

# ORGANIZATION OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE: AMERICAN CATHOLIC DEVOTIONAL WORKS, 1791-1866

JOSEPH P. CHINNICI, O.F.M.

*Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley*

ONE OF the dominant characteristics of American Catholic life from 1791 to 1866 was the search for unity through ecclesiastical discipline—the desire for a uniform adherence to ritual practices, patterns of religious behavior, and forms of prayer. It was presumed that a strict observance of universal norms in communal and personal religious life would bind the small community into a coherent whole and unite it to the international ecclesial body. The period under consideration exhibited a progressively increasing emphasis on Church structures. The people of God, both clerical and lay, came to understand their life from the perspective of correct organization. This value both shaped and was encouraged by a particular approach to the spiritual life. Organization and uniformity were not only structural characteristics; they proceeded from the deepest religious needs of the people. The following essay will argue that the passage from a missionary to an immigrant church involved a definite religious sensibility. The devotional works of the period indicate that the journey from a condition of almost chaotic pluralism in forms of prayer and ritual practices to a position of relative stability presupposed a particular view of the person, the world, and the Church. After reviewing the general organizational trends, the article will examine this brand of spirituality.

## I

One general orientation of the American Catholic's approach to the Christian life can be discerned in an examination of personal testimonies, the activities of the bishops, and the legislation of the Councils of Baltimore. A significant body of source material for the first quarter of the nineteenth century indicates that uniformity of behavior was thought to be essential to the very life of the Church. There was an underlying feeling that pluralism in spiritual discipline reflected a shallow faith and a tenuous connection with Rome. In October 1791, on the eve of the First National Synod, John Carroll wrote to Charles Plowden, a friend in England, that before he could divide the Baltimore Diocese, he needed to establish uniform discipline, "that as little danger as possible may remain of a disunion with the Holy See."<sup>1</sup> In 1794 Filippo Filicchi, an Italian

<sup>1</sup> John Carroll to Charles Plowden, October 12, 1791, in Thomas O'Brien Hanley, S.J., ed., *The John Carroll Papers* 1 (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame, 1976) 524. Hereafter cited as *JCP*.

visitor, attributed the inexact observance of ecclesiastical custom to "ignorance of the reasons on which the fundamental principles of religion are founded." Americans, he wrote, "believe in the unity and infallibility of the Church, but they hardly recognize that authority will obligate them to obedience in matters established for their conduct." What was needed were priests properly trained in doctrine and conduct, but their dependence on the Roman court must not be too evident.<sup>2</sup> This type of thinking was further elaborated by Pierre Babade, a Sulpician teaching at St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore. He complained to Carroll that the liturgical practices of William Dubourg, the seminary's rector, were sapping the foundations of discipline, making customs contrary to the general laws of the Church, and leading young ecclesiastics to believe that the laws of the Roman Church were not applicable in America.<sup>3</sup> Babade became so upset by the lack of a uniform approach that he carried his case to Propaganda in 1805. He noted that many Church laws had fallen into disuse. In America it was commonly accepted that "those laws which have been abrogated by contrary customs are to be disregarded."<sup>4</sup> This was an interesting observation, since Babade was speaking about the details of the Christian life: the celebration of the Eucharist without candles and in indecorous places, the failure of the priests to say the Roman breviary, the lack of respect for ceremonial law, and the amount of singing at solemn Mass. The priest was primarily concerned about the externals of cult and discipline. A priest in New York would seem to have agreed with the Sulpician's observations. He reported to Carroll a whole list of liturgical practices which he considered to be very lax. These included people parading across the sanctuary to get to the sacristy, schoolboys carrying the Blessed Sacrament, failure to stand at the Gospel, and not kneeling at the proper times.<sup>5</sup>

Complaints similar to these increased as Church membership grew and the need for organization began to dominate. A report to Propaganda, probably in the 1820's, ascribed the Protestant characterization of Catholicism as "elastic" to the continual lack of a uniform discipline.<sup>6</sup> This

<sup>2</sup> Filippo Filicchi to Cardinal Antonelli, 1794, Archives of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, *Scritture riferite nei congressi: America Centrale dal Canada all' istmo di Panama*, Vol. 3, fols. 47r-50r. Hereafter cited as *Congressi*. Microfilm copies of the American material for this period are deposited in the Archives of the University of Notre Dame. This Propaganda material is hereafter cited APF-AUND.

<sup>3</sup> P. Babade to John Carroll, 27<sup>x</sup>Bre, 1804, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, IK1. Hereafter cited as AAB.

<sup>4</sup> Petrus Babade, S.S., to Congregation, November 16, 1805, Archives of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, *Atti della Congregazione Particolare de 4 Marzo*, 1808, *America Settentrionale*, Vol. 145, fol. 102r. Cf. same to same, November 21, 1806, *ibid.*, fols. 103rv, 104r, 105r.

<sup>5</sup> M. Hurley to John Carroll, March 10, 1806, AAB, 1805-1806, 4G9.

<sup>6</sup> *Congressi*, Vol. 3, fol. 10rv.

would not do for a generation of apologists raised on Bossuet, who emphasized the "variations" in Protestantism and the immutability of Catholic doctrine and practice. Around 1826 Francis Niel, vicar general in Missouri, wrote a report on the state of the Catholic Church in the United States.<sup>7</sup> He called for a national council which would bind the American Church more closely to Rome and establish regular ecclesiastical discipline. This included the publication of the banns of marriage, the administration of baptism and matrimony in churches, confessional boxes, clerical dress, and first Communion instruction. The same year Rev. Bertrand Martial listed several abuses of customary law and complained about the lack of plain chant and Roman ceremonies in the seminaries.<sup>8</sup> Stephen Badin called for a standard catechism to be used in the United States.<sup>9</sup> Archbishop Ambrose Maréchal of Baltimore emphasized the need for "precious uniformity" in the same area.<sup>10</sup> An 1828 anonymous report traced the evils in the American Church to two dominant problems: lay trusteeism and the lack of a national clergy animated by the same common spirit and "sane principles."<sup>11</sup> It was largely to remedy these types of complaints that the Baltimore Council of 1829 was called. From the very beginning American Catholics had linked the desire for a strong spiritual life with the need for proper organization and uniformity in behavior.

After the First Provincial Council of Baltimore many of the American bishops saw one of their primary tasks as the encouragement of uniformity in the practice of the Christian life. In 1834 Martin John Spalding published the doctoral theses which he had defended in Rome. His ecclesiology explicitly stressed structural elements and Roman practices in disciplinary regulations.<sup>12</sup> Spalding carried a similar vision throughout his life. In imitation of the Protestant tract societies and mission riders, he called for "a thorough *organization carried out with efficiency in every Diocese.*"<sup>13</sup> He was the architect of the Second Plenary Council of

<sup>7</sup> "Etats unis de L'Amérique septentrionale: Etat de l'Eglise catholique dans ces pays," *Congressi* 8, fols. 141r, 142r to 154r, APF-AUND.

