Ibid., 371.

[*sic*], and an uncertainty existing as to which side will have Maryland, it will be difficult to select the proper person for that important see."[345] McGill was aware of the Church's state of division during this time and saw the vacancy as an opportunity to install a Southern bishop (or at least a bishop sympathetic to the South) to the influential Baltimore post. The efforts to which Richmond's bishop went in his attempt to secure a candidate he found acceptable further demonstrate the fractured nature of American Catholicism during the Civil War.

Bishop McGill spent most of the remainder of 1863 attempting to exert influence over the replacement bishop for the Baltimore see. In late July, he discussed a plan to travel north along with Bishops Lynch and Verot to represent Southern interests in the ongoing discussions among Northern bishops. In a letter to Bishop Lynch, he wrote, "If you & Bp Verot wish that we should send a joint petition to be allowed to go North to see about appointing a successor for the Abp of Baltimore, I should not object to try, but when there I should urge the policy of no appointment till after the war, and leave affairs to an administrator. I suppose Bp. [Francis] Whelan [of Wheeling], the senior suffragan, will have made an appointment of administrator ere this. I am anxious to hear from Baltimore."[346] This letter indicates McGill's worry about the lack of Southern input in the decision to recommend a new bishop; it is also telling he sought to travel alongside Lynch and Verot, two of the most outspoken Confederate bishops, as McGill likely

[345] John McGill to Patrick Lynch, July 23, 1863, in Wight, "War Letters," 264. Barnabò was the Prefect of the Congregation *Propaganda Fide* (Propagation of the Faith), responsible for overseeing all missionary work in the Church, including the American dioceses.

[346] John McGill to Patrick Lynch, July 24, 1863, in Wight, "War Letters," 266. Wight misidentifies Bishop Richard Whelan's first name in his editorial addition.

expected the three of them together stood the best chance of ensuring a pro-Southern candidacy.

This effort never came to fruition, however. McGill had previously attempted to cross into the North in 1862, but his request (delivered via Archbishop Kenrick) was denied by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, who "had been informed that the Bishop had encouraged the Seceders, and if such was the case, no regard would be shown his office, if he were found beyond the lines."[347] Not only does this indicate the wartime division of the Church was apparent even to an outsider like Stanton, but it also diminished McGill's hopes of receiving approval for a similar request in 1863, as he admitted in a letter to Bishop Lynch in October of that year: "One refusal would seem sufficient, especially as I have, as I have informed you, written to Rome respecting the successorship to the vacant see of the Archdiocese."[348] In the same letter he reiterates his desire "that if the war not be too long protracted, it will be advisable to wait its end before filling the see of Baltimore."[349] McGill's lessened enthusiasm may have also stemmed from not receiving any response from Rome to his correspondence from July.[350] This could be an indication Cardinal Barnabò did not support McGill's efforts, or it may have been due to the effectiveness of the Union blockade. Regardless, the bishop made no further attempts to directly influence the selection of a nominee. However, this did not stop him from

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[347] Francis Patrick Kenrick to Patrick Lynch, August 24, 1862, quoted in Wight, "War Letters," 267, n. 15.

[348] McGill prefaced that statement: "I do not deem it proper for me to take steps to obtain permission for myself and the Bps. of Charleston and Savannah to go to Baltimore as you suggest. In fact I once applied and was refused, to be allowed to go to New York and thence to Europe." John McGill to Patrick Lynch, October 22, 1863, in Wight, "War Letters," 267.

[349] John McGill to Patrick Lynch, October 22, 1863, in Wight, "War Letters," 267.

[350] In the same letter, McGill expresses his doubts at the rumors that Barnabò had died.

expressing his fears about who the eventual replacement would be, providing further evidence of the separation which existed between the Northern and Southern wings of the Catholic Church in America.

Throughout the autumn of 1863, McGill expressed his continued consternation at being unable to influence the replacement for Archbishop Kenrick. In September, he complained the South was not given a seat at the table in deciding who to recommend to Rome: "A report here the other day that the Bishops on the other side of the line were sending on to Rome a list of names for the see of Baltimore. But it does seem to me, that while it is so easy for them to obtain permission to send letters to us by flag of truce, they should inform us, and take our views on this."[351] Here, McGill expresses his fear the Southern view was not being taken into consideration, and was even being deliberately excluded, indicating his understanding of the division within the wartime Church. Desperate for news, he even asked Lynch in the same letter: "Have they written to you?" By the end of October, McGill heard through the grapevine of episcopal communication the Northern bishops had identified five candidates which they sent to Rome for consideration, but he remarked to Lynch his disappointment at not being able to participate in the decision-making process: "But stranger than all, that they did not think worth while [*sic*] to communicate with the Southern Bishops of the province on the subject."[352] The resentment he expresses here at being left out shows how importantly he

[351] John McGill to Patrick Lynch, September 3, 1863, in Wight, "War Letters," 266.

[352] John McGill to Patrick Lynch, October 22, 1863, in Wight, "War Letters," 267. McGill identifies the five nominees (as well as the convoluted chain of communiques by which he knew the information): "I may inform you that Bishop [John] Quinlan [of Mobile] tells me on the authority of Archbishop [John Baptist] Purcell [of Cincinnati], that the late Archbishop of Baltimore left three names for his successor vix Rev Messers [Henry B.] Coskery, [Thomas] Foley and Jenkins, and that the prelates at the funeral sent these on with the names of Bp Whelan and Bp [Martin John] Spalding added." Pope Pius IX selected Spalding to lead the Archdiocese of Baltimore in May 1864.

thought it that Southern views be included in the selection of the new bishop. As of December 1863, he was still in the dark as to the status of the Archdiocese: "I doubt if there is any appointment to the vacant Metropolitan see, as I had a few lines from Bp. Whelan last week of a pretty late date, and in them he said; they had yet no news about the appointment." He continues in a tone of resignation: "Bp. Spalding would be a very good choice as successor to the Abp. I do not see how any thing [*sic*] better can be done."[353] McGill conceded defeat in his efforts to combat the extension of Northern influence over the American episcopate, and his expressed thoughts in the letter show his attempt to make the best of the situation. Though unable to successfully influence the nominated candidates to replace Archbishop Kenrick, the actions of Bishop McGill and the other Southern bishops demonstrate the ideological and administrative divisions which existed within the Catholic Church during the Civil War.

The sectionalism within the American Church even permeated the prayers of the bishops. McGill disapproved of a speech Archbishop Hughes made in support of Union army enlistment (and the draft) in 1862, as he wrote to Bishop Lynch: "I really think that the Archbishop of New York is losing his wits. I trust in Providence, who will I hope render vain all their designs and efforts. We must pray."[354] In addition to insulting his (ostensible) brother bishop, McGill's statement indicates he prays neither for peace exclusively nor in submission to God's will; rather, he prays for Southern victory, and trusts God is on the side of the South. He was of course not the only Southern Catholic prelate to pray for Confederate victory. In an 1862 fundraising letter to a missionary society in France, Archbishop Odin wrote, "the desperate war which afflicts the South

[353] John McGill to Patrick Lynch, December 17, 1863, in Wight, "War Letters," 269.

[354] John McGill to Patrick Lynch, September 2, 1862, in Wight, "War Letters," 263.

causes great discomfort in all the land. Misery increases rapidly, and it is difficult for us to foresee the end of the disastrous conflict." He continued, "Those who do not take an active part in the operations of the war, increase the fervor for attracting the protection of heaven on the combatants. Our churches are frequented by many at all hours of the day. In all the diocese we have communions beyond our expectations. The devotion to Immaculate Mary has increased, and we have confidence that she, who is the consolation of the afflicted, will protect us in this bloody struggle."[355] Like his Virginian brother, Archbishop Odin's prayers and the prayers of his flock were distinctly Southern.