<sup>8</sup> "Note pour la Congrégation de la Propaganda," *Congressi* 8, fols. 660r, 661v, APF-AUND.

<sup>9</sup> S. T. Badin to Propaganda, December 15, 1826, *Congressi* 8, fols. 741rv-742rv, APF-AUND.

<sup>10</sup> A. Maréchal to Propaganda Fide, October 1, 1827, *Congressi* 9, fols. 357r-361r, APF-AUND.

<sup>11</sup> *Congressi* 9, fols. 73v-76r, APF-AUND.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Theses ex universa theologia et jure publico ecclesiastico quas auspiciibus et patronis eminentissimis patribus s. Consilii P. F. publice propugnandas suscipit Joh. Martinus Spalding Kentuckiensis eiusdem S. Consilii alumnus XVI. Kalend. August 1834* (Rome: In Collegio Urbano) esp. nos. XCIV, LXXXIII.

<sup>13</sup> Fr. Martin John Spalding to Bishop John Baptist Purcell, January 30, 1846, AUND. Cf. Thomas W. Spalding, *Martin John Spalding American Churchman* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1973) 124-128.

Baltimore in 1866. As will be seen, this marked a watershed in the Catholic conception of the Christian life. At his own diocesan synod of Baltimore in 1868 Spalding legislated against parish picnics and excursions, waltzes and round dances. He also presented a detailed schedule for Forty Hours devotion.<sup>14</sup> Because of the demands of the immigrant Church and the genuine need to establish order, Spalding's mentality was shared by many others.

In 1837 Father John Hughes, the future bishop of New York, witnessed to the continued existence of disciplinary pluralism and the need to remedy the situation. He told the Bishop of Cincinnati:

One of the two things which struck me most in the council was the diversity of opinion of the different speakers on certain points of discipline. This I could trace to nothing else but the difference of the circumstances in connection with which each speaker gave his opinion. Things were decided by each just as it appeared they would be applicable or otherwise in *his* congregation—forgetting that the point was to affect the Catholics of the whole province, and that these consist of every variety of minds and habits—from the artificial life of our fashionables in the great cities, down to the country—in times and places of which Mr. Badin, e.g. could lecture them on the stool of repentance before the whole assembly of the faithful.<sup>15</sup>

Hughes's writings testify to his own overwhelming concern for unity and authority.<sup>16</sup> In Cincinnati, Archbishop John Baptist Purcell pursued a similar approach in his attempt to control Irish wake practices and foster clerical life.<sup>17</sup> Among other factors, Purcell's concept of episcopal authority necessitated a strong approach to ecclesiastical discipline. In a meditation before he was consecrated, Purcell asked: "What is a Bishop? He is the *Man* of Endowment, the man of Christ, just as Peter, Paul, John, Titus. The Man of *Religion*, that illustrious forerunner, as says Bossuet, who came down from heaven and travels through this earth, through kingdoms, republics and nations, to gather the Elect of the Eternal Empire of her Infinite Lord."<sup>18</sup> An uncompromising respect for rubrical, synodal, dogmatic, and moral law also characterized the episcopacy of Francis Patrick Kenrick, Bishop of Philadelphia. Kenrick's four volumes of dogmatic theology, used in many of the seminaries, showed a preoc-

<sup>14</sup> Spalding, *Martin John Spalding* 180, 191-92.

<sup>15</sup> Father John Hughes to Bishop John Baptist Purcell, June 27, 1837, AUND.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. esp. Henry J. Browne, ed., "The Archdiocese of New York a Century Ago," A Memoir of Archbishop Hughes, 1838-1858," *Historical Records and Studies* 39-40, (1952) 129-90. The standard biography of Hughes is John R. G. Hassard, *Life of the Most Reverend John Hughes, D.D.* (New York: Appleton, 1866).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Andrew H. Deye, *Archbishop John Baptist Purcell of Cincinnati, Pre-Civil War Years* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Univ. of Notre Dame, 1959) 386-87.

<sup>18</sup> John Baptist Purcell, October 1, 1833, AUND.

reputation with structure and unity in discipline.<sup>19</sup> All of these men reflected the thinking of their times.

The needs of the era and the tendency to approach the Christian life from an organizational standpoint were probably nowhere more clearly revealed than in the legislation of the Baltimore synods and councils from 1791 to 1866.<sup>20</sup> The First National Synod passed regulations on such diverse items as church furnishings, vestments, instruction for first Communion, the administration of penance and matrimony, paschal duty, the Eucharistic liturgy, clerical dress, and devotion to the Blessed Virgin. In 1810 the Archbishop of Baltimore and his four suffragans issued articles on the faculties of traveling priests, the use of the Douay Bible in prayer books and pious works, the vernacular in the liturgy, theatre attendance, and novel reading. At least four of the seven provincial councils of Baltimore between 1829 and 1849 passed regulations enjoining the priests to follow the Roman ritual and ceremonials. There was other legislation affecting church ornamentation, confessionals, ecclesiastical dress, music, fasting, and devotion to the Blessed Virgin. The First Provincial Council in 1829 and the Plenary Council of 1852 called for episcopal authorization of prayer books. All of this legislation proceeded from a particular need to sharply define the Christian practice.

The Second Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1866 represented the apex of much of this legislation. In addition to the usual decrees about the sacraments and the liturgy, the Council included sections on indulgences, sacramentals, Benediction, missions, confraternities, and prayer books. Observations were made on scapulars, litanies, mental prayer, May devotions, Stations of the Cross, visiting the reserved Sacrament, the use of blessed bread, alms, daily prayers, blessings, ashes, Agnus Deis, blessed candles, vespers, Gregorian chant, pious societies, the Apostolate of

<sup>19</sup> On Kenrick see Hugh J. Nolan, *The Most Reverend Francis Patrick Kenrick, Third Bishop of Philadelphia, 1830-1851* (American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia, 1948); John Peter Marschall, C.S.V., *Francis Patrick Kenrick, 1851-1863: The Baltimore Years* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic Univ. of America, 1965); F. P. Kenrick, *Theologiae dogmaticae tractatus tres: De revelatione, de ecclesia, et de Verbo Dei* (4 vols.; Philadelphia: L. Johnson, 1839-40).