Not even a papal exhortation to the bishops could convince them to pray together. In 1862, Pope Pius IX issued a joint appeal for peace to both Archbishop Hughes and Archbishop Odin. "[W]e urge you," he wrote, "with all the force and earnestness of our mind, to exhort, with your eminent piety and episcopal zeal, your clergy and faithful to offer up their prayers, and also apply all your study and exertion, with the people and their chief rulers, to restore forthwith the desired tranquillity [*sic*] and peace by which the happiness of both the Christian and the civil republic is principally maintained."[356] The pope reminded the bishops they ought to be the example for the rest of the country to "love each other with uninterrupted charity."[357] In a final and incisive rebuke to the

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[355] Jean Marie Odin to the President and Members of the Council of the Propagation of the Faith, Lyons, February 28, 1862, in Willard E. Wight and J. M. Odin, "A Letter from the Archbishop of New Orleans, 1862," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 3, no. 2 (1962): 130–131. Even some sisters, so famously apolitical, shared their prayerful partisanship with Fr. James Sheeran. The Sisters of the Visitation in Frederick, Maryland hosted the Confederate chaplain at their school. Sheeran describes his conversation with them: "I was not a little surprised to hear the enthusiastic feelings displayed by these good Sisters for the success of the Southern cause. They assured me that, whilst our brave men were fighting the battles of their country, they and the children were praying for the success of our arms." Sheeran, *Civil War Diary*, 64.

[356] Pius IX to John Hughes, October 18, 1862, in *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 14, no. 3 (1903): 265.

[357] Pius IX to Hughes, October 18, 1862, 265.

sectional strife and infighting already shown by the bishops, Pius stressed the importance of working for true peace rather than partisan victory: "we are confident that they would comply with our paternal admonitions and hearken to our words the more willingly as of themselves they plainly and clearly understand that we are influenced by no political reasons, no earthly considerations, but impelled solely by paternal charity and peace, to exhort them to charity and peace."[358] The pope was likely aware of the publicly divisive stances taken by his American bishops, and thus his reminder to avoid entangling the spiritual mission of the Church with political sectionalism is particularly apt.

Southern bishops, belatedly and half-heartedly, attempted to join the Northern bishops in prayers for peace late in 1863. No doubt the Union twin victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg in July of that year and the dwindling prospects of Confederate victory sobered the Southern prelates, influencing them to exert some effort towards repairing relations with Northern bishops. In October, Bishop Verot of Savannah proposed each bishop (North and South) unite their dioceses in a novena (nine days of intentional prayer) for peace beginning on December 8, the still-recently declared Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary.[359] However, McGill noted in mid-December he was unaware of any intent by the Northern bishops to participate, writing to Bishop Lynch: "There is, from no source, any indication that the proposal of yourself and Bp Verot to the Bps. of the North to unite in prayers for peace has been accepted and

[358] Pius IX to Hughes, October 18, 1862, 265–266.

[359] Augustin Verot to Patrick Lynch, October 5, 1863, in Kraszewski, *Catholic Confederates*, 77; John McGill to Patrick Lynch, October 22, 1863, in Wight, "War Letters," 268. In 1854, Pope Pius IX published *Ineffabilis Deus*, an encyclical which defined the Immaculate Conception and declared it a part of Catholic dogma. Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus: The Immaculate Conception*, Papal Bull, December 8, 1854, https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius09/p9ineff.htm (accessed April 27, 2022).

acted on."[360] Instead, McGill "announced that from the 1st of December next to the 20th, was set apart by the Bishops of the Catholic Church of the Confederacy for prayers in behalf of peace."[361] Ominously, he also independently developed a draft moral framework to justify the military conscription of Catholic priests—even as common soldiers—and wrote to Lynch he wanted to "very much to have your views and the views of the Bps of the South."[362] McGill thought of the Church in the South as a distinct entity, separate from its former brothers in the North. Thus, even in areas as spiritually unitive as prayer, Bishop McGill and other Southern bishops identified themselves as separate from their Northern brothers.