<sup>20</sup> For what follows see *Acta et decreta sacrorum conciliorum recentiorum collectio lacensis* 3 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1875); hereafter *CL*. See also *JCP* 1, 520-21, 526-45; 3, 130-32. Among the more important secondary studies of the councils are: Thomas F. Casey, *The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide and the Revision of the First Provincial Council of Baltimore (1829-1830)* (Rome: Gregorian Univ., 1957); Peter Guilday, *A History of the Councils of Baltimore (1791-1884)* (New York: Macmillan, 1932); John Tracy Ellis, "The Centennial of the First Plenary Council of Baltimore," in *Perspectives in American Catholicism* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1963) 134-62; James Hennesey, S.J., "The Baltimore Council of 1866: An American Syllabus," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 76/3 (September 1965) 157-73; David Spalding, C.F.X., "Martin John Spalding, Legislator," *ibid.* 75/3 (September 1964) 131-60.

Prayer, and processions. Title VII considered the "Promotion of Uniformity in Discipline." This referred to such items as the celebration of feasts, fasting practices, matrimonial dispensations, funeral rites, "Pic-Nics," excursions, and public prayers. The beginning of the decree summarized the mentality that lay behind it:

Since the Catholic faith depends entirely on the authority of God, who either teaches, commands, or forbids, it is utterly clear that it can never be diminished, become obsolete, or be in any way changed by lapse of time or change of locality. Also, although Holy Mother Church in her wise judgment does at times vary and change her discipline, human in origin as it is, she hopes and makes every effort to see to it that one and the same discipline is everywhere observed, if there is no persuasive need for a different procedure. Therefore we must take care, to the best of our ability, that our discipline either disagrees in no way with the discipline of the universal Church or, if this cannot be done in every detail, that it at least stays as close to that discipline as possible.<sup>21</sup>

Here the desire for unity merged with a structural approach to ecclesiology and a devotional ultramontanism. The spiritual life of the Catholic Christian was codified and thereby given a universal dimension.

This tendency to legislate the substance of Catholic practice in pre-Civil War America stemmed in large measure from the absolute necessity of bringing some degree of cohesion into the nascent Church. In the colonial period the absence of a strong hierarchical organization and the need to survive in a legally hostile environment had encouraged the development of a loose attitude towards disciplinary law. This combined with the prevailing acceptance of civil and religious liberty after the Revolution, the poverty of the missionary Church, and the increasingly diverse origins of the priests to create a situation of tremendous heterogeneity. Priests neglected liturgical law in the administration of the sacraments; churches were poorly furnished; widespread diversity in prayer weakened the witness to membership in the Roman communion. As a result, religious progress came to be evaluated with the yardstick of organization. The apologetic tradition, devotion to the Blessed Virgin, Eucharistic practice, and stress on the immutable character of Catholic discipline furthered the basic approach. German and Irish immigration, the structuring of urban Catholic life around the bishop, and a European ecclesiology which stressed authority increased the emphasis on external conformity. The growth of nativism necessitated a defensive position. Concern for the rubrical and externally identifiable characteristics of the spiritual life naturally dominated consciousness.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *CL* 3, 502.

<sup>22</sup> This interpretation is based on a reading of the letters to Propaganda Fide contained in the *Congressi*, Vols. 2-3, 6-10, *passim*. Some of the more important secondary studies

All of this is understandable, and however much churchpeople in the 1970's might lament this tendency to reduce the pluralistic expression of belief to a minimum, still definite Christian values emerged in the process: a strong awareness of the communal dimension of prayer, witness to a universal Church, and a definite incarnationalism which refused to reduce the Christian life to strictly internal conviction. In this context, however, it should be noted that the organizational tendency also revealed something else. It reflected one of the colorations of Catholic life during the period. A certain type of spirituality permeated much of the thinking of the age, and without it episcopal actions, conciliar legislation, and the search for disciplinary unity would have been largely ineffective. What was significant about organization was not that it was needed but that for some it comprised the very center of how they felt about their relationship to God. In other words, the structural development of pre-Civil War Catholicism was part of a spiritual sensibility. It was, in Péguy's phrase, a "mystique of salvation." It is the interior components of this sensibility which must now be examined.

## II

Religious sensibility may be defined as the intellectual and affective perception which an individual and/or community has of the relationship between religious experience and the various dimensions of life. As such, it is concerned with the underlying structure of the religious consciousness—not just the externals of behavior but how and why people approach Christian existence in a certain way and the interconnections which they make between their inner and outer lives. A particular sensibility is usually the product of external realities, e.g., nativism; inherited patterns of thinking, e.g., a tradition of spirituality; and personal initiative, the creative factor which is able to present in a given environment a "way of salvation" which appeals to people. In pre-Civil War America, external demands, as has been indicated, placed a primary emphasis on organization. This easily combined with a particular tradition of spirituality and the personal experiences of many Catholics to produce one dominant opinion about the person, the world, and the Church. The following section will attempt to outline one interior religious sensibility of the epoch by examining some printed sources dealing with devotional subjects. I make no attempt here to be exhaustive nor to

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dealing with this subject are: Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade 1800-1860* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1964); Jay P. Dolan, *The Immigrant Church* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ., 1975); Robert Gorman, *Catholic Apologetical Literature in the United States (1784-1858)* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Univ. of America, 1939); R. Aubert, "La géographie ecclésiologique au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 34 (1960) 11-55.

argue that this was the only outlook during the period. Only English works have been examined. It is presumed that the most popular devotional works both shaped and reflected the spiritual viewpoint of many of the people.

### *The Person*

In the area of personal self-understanding the connection between the environmental demands for structure and the inner vision of the spiritual life can be examined in the prayer books of the time. Two general spiritual traditions seem to be represented in the most popular works. The *Pious Guide to Prayer and Devotion* and the *Roman Catholic Manual* were two works emphasizing Christian interiority. The first, compiled by former Jesuits at Georgetown and published in 1792, went through at least twelve editions before 1852. The list of subscribers in the 1808 edition included Archbishop John Carroll (100 copies), Bishops Leonard Neale (100) and Benedict Joseph Flaget (6), Anthony Kohlman (50), and Stephen Theodore Badin (10). The *Roman Catholic Manual*, first issued in Boston in 1803 with the approval of Bishop Jean Cheverus, saw at least two more editions before 1837.<sup>23</sup>

The two works manifested a strong Christocentric character. The *Pious Guide* included the Litany of Jesus, meditations on Christ during Mass, and the Jesus Psalter, a prayer stemming from the old English spiritual tradition. The *Catholic Manual's* Litany, commemorating the "principal circumstances of our Saviour's Life and Passion," encouraged intimate meditations on the mysteries of Christ's life. It was a masterpiece of interior piety:

Blessed Jesus, true God and true man, have etc.