Richmond's bishop set the example of distinctly Southern Catholicism which priests in Virginia eagerly followed. On and off the battlefield, the behavior and expressed beliefs of clergymen indicated their understanding of the American Church as fractured. Behind the lines, Richmond's Father John Teeling preached to Union Catholic prisoners on the immorality of the North's war against the South.[363] Lay parishioners at Fr. Teeling's St. Peter's church, perhaps encouraged by their pastor's example, complained to government authorities after Fr. Thomas Scully, a captured Union chaplain, said Mass one Sunday in 1862, as Fogarty describes, "Some Catholics grumbled that, while fulfilling their Sunday Mass obligation, they would be "compelled

[360] John McGill to Patrick Lynch, December 17, 1863, in Wight, "War Letters," 269.

[361] "Prayers for Peace," *Charleston Mercury,* November 30, 1863.

[362] John McGill to Patrick Lynch, December 17, 1863, in Wight, "War Letters," 270.

[363] Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism,* 157.

to attend the ministrations of Yankee chaplains.”"[364] Thus, McGill's and Teeling's examples of Catholic sectionalism encouraged lay Catholics in Richmond to flaunt the Church's hierarchy and attempt to exert authority over the priests serving their parish. Indeed, the episode recalls the trustee controversies American bishops faced at the turn of the century, in which parishioners sought to oust priests and control Church property. In this way, Southern Catholic leaders participated in the fracturing of their Church.

In Union-occupied territory, some Virginian priests allowed their Southern political allegiance to distort their sense of Church unity. Like the aforementioned Father O'Keefe of Norfolk and Fr. Becker of Martinsburg, Jesuit Fr. Peter Kroes of Alexandria publicly spurned demands to pray for Federal authorities, but he went further than his fellow Confederates by refusing to fulfill his priestly duties. Unwilling to take an oath of loyalty to the United States as a civil requirement to perform marriages, Kroes abdicated his sacramental responsibilities, sending Catholic couples to Washington, D.C. to be married.[365] The deeds of these priests demonstrate the disunity which afflicted the Church during the war; the actions and expressed thoughts of Catholic chaplains serving in the Confederate armies show these fractures extended to the battlefield as well.

Catholic chaplains in the Confederate army allowed their Southern politics to supersede their duty as priests of a universal Church. The experiences of Jesuit Fr. Louis-Hippolyte Gache, Redemptorist Fr. James Sheeran, and Jesuit Fr. John Bannon serve to

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[364] Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 157. Fogarty quotes Fr. Peter Tissot's recollection of his captivity in Richmond. While Fr. Fogarty does not identify Scully specifically, the incident matches almost exactly one described by Conyngham about Fr. Scully in Conyngham, *Soldiers of the Cross*, 156.

[365] Bailey, *A History of the Diocese of Richmond*, 150–151.

illustrate this point.[366] The priests are representative of the many other Catholic clergymen who served the Confederacy. These men were priests before they became Confederates, yet their actions demonstrate that, at times, political loyalties trumped religious obligations.

Catholic chaplains in the Confederacy viewed the war in moral terms. Like Bishop McGill, Fr. Sheeran believed in the righteousness of the Southern cause and abhorred what he viewed as the depravity of the soldiers fighting for the Union. Indeed, Sheeran sprinkled various disparaging and dehumanizing terms to describe these immoral Northern soldiers throughout his wartime diary, including: "Abolition robbers", "Lincoln's bandits", "subjects of King Abe 1st", "hirelings", and "brigands," among many others.[367] Fr. Gache also despised Union soldiers, admitting to a fellow Jesuit he enjoyed the thrill of battle and even rejoiced at seeing "shells exploding in the midst of those confused and terrible [Union] troops."[368] This revelry in death is hardly fitting for a Catholic priest, especially given the sectional nature of his celebration. Reflecting on the carnage, bloodshed, and suffering he witnessed firsthand, Sheeran described the deplorable nature of the Union army: "I had seen the worst passions of the human heart displayed under the names of liberty and humanity."[369] He then immediately contrasts this with his view of his fellow Confederate soldiers: "I had seen displayed a patriotism

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[366] Fr. Gache served as a chaplain in the 10th Louisiana Volunteers; Fr. Sheeran was assigned to the 14th Louisiana Regiment. Both priests operated in Virginia for most of the war as part of the Army of Northern Virginia. Fr. Bannon served his chaplaincy in the West, but transferred to Richmond in 1863 and soon began work for the Confederate government.

[367] Sheeran, *Civil War Diary*, 15, 72, and 78.

[368] Louis-Hippolyte Gache to Rev. Father Cornette, SJ, July 8, 1862, quoted in Kraszewski, *Catholic Confederates*, 28.

[369] Sheeran, *Civil War Diary*, 61.

more noble, more elevated, more brave and chivalrous than any recorded in the world's history."[370] Similarly, Fr. Bannon saw himself as one of many Southern "crusaders" fighting a "holy war" to protect their homeland.[371] Catholic chaplain believed in the morality of the Confederate rebellion and opposed Northern aggression on moral terms.

Likewise, priest-chaplains opposed fellow Catholics who supported the Union effort. Fr. Sheeran expressed frustration with naïve Catholic Union soldiers who allowed anti-Catholic New England Protestants and Know Nothings (or as he called them, the "grog shop keepers of the North") to take advantage of the Catholic tradition of patriotism and convince the young men to fight an immoral war.[372] In a letter to a fellow Jesuit with pro-Union sympathies, Fr. Gache decried the priest should "Make haste to become once more a true and loyal Southerner."[373] He then proceeded to insult his colleague, calling him a "double-dyed Yankee…right to the very substance of his soul."[374] Here, Gache equates Northern political allegiance with spiritual corruption, not only challenging the political preferences of his brother Jesuit, but also asserting those preferences were condemnable. Sheeran wrote, "I grieve to think that a Union, which was once the political idol of my soul, was now shattered forever and lying the bleeding victim of religious fanatics and political demagogues."[375] While certainly referring to

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[370] Sheeran, *Civil War Diary*, 61–62.

[371] John Bannon, quoted in Kraszewski, *Catholic Confederates,* 6.

[372] Sheeran, *Civil War Diary*, 76–77.

[373] Louis-Hippolyte Gache to Phillipe de Carriere, March 8, 1863, quoted in Kraszewski, *Catholic Confederates,* 29.

[374] Louis-Hippolyte Gache to Phillipe de Carriere, May 19, 1863, quoted in Kraszewski, *Catholic Confederates,* 29.

[375] Sheeran, *Civil War Diary*, 59.

antislavery Protestant ministers and abolitionists, Sheeran also explicitly included none other than Archbishop Hughes as one of the fanatics he denounced:

> I became still more fully convinced of the great injury done by a certain Northern prelate in identifying himself with the war. I am very much afraid that he has been the means of leaving many a poor widow and orphan in his diocese. It was galling to hear for the first time that a Catholic Archbishop had urged a rigorous prosecution of a war waged for an unjustifiable object and conducted in a manner unworthy of a barbarous nation. Poor simple Catholics, unable to distinguish between the opinions of a Bishop and the doctrines of the Church! They looked upon Archbishop Hughes's War Manifestoes as so many exhortations to fight against the South and believed so, they were aiding the cause of religion, in over-running our country and killing our people.[376]

Sheeran denied there could be any justice in Northern aggression, nor that Catholics of good faith could support the Union's position in the war. In this statement, he exhibits a flagrant disregard for the Church hierarchy he professed to support by denying the validity of Hughes's argument—he even blamed the Archbishop for killing the men he encouraged to enlist in the Union army. Southern Catholic chaplains insisted true Catholics simply could not support the Union's cause in the war, and to be authentically Catholic one had to be pro-Southern.

Confederate Catholic chaplains were willing to set aside their priestly vocation at times to serve the Southern cause. Fr. Gache expressed relief when a dying Northern soldier to whom he had just given Last Rites disclosed that though he fought for the Union, he was not an abolitionist.[377] In so doing, Gache indicates he may have withheld his prayers had the man professed a different political stance; this shows he was willing to renounce his pastoral duty for the sake of Southern slavery. Fr. Sheeran once assumed command of a group of Confederate soldiers when they detected Union troops moving to

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[376] Sheeran, *Civil War Diary*, 77.