By thy power in creating heaven and earth, and all things therein contained, *have mercy on us.*

By thy goodness, in making man to thy own image and likeness, *have mercy on us.*

By thy mercy in redeeming man after his fall, *have mercy on us.*

By thy unspeakable love in making choice of the Virgin Mary for thy mother, *have mercy on us.*

<sup>23</sup> *Pious Guide to Prayer and Devotion, Containing Various Practices of Piety Calculated to Answer the Various Demands of the Different Devout Members of the Roman Catholic Church* (Georgetown: James Doyle, 1792); *Roman Catholic Manual, or Collection of Prayers, Anthems, Hymns, etc.* (Baltimore: Fielding Lucas Jr., n.d.). Cf. Joseph M. Finotti, *Bibliographia Catholica Americana: A History of Works Written by Catholic Authors, and Published in the United States, Part I, 1784-1820* (New York: Catholic Publication House, 1872); John Wright, *Early Prayer Books of America; Being A Descriptive Account of Prayer Books Published in the United States, Mexico, and Canada* (St. Paul, Minn.: Printed privately, 1896).



By the ineffable mystery of thy incarnation, whereby thou didst vouchsafe to unite thy divine person to our frail human nature, *have mercy on us.*

By thy blessed birth in a mean stable at Bethlehem, *have mercy on us.*<sup>24</sup>

The two books also agreed in a positive appreciation of the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist, stressing the love and forgiveness of God and the pleasures of adoration and thanksgiving. In both, the examination of conscience was detailed but not excessively exacting. The *Manual's* reflections on confirmation stressed the positive action of the Holy Spirit in the individual. These works combined with the numerous works of Fénelon and the American edition of Pacificus Baker's *The Devout Communicant* to represent the best in the humanistic tradition of piety.<sup>25</sup> Here the underlying spiritual anthropology was positive. Basically Christocentric, this tradition did not dwell excessively on fallen human nature but encouraged individual participation in the mystery of salvation. As a result, the necessity of structures, the mediation of the hierarchical Church and the saints, and external religious behavior (e.g., baroque devotionalism) did not play a preponderant role. The tendency of the works was to create *interior* communion with Christ. The person was evaluated as good, a possessor of the Spirit, one having direct access to the supernatural.

This first tradition, however, was not the dominant one, especially after 1815. The *Roman Catholic Manual* does not appear to have been very popular. Perhaps its appeal was limited because it omitted some of the more popular devotions. *The Devout Communicant* went through only one edition during this period. The *Pious Guide*, the most popular of the three works, combined its Christocentric interiority with baroque devotionalism. Succeeding editions became more exacting in penitential requirements and contained a greater selection of devotions, thereby emphasizing external practices.<sup>26</sup> The *Guide* also contained sections on regularity of life, reparation for sin, various novenas, and the ever-present reality of death. The centrality given to Sacred Heart devotions tended to focus on the wrongs and outrages daily committed against Christ,

<sup>24</sup> *Roman Catholic Manual* 305-6.

<sup>25</sup> Pacificus Baker, *The Devout Communicant* (London: J. P. Coghlan, 1794), first published in the United States 1818. Cf. Finotti for the works of Fénelon. For background information on the humanistic tradition of piety and its influence on the Enlightenment, see Emile Appolis, *Le "Tiers parti" catholique au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (Entre Jansénistes et Zelanti)* (Paris: Picard, 1960). A good example of the anthropology supporting this view can be found in *Catechism on the Foundations of the Christian Faith* (New York, 1811) 26-29, containing extracts from the letters of Fénelon.

<sup>26</sup> Compare e.g., the edition of 1792 with that of 1808 (New York: Bernard Dornin). For suggestions that the *Pious Guide* contain more devotions, see John Grassi to Simon William Gabriel Bruté, November 24, 1813, cited in Joseph Harold Feedler, C.S.C., "The Grassi-Bruté Correspondence" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Univ. of Notre Dame, 1932) 14-16.

fostering a slightly negative view of human nature. The Georgetown work presented three general rules of guidance: (1) frequent remembrance of God's presence; (2) purity of intention;

3d. To be attentive to your predominant passion or evil inclination, and to apply yourself to the conquering of them. Think yourself never happier than when you have wherein to overcome yourself, both on the [?] of honouring God by the homage of some victory, and because of the opportunity given you of increasing your merits, and augmenting your crown in heaven.<sup>27</sup>

In general, the work seems to have served as a halfway point between the humanistic tradition and the much more influential rigorist inheritance.

John Baptist David's *True Piety*, a reprint of the Cork edition of 1797, taken partly from the French, represented the more dominant current of the American Catholic's interior religious sensibility before the Civil War.<sup>28</sup> Although the evaluation of the person in this work was extreme, it represented the spiritual orientation of the epoch. *True Piety* went through six editions before 1832. By the time it was issued again in 1848, its tradition passed to the public through *The Catholic's Manual* (1832), *The Ursuline Manual* (1844, 1845, 1846, 1847), *A Manual of Catholic Devotions* (1859), confessional practices, hierarchical statements, and, as will be indicated in a later section, the prevailing understanding of the world and the Church in confraternities, sodalities, and compilations of prayers.

The most important characteristic of the spiritual life according to *True Piety* was self-discipline. "The corruption of our nature, the perpetual rebellion of human passions, the constant lusting of the flesh against the spirit, puts us in the necessity of offering a continual violence to ourselves."<sup>29</sup> This "violence" was accomplished through the performance of every action with care and diligence, carrying crosses, watchfulness and prayer, examination of conscience, spiritual reading, almsgiving, visiting those in prison, the sick, and the poor, retirement from the world, and strict adherence to a rule of life. Pleasures and amusements were to be viewed as remedies which should not be "hurtful, nor dangerous, nor too frequent, nor too continual." The work listed numerous examples of mortification: resistance to unprofitable activities, custody of the eyes, suppression of idle curiosity, regulation of innocent pastimes, speaking moderately and without emotion, kind behavior towards those one dis-

<sup>27</sup> *Pious Guide* (1792) 5.

<sup>28</sup> *True Piety or, The Day Well Spent, Being a Catholic Manual of Chosen Prayers, Devout Practices, and Solid Instructions. Adapted to Every State of Life. Taken Partly from the French.* By A Catholic Clergyman of Baltimore (Baltimore: Warner & Hanna, 1809); cf. Finotti.

<sup>29</sup> *True Piety* 26.

likes. The purpose was to “mortify yourself in common and ordinary matters; nothing is more necessary to establish the empire of grace, and destroy that of nature.”<sup>30</sup> The negative conception of the spiritual life which this entailed came out most clearly in the treatment of the virtues: for followers of *True Piety*, humility meant never speaking a word tending to our own praise, doing nothing out of human respect, never excusing our own faults. Charity was defined as never detracting, never showing anger, never harboring aversion for our neighbor.

The key to this approach lay in its theological anthropology. *True Piety* contained a “Short Meditation on the Life of Christ.” This began with a few reflections on the creation and fall of man. The reader was asked to consider:

The fatal consequences of sin: the loss of innocence, of happiness and immortality, the disorder of faculties, ignorance in the understanding, perverseness in the will, concupiscence in the flesh; a subjection to death, disease, and every sort of sufferings; and all this not only for Adam himself, but for all his posterity. Acknowledge the justice of the punishment—confess that you deserve all this and more—resolve to lead a penitential life. . . .

That mankind, after the fall of Adam, offered to the eyes of their offended Maker, but a mass of perdition destined to everlasting misery. . . . Acknowledge the corruption of your nature, and your impotency to all good without the grace of the Redeemer.<sup>31</sup>

The importance of this starting point can be easily seen when *True Piety* is compared to Baker’s *Devout Communicant*. The latter began its “Meditation on the Life of Christ” with the Incarnation, and so stressed the divine indwelling in human nature. In contrast, the adherent of *True Piety* reduced the Christian life to the control of the passions, not the enjoyment of the Spirit.

The Jansenistic tone of *True Piety* also manifested itself in David’s *A Spiritual Retreat of Eight Days*.<sup>32</sup> Martin John Spalding edited and introduced this work in 1864, the year he became Archbishop of Baltimore. According to Spalding, David’s retreats, based on the Exercises of St. Ignatius, were very popular. The work emphasized the “essential,” “supreme,” “absolute,” “universal,” “eternal,” and “irresistible” dominion of God and the nothingness of the person. The following reflections occurred in the section “Sin in the Earthly Paradise”:

Eve, seduced by the devil, under the form of a serpent, eats of the forbidden fruit. Adam, by her persuasion, eats also of it. By this transgression, they both lose the

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 54.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 224–25.

<sup>32</sup> John M. David, *A Spiritual Retreat of Eight Days* (Louisville: Webb and Levering, 1864).

grace and friendship of their Creator; they forfeit the privilege of immortality; they are driven out of the earthly Paradise. God is not yet satisfied. Their unfortunate posterity shall be infected with the contagion, and disgraced with the stain of that sin; millions shall be deprived, on that sole account, of the happiness of heaven; even those, who will be cleansed from that stain shall groan under a flood of miseries. Adam himself, after being forgiven, shall be condemned to nine hundred years of a most rigorous penance; viz. to earn his bread in the sweat of his brow, to see murder in his own family, and to hear himself reproached until his death by his children, with his being the first author of their disorders and of their misfortunes. Now, compare your own sins with that of Adam. His was only one sin, and yours are multiplied over the hairs of your head.<sup>33</sup>

In this perspective the Incarnation and with it the world and the individual lost their positive dimension as an act of creative love. The debasement, annihilation, and humility of Christ in becoming a person like us became uppermost. His utter degradation in assuming the human condition was primarily an insight into our own need for humility: "Let us acknowledge that nothing can be more just, than that we should humble ourselves; and nothing more unjust than our pride. That, as men, we deserve no glory; as sinners, we deserve all sorts of humiliation and punishments; and as penitents and disciples of Christ, we are in the necessity of conforming ourselves to our humble Master."<sup>34</sup> The meditation on the life of Christ followed this same approach. There the reader was asked to view our Lord as a model: his *use* of creatures, the simplicity of his clothes, the reserve of his words and looks, his continual mortifications, and his aloofness in his dealings with his neighbors.

This vision of the person, with its corresponding emphasis on control, regularity, humility, and order in life, was extreme. Still, a similar orientation marked numerous other works. *The Catholic Laity's Directory* for 1817 took selections from Francis de Sales and John Gother emphasizing constancy in attendance at church gatherings and "suitable behavior in Church."<sup>35</sup> Here the sober, rigorous piety of the seventeenth-century Englishman was combined with the more ascetic parts of the humanist tradition. The edition of 1822 was even more conscious of Christian duties. By meditating on the Purification, the Christian should be led "To obey the whole law of God, and the smallest ordinances of his Church, and to comply with them to the very letter, and with the most perfect spirit; that is to say, conformably to the intention and the views of the Holy Ghost who has dictated them."<sup>36</sup> John Powers designed his

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 113.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 175; for the meditation on the life of Christ, see 168-77.

<sup>35</sup> *The Catholic Laity's Directory to the Church Service with An Almanac for the Year 1817* (New York: M. Field) 21-23.

<sup>36</sup> *The Laity's Directory to the Church Service, For the Year of Our Lord M,DCCC,XXII* (New York: William H. Creagh) 43.

1832 *The Catholic's Manual* as a continuation of *True Piety*. *The Ursuline Manual* presupposed the extreme fallenness of the person, and a *Manual of Catholic Devotions* described the Christian life as a "continual exercise of penance."<sup>37</sup>

The practical influence of this anthropology could be seen in the various views of the sacrament of penance to which people were exposed. *True Piety* and *The Catholic's Manual* presumed frequent mortal sin. *The Ursuline Manual* contained almost sixty pages on the sacrament. The person, "trembling at danger," should conceive of himself as "loaded with sin" and should approach the "sacred tribunal" each time as if it was his last. A detailed examination of conscience was essential. *The Manual* listed the following motives for contrition: the hateful deformity of sin; exposure to the intolerable and eternal pains of hell; forfeiture of the claim to the kingdom of heaven; the thought of having offended an infinitely good God; the goodness of God in Himself; reflection on the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ.

You have caused the death of your true parent—your sins, more than his cruel enemies, fastened him to the cross;—your pride covered a God with humiliation; your impatience under the slightest contradictions, exposed this meek Lamb to the most insulting outrages; your vanity and attachment to the vain amusements of the world, crowned his divine head with thorns. . . .<sup>38</sup>

This pessimistic view received pastoral application in the ministries of Charles Nerinckx and Stephen Theodore Badin. The former may have based his well-known rigorism on *Conduite des confesseurs dans le tribunal de la pénitence*, a work containing long sections on practical means to achieve moral advancement and cases of refused or deferred absolution.<sup>39</sup> Badin's views can be discerned from the following letter to Carroll:

As to the [confessional] practice of the clergy of France, I am conscious with your Reverence that it certainly was more rigid than it is in America, still it appears to me that America is not less corrupted than France was, so far as I know both

<sup>37</sup> Cf *The Catholic's Manual*, arranged by John Power (New York: James Ryan, 1832); *The Ursuline Manual*, or *A Collection of Prayers, Spiritual Exercises, etc.* . . . (New York: Edward Dunigan, 1844; revised by John Power); *A Manual of Catholic Devotions, for the Use of the Faithful, Who Desire to Live Piously and Die Happily* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1859) 576.

<sup>38</sup> *The Ursuline Manual* 165-74, for the "motives for exciting contrition"; see 173 for quotation.