[377] Kraszewski, *Catholic Confederates,* 28.

their position: "Mounting my Grey and riding down to the ambulances, I ordered the drivers to move forward as quickly as possible. They obeyed promptly. As I saw no commissioned officer present, I took command of the stragglers and formed in a line on a road running through the woods." The ostensibly non-combatant priest then conveyed tactical direction he received from the overall commander: "The commanding officer gave orders to reserve fire till the enemy were in short range and then let them have it. The Yankees were advancing very cautiously through the woods. I rode up to our battery to inform the brave Capt. Dakin of the La. G. B. of their approach."[378] Though spared from initiating fire on his Union enemies by the arrival of a larger Confederate force in the nick of time, Fr. Sheeran's willingness to take an active role in combat demonstrates how his Confederate ideology overrode his fidelity to Catholic doctrine. Unlike his fellow priests, Bannon actually did fight in the war, firing cannons alongside Confederate artillerymen in the Siege of Vicksburg![379] Historian Gracjan Kraszewski describes it as "a remarkable, even scandalous, testament to his zealous Southern partisanship" that Bannon "was willing to overstep the bounds of his priesthood and become, for all intents and purposes, a soldier."[380] In the manner of their service to the Confederacy, Catholic priests demonstrated the fractured nature of the Catholic Church during the American Civil War.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of this American Catholic factionalism occurred outside the country itself. Fr. Bannon's willingness to serve as a soldier was

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[378] Sheeran, *Civil War Diary*, 26.

[379] Kraszewski, *Catholic Confederates,* 40. "He supposedly knew each man's job "as well as he knew the Bible." Bannon performed myriad tasks, including swabbing the barrel with a sponge, ramming down powder and canister, and even firing the cannon."

[380] Kraszewski, *Catholic Confederates,* 40.

matched by his desire to serve as a diplomat. After celebrating Mass at St. Peter's in Richmond on August 30, 1863, Bannon spoke briefly with Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory. Mallory invited the priest and Bishop McGill to a meeting with Jefferson Davis, who requested Bannon's assistance in two diplomatic assignments: to dissuade Irishmen from emigrating to the North and to achieve papal recognition of the Confederate States. With Bishop McGill's approval, Bannon eagerly accepted the tasks.[381] In so doing, the Virginia clergymen endorsed an attempt by the Confederate government to enlist foreign military and diplomatic support. They (and, subsequently, Bishop Lynch as well) took an active role in manipulating the fractured nature of the American Church to their advantage, using their positions as Catholic clerics to invoke papal support for the Southern cause. Pope Pius IX declined the invitation to involve himself in the American Civil War, and provided an excellent example of Catholic unity and peacemaking so lacking in the Southern church by way of his response to Davis's overtures: "We, on Our part, shall not cease offering up Our most fervent prayers to Almighty God, begging and supplicating Him, in His Goodness, to pour out upon all the people of America a spirit of Christian charity and peace, and to rescue them from the multitude of evils now afflicting them."[382] Unlike his American bishops, the pope focused exclusively on the restoration of peace rather than a divisive and sectional victory.

In 1861, with the secession crisis in full swing and the threat of open war still looming, New York's Archbishop John Hughes wrote to his counterpart in Wheeling,

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[381] Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 162.

[382] Pius IX to Jefferson Davis, December 3, 1863, in *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 14, no. 3 (1903): 270.