<sup>39</sup> *Conduite des confesseurs dans le tribunal de la penitence* (4th ed.; Paris, 1766) 42-53. A later edition of this work, based on the doctrine of Charles Borromeo and Francis de Sales, can be found in the remnants of Nerinckx' library, Loretto, Kentucky. On Nerinckx' rigorism see Camillus P. Maes, *The Life of the Rev. Charles Nerinckx* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke, 1880) 548-54.

countries, and probably I am not the only man of that opinion. I attribute the pullulation of sins and vicious habits among the American Catholics, especially in Kentucky, to their intermixture in life and connecting in marriage with Protestants, Latitudinarians, Deists, Libertines, etc.—to the want of education, to their supine ignorance and to the scarcity of clergymen and spiritual books, to their distance from places of worship—to the dangers, temptations and many opportunities of sin occurring during the time of their emigrations—to nocturnal promiscuous assemblies of pleasure and immodesty of dress—to the profanation, very common and almost general, of the Sundays and Holy days—to the various scandals given in the Church—to Idleness and the Luxuriancy of the country, two frightful Parents of iniquity—to the warmth of the climate—to the blindness of Parents and Heads of families in allowing dangerous liberties or familiarities in their very presence; to their neglect in keeping a watchful eye, & Religious as well as civil discipline—In fine to the pride, abuse or excess of liberty and an ungovernable spirit of independency etc. All which abuses cannot be effectually checked without contradiction and opposition.<sup>40</sup>

Although this letter seems to indicate some differences in pastoral practice, it does not deny the context of a widespread rigorism. If the devotional works are any indication, then the pastoral practice surrounding penance did presuppose a rather pessimistic view of the person and involvement in the world. The *Roman Catholic Manual* envisaged a situation of deferred absolution.<sup>41</sup> Louis de Granada's *The Sinner's Guide*, republished during the period and commended by Francis Patrick Kenrick, also emphasized strict control over oneself.<sup>42</sup>

There were many other indications that the religious sensibility of the pre-Civil War American Catholic was dominated by a feeling of personal moral weakness. Martin John Spalding was one of the most influential churchmen of the day. In the "Introduction" to David's *Spiritual Retreat*, he commended the doctrine of *True Piety* and presented an exposition of the Ignatian Exercises which he compiled from his notes taken in Rome. Spalding stressed the struggle of the spiritual life, unsparing self-examination, the discovery of the predominant passion. The purpose of the Exercises was to conquer self and to establish a new rule of life. "Our nature," Spalding wrote, "tainted in its very origin by the sin of our first parents, is adverse to good and prone to evil. It is constantly drifting down the current of evil inclinations towards the gulf of perdition. In the spiritual combat, then, we must constantly labor and toil to stem the

<sup>40</sup> Stephen Theodore Badin to John Carroll, June 9, 1802, AAB. There is a wealth of material on Badin's rigorism in the Baltimore Cathedral Archives. Confer Victor F. O'Daniel, O.P., "Fathers Badin and Nerinckx and the Dominicans in Kentucky: A Long Misunderstood Episode in American Church History," *Catholic Historical Review* 6/1 (April, 1920) 15–45; "Documents" 66–88.

<sup>41</sup> *Roman Catholic Manual* 296.

<sup>42</sup> *The Sinner's Guide* (Philadelphia: Eugene Cummiskey, 1833) 329–49; this was republished in 1845.

current, if we would ascend and not descend."<sup>43</sup> The apologist divided the Christian's spiritual life into four stages, the *via purgativa*, *via illuminativa*, *via confirmativa*, and *via unitiva*, and, in a startling reversal of the classical doctrine, gave all four a moralistic interpretation. Spalding reiterated this doctrine in a devotional writing on the Atonement: ". . . we cannot expect to share in the merits of the redemption unless we do violence to ourselves, deny ourselves, mortify our members, imitate the example of Christ, and catch His sacrificial and expiatory spirit. He was innocence itself, and yet was He made the victim of sin: we are guilty—we contributed to nail Him to the Cross—we *deserve* to suffer."<sup>44</sup>

These sentiments were paralleled to some extent by William H. Elder, Bishop of Natchez, in his talk before the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore. Elder rested devotion to the Blessed Mother on the weakness of the human condition. "We all know too well that, of ourselves, we are but weakness and misery; that the devil, like a roaring lion, goes about seeking to devour our souls, and that our own sinful passions would, every day, lead us into evil, if we trusted only to our own watchfulness and fortitude, and did not seek for help."<sup>45</sup> As will be seen, an apocalyptic evaluation of the human condition pervaded other literature from the period. In reaction to the Enlightenment and to the "new paganism," Catholic apologists were inclined to emphasize the moral weakness of individual reason and will.<sup>46</sup> Even Francis Patrick Kenrick, a very careful theologian, was led to defend the existence of original sin at great length because of its denial in the prevailing culture.<sup>47</sup>

All of these sources—devotional works, confessional practices, bishops' statements—show that part of the religious sensibility of the epoch concentrated on predominant passions, human weakness, the precariousness of eternal life. Such an evaluation of the person supported a search for stability. It corresponded to the structural need for organization and helped inform it. Order, regularity, control, and self-discipline became the distinguishing marks of the Christian life. *True Piety* and *The Ursuline Manual* linked the search for Christian perfection to frequent use of the sacrament of penance and extolled the virtue of obedience to authority.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup> *A Spiritual Retreat* 39.

<sup>44</sup> "The Atonement," *Ave Maria* 1/10 (July 15, 1865) 149.

<sup>45</sup> *Sermons on Subjects of the Day, Delivered by Distinguished Catholic Prelates and Theologians, at the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore, United States, October 1866* (Dublin: W. B. Kelly, 1868) 127.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Laurence Kehoe, ed., *The Complete Works of the Most Rev. John Hughes, D.D.* (New York: American News Co., 1864) 1, V, 12; 2, 223–28, 315; Martin John Spalding, *Miscellanea* 2 (5th ed.; Baltimore: John Murphy, 1869) 383–96.

<sup>47</sup> *A Treatise on Baptism; also A Treatise on Confirmation* (2nd ed.; Baltimore: Hedian and O'Brien, 1852) chap. 5.

<sup>48</sup> *True Piety* 46; *The Ursuline Manual* 139.

A person should obey universally, cheerfully, purely, readily, and blindly.<sup>49</sup> The *Manual* noted that the Catholic religion instructed by the method of authority, because that was the only way to prevent schism, cure the doubts of the learned, and instruct the ignorant. The characteristic virtues of a disciple of Christ were "The spirit of peace, of meekness, of humility, of diffidence in ourselves, of submission and obedience. . . ." <sup>50</sup> For Bishop David, "peace of heart is the fruit of order faithfully kept, faithfully observed."<sup>51</sup> These works made no mention of personal conscience and its operation in the spiritual life; this would have implied a more positive evaluation of the person.