Bishop Richard Whelan, about the behavior of American Catholics during the preceding months of tumult. He wrote, "I think, my dear Bishop, that the Catholics of the North have behaved themselves with great prudence, moderation, and a dignity which has, for the moment at least, inspired, among the high and the low, great respect for them as a religious body in this Union."[383] Hughes communicated his pride at the ability of Northern Catholics to show the "practical patriotism" required of American Catholics for decades. His next words are less laudatory, and express his disappointment with the behavior of Southern Catholic bishops:

> I regret I cannot say as much for the Catholics, and for some of their clergy, in the South….they have justified the attitude taken by the South on principles of Catholic theology, which I think was an unnecessary, inexpedient, and, for that matter, a doubtful if not a dangerous position, at the commencement of so unnatural and so lamentable a struggle. . . . . I could write more on this subject, but I think it is unnecessary. My respect and affection for the people of the South are the same as they ever have been. And I look forward with hope to a reconciliation between the contending parties, to be effected, perhaps, at no very distant day.[384]

Here, Hughes describes the internal strife which engulfed the American Catholic Church. He laments that Catholic prelates lent religious justification to matters of constitutional policy, and criticizes the disruptive effect of those actions on the unity of the Church. In expressing hope for a day of healing, Hughes recognized the split which had already occurred within the Church. The American Civil War divided the Catholic Church along moral lines as well as geographic borders.

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[383] John Hughes to a Southern bishop, May 7, 1861, quoted in John R. G. Hassard, *Life of the Most Reverend John Hughes, D.D., First Archbishop of New York. With Extracts from his Private Correspondence* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1866), 439. Though Hassard does not identify the specific "Southern bishop" to whom Hughes addressed the letter, Fogarty surmises that Richard Whelan was the recipient by using contextual evidence within Hughes's letter. Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 146.

[384] Hughes to a Southern bishop, May 7, 1861, 439–440.

The day of healing long sought by Archbishop Hughes did eventually come, but only after the cessation of hostilities and the Union's triumph over the rebellion. Had the Civil War ended with Southern independence, it is difficult to imagine how the Catholic Church could have returned to amicable unity. Though of course any such line of inquiry is speculative, the Southern Catholic Church had developed an increasingly divergent theology of slavery and had even condemned the Federal effort to keep the country united as morally abhorrent. The predominant historical overemphasis of the postbellum Catholic hierarchy's renewed unity obscures the division which marred the American Church during the years of war, and which could have ultimately broken the Church after the war. While this sketch does not detail the full contours of that division, it does point the way to an area of American Catholic history which deserves more nuanced attention by historians.

VIII. CONCLUSION: "DEFEATED YET WITHOUT A STAIN"

One of Father Ryan's most famous poems, "The Sword of Robert Lee," illustrates succinctly the themes of theological conflict, loyalty, and Catholic factionalism which distinguish Catholic service to the Confederacy. The poem concludes with the following two stanzas:

Forth from its scabbard! how we prayed,
That sword might victor be; —
And when our triumph was delayed,
And many a heart grew sore afraid,
We still hoped on while gleamed the blade
Of noble Robert Lee.
Forth from its scabbard! all in vain
Bright flashed the sword of Lee;—
'Tis shrouded now in its sheath again,
It sleeps the sleep of our noble slain;
Defeated yet without a stain.
Proudly and peacefully.[385]

Above, the reader clearly sees Ryan's support of the Confederate cause, including slavery, with his insistence Lee's sword (a symbol for the Confederacy) was unstained. The priest assumes his place as a loyal member of the Southern nation by including himself among those hoping for victory ("*our* triumph," "*We* still hoped on," and "*our* noble slain"). Lastly, Ryan's invocation of the Divine—"how we prayed, That sword might the victor be"—demonstrates how the Church itself was split during the bitter conflict.

Perhaps Randall Miller best describes the most significant result of Catholic support to the Confederacy: how it was interpreted by Black Catholics. "Catholic prayers, poems, or diplomacy moved neither God nor man to stave off southern defeat, but they

[385] Abram J. Ryan, *Father Ryan's Poems* (Mobile: Jno. L. Rapier & Co., 1879), 19.

did hitch the church to white southern destiny. Blacks could not forget the church's perversions of Christian universality to southern political and racial expediency."[386]

[386] Randall M. Miller, "Slaves and Southern Catholicism," in *Masters & Slaves in the House of the Lord: Race and Religion in the American South 1740–1870*, ed. John B. Boles (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 150–151.

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