*The Laity's Directory* for 1822 contained a "Discourse on Religious Innovation" written by Rev. Walter Kirwan in 1786. The inclusion was significant, because it represented the explicit rejection of the more interior approach to Christian life which had characterized the Enlightenment view of the person. The writer noted that "the use of ceremonies is to maintain order, decency, and uniformity in the exterior acts of religion, to raise and elevate the mind to a proper contemplation of our mysteries, and to inspire respect and awe for the supreme majesty of God."<sup>52</sup> This corresponded very well with the book's emphasis on the regular performance of Christian duties. The rule of life printed in *A Manual of Catholic Devotions* summarized well the prevailing attitude and the connection between the growth of organization and inner religious sensibility:

It is not enough to do good; we must do it well, that is, according to order. This is the only way of discharging our obligations with facility, constancy, and merit. It is of the utmost importance, therefore, that a Christian consult his spiritual director with regard to the regulation of his actions, the hour of performing them, the time and method to be employed in them, and the spirit with which they should be animated.<sup>53</sup>

Although he was inconsistent, Bishop John Hughes directly linked a negative evaluation of the person to the growth of uniformity and Church authority. He believed that "all that is good is due to Christianity—all that is evil . . . to the perverse exercise of men's free will." "Man is naturally evil." The good in civilization came from religion, "whilst the evil itself came from the corrupt and depraved heart of man, on whom that religion could make no impression." What the modern world needed was "a religious power which should be able to extend the obligation of

<sup>49</sup> *True Piety* 139.

<sup>50</sup> *The Ursuline Manual* 509.

<sup>51</sup> *A Spiritual Retreat* 98.

<sup>52</sup> *The Catholic Laity's Directory* 30.

<sup>53</sup> *A Manual of Catholic Devotions* 570 ff. The "Rule of Life for a Pious Christian" was taken chiefly from the writings of Father Nepveu.



duties, in exact proportion with the extension of rights." In a speech before the House of Representatives in Washington, Hughes drew together his anthropology, his view of the Christian life, and his spirituality:

God has, therefore, made man free, because it was requisite for the dignity of the nature bestowed upon him that he should render a voluntary homage to the Creator. Being free, he necessarily had the power of disobedience, and there is the key which explains the other mystery—itself indeed mysterious. There is that which accounts for the introduction of evil into the world. Thus disobedience—a reversal of God's order by man's own power, an evil having its origin at the cradle of our race, and receiving accumulations of guilt and familiarity with depravity in the progress of time—accounts for the condition of mankind. . . .

It was necessary, beloved brethren, that man should be taught by authority. He had not discovered his duties by any appeal to his own breast. Until the appearance of Christ, the selfishness of his nature was the ruling law of his action. The opportunities that presented themselves for the gratification of that selfishness were always greedily seized on; and as for restraint, he knew none. If he questioned his own heart, it imposed no law of self-denial. On the contrary, it prompted him to the indulgence of selfishness—to the gratification of his evil passions. There was, therefore, no restraint, and it was necessary that the authority of God should lay down those rules for the government of human conduct which Christ conveyed in his lessons to his disciples.<sup>54</sup>

It was not accidental that Hughes went on to describe the life of Christ in terms similar to those of *True Piety*.

In this way the external need for organization joined the underlying evaluation of the person. Structures and sentiments coincided. Anthropology, ecclesiology, and spirituality were interconnected. Order and regularity became not just institutional necessities but the very criteria of the Christian life. This was true not only on the personal level but also on the communal. The following portion of this essay will examine the dominant feeling about the world, the rise of confraternities, and their relationship to the search for order.

### *The World*

A pessimistic evaluation of the person coincided with a very somber vision of that era in many of the popular writings of pre-Civil War Catholicism. From 1791 until 1866 people felt the world to be under the power of darkness; a type of apocalypticism permeated the thinking of the age. In response, individuals prepared for the imminent judgment of God, performed works of reparation, asked the Blessed Virgin to intercede for them, and banded together to protect their faith.

A variety of sources attested to a negative evaluation of the world.

<sup>54</sup> Kehoe, *The Complete Works* 1, V, 52–54; cf. 1, IV, 9; 1, II, 112; 1, V, 13.

Father John Ashton delivered the closing sermon at the First National Synod of Baltimore in 1791. He chose as text 2 Timothy 4:5: "But be thou vigilant, labour in all things; do the work of an evangelist; fulfill the ministry, be sober." Ashton described the present era as demanding extraordinary vigilance and care. It was a time when "error has supplanted sound doctrine, when fables of pretended philosophy have eclipsed evangelical wisdom, and mankind intoxicated with the enthusiasm of liberty will not submit to the sweet yoke of Christ."<sup>55</sup> *The Pious Guide* manifested similar sentiments. This very popular prayer book spoke about the necessity of Sacred Heart devotions "in these latter days." The devotions were to be performed in reparation for wrongs and outrages daily committed against God's love.<sup>56</sup> *True Piety* and David's *Spiritual Retreat* stressed withdrawal from society and the spiritual threat which social conviviality, recreation, and worldly activity posed.<sup>57</sup> *The Laity's Directory* for 1817 contained a large section on contemporary miracles, noting that they indicated that the days of retribution and punishment were near. The work included a litany for the dead which prayed for deliverance from the dreadful day "when the sun and moon shall be darkened, and the stars fall down from heaven."<sup>58</sup> Charles Walmsley's *General History of the Christian Church* with its apocalyptic orientation was republished twice during the period.

After 1830, when Protestant nativism began in earnest, the intensity of these feelings increased. The following circular for *The Shepherd of the Valley*, a Midwestern Catholic newspaper, was indicative:

Religious error stalks abroad in fearless attitude, pharisaically assuming exterior attributes of sanctity and godliness, a wolf in sheep's clothing, it prowls about the earth, "seeking (in the emphatic language of the Prince of the Apostles) whom it may devour."

The purpose of the paper was

to stay the boisterous impetuosity of this torrent; to defend our holy religion from the unprovoked attacks and slanders of her enemies; to encourage our fellow Catholics to persevere in the soundness of doctrine; and to lead the sincere of heart into that path which conduceth to eternal life. . . .<sup>59</sup>

Although the apocalyptic tone was not as evident, the apologetic works agreed in their negative judgments on a world dominated by Protestant-

<sup>55</sup> The full text can be found in Peter Guilday, *The Life and Times of John Carroll* (New York: Encyclopedia Press) 434-41.

<sup>56</sup> *Pious Guide* (1792) 14, 48-49.

<sup>57</sup> Cf., e.g., *True Piety* 52.

<sup>58</sup> *The Catholic Laity's Directory* 29-34, 62.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Fr. Philip Borgna, C.M., to Fr. John Timon, C.M., July 27, 1833, AUND.

ism and revolution, and one step removed from barbarism.<sup>60</sup> The needs of the immigrant Church encouraged such defensive attitudes.

Events involving the papacy occasioned many reflections on the evil times and the need for repentance. In November 1810 John Carroll and his four suffragans issued a protest against the captivity of Pope Pius VII. A joint encyclical to the Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland followed. Both documents communicated a preoccupying anxiety for the fate of the Pope and the Church. Carroll issued another pastoral at the time of Pius' release in 1814. He captured the mood of the times in these words:

Nevertheless the rigour of confinement was increased; new obstacles were interposed to intercept all communications between his Holiness and those who needed his paternal counsels and guidance. Entire regions and provinces were destitute of any pastors. The integrity of Catholick doctrine, the maintenance of ecclesiastical discipline were exposed to the open violence and hostility of their declared enemies, and liable to be undermined by the artifices of corrupt seducers. Infidelity boldly stepped forward, encouraged to effect, and presumptuously to forbode the downfall of the Apostolick chair of St Peter and the extinction of these splendid evidences, which from the earliest periods of Christianity to the present day illuminated and directed the sincere lovers of truth to discover and follow the Church, of which it has been spoken, that the spirit of truth should *abide with it all days even to the consummation of the world* Mat. 28.<sup>61</sup>

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century the struggle of Napoleon and Pius VII was interpreted in moralistic categories: evil against good, might against right. As John Hughes put it, the conflict was "but the visible exhibition of forces and antagonisms of another order in the human mind."<sup>62</sup> The world, clearly, needed redemption; Christians lived in the midst of a hostile environment and to some extent participated in it.

Pastorals on papal jubilees also indicated the widespread feeling that developments in the world were spiritually destructive. In 1826 Leo XII extended the jubilee of the previous year to the universal Church, so that Christians might "appease by sincere repentance and the reformation of their manners, the majesty of God so often offended by our crimes."<sup>63</sup> Both Ambrose Maréchal, the Archbishop of Baltimore, and Bishop Henry

<sup>60</sup> Kehoe, *The Complete Works* 2, 69-87, and Hughes's statements during the public-school controversy: 1, 41-124; Spalding, *Miscellanea* 1, 57-76; 2, 619-34, 710-28.

<sup>61</sup> Hanley, *The John Carroll Papers* 3, 280; cf. 125-30.

<sup>62</sup> Kehoe, *The Complete Works* 1, II, 16; cf. *The United States Catholic Almanac: or Laity's Directory, for the Year 1834* (Baltimore: James Myres, 1834) 33-42, for a more objective account. Augustine Thebaud, S.J., *Pius VII and Napoleon* (New York: Dunigan, 1852).

<sup>63</sup> *Bull of His Holiness Leo XII for the Indiction of the Universal Jubilee of 1826. To Which are Annexed the Mandates, Directions and Instructions of the Most Rev. Archbishop of Baltimore* (Baltimore: Fielding Lucas, January 1826) 4.

Conwell of Philadelphia saw the jubilee as an opportunity for repentance, examination of conscience, and preparation for judgment.<sup>64</sup> Archbishop James Whitfield, Maréchal's successor at Baltimore, heightened this theme in his reflections on Gregory XVI's jubilee of 1832:

At the sight of the desolation which the powers of darkness have, of late, spread over divers parts of the Church of Jesus Christ, and especially of the wounds inflicted on the Mother and Head of the other Churches, the common Father of the Faithful, could not help opening his heart to his children, in order that they may share his sorrows, and unite with him in prayers and supplication to appease the wrath of the Almighty.<sup>65</sup>

Pius IX declared jubilees in 1846, 1854, 1858, and 1864. The Provincial Councils of St. Louis, Baltimore, and Cincinnati used very stark language in explaining the jubilee of 1858.<sup>66</sup> Martin Spalding wrote that the one for 1864 was proclaimed

to awaken the attention of all Christendom to the torrent of pestilent errors, which are now prevailing, and threatening to overwhelm the Church, and along with it, all civil society; and to unite all the faithful followers of Christ in one general and earnest supplication to God, that He would mercifully interpose to control the storm, and avert the impending danger.<sup>67</sup>

This type of language characterized many other episcopal statements which pictured the Church in the person of the Pope as a citadel under siege.

The clearest indication of the dominant spiritual sensibility towards the world surfaced in reflections on the role of the Blessed Mother in the economy of salvation. The pastoral of the Seventh Provincial Council of Baltimore in 1849 connected devotion to the Immaculate Conception to the present time of "thrones overturned, monarchs fleeing in fear, society convulsed, destructive errors spread abroad by the untiring efforts of impious men, and confusion and disorder widely prevailing."<sup>68</sup> In 1854

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.; *The Brief of His Holiness Pope Leo XII on Proclaiming the Extension of the Jubilee to the Whole World in 1826, Celebrated at Rome in 1825, Indiction 13. To Which is Prefixed the Mandate of the Bishop of Philadelphia. With An Appendix on the Subject of This Plenary Indulgence—Denominated the Jubilee, with Regulations for Its Observance, and Catechetical Instructions* (Philadelphia: Mifflin and Parry, 1826).

<sup>65</sup> *The Universal Jubilee Granted by His Holiness, Pope Gregory XVI, In the Year of Our Lord 1832; and Proclaimed in the Diocese of Baltimore, in 1833, June 10, by the Most Rev. Archbishop Whitfield* (Baltimore: James Myres, 1833) 3.

<sup>66</sup> CL 3, 1169, 1181, 1189, 1207, 1229, 1233.

<sup>67</sup> *Pastoral Letter of the Most Rev. Martin John Spalding, D.D., Archbishop of Baltimore, to the Clergy and Laity of the Archdiocese; Promulgating the Jubilee* (Baltimore: Kelly & Piet, 1865) 4.

<sup>68</sup> CL 3, 1141. For background to this section, see James Hennesey, S.J., "A Prelude to Vatican I: American Bishops and the Definition of the Immaculate Conception," *TS* 25 (1964) 409-19.

John Neumann, Bishop of Philadelphia, presented a detailed description of the "last days," a time of calamity, widespread unbelief, vain philosophy, avarice, ungodliness, riots, etc. "Should the fearful days . . . prove to be *our own*," the Virgin would be there to intercede.<sup>69</sup> John Bryant, a convert, wrote one of the most popular explanations of the Immaculate Conception. His work went through three editions in 1855. Bryant asked why the dogma had been proclaimed in the nineteenth century. It served, he noted, as a bulwark against "libidinous passions," "Sodomitic Sects," disobedience, avarice, and lasciviousness. Christians were called to "imitate her, and conform their lives to the example of her."<sup>70</sup> In 1866 the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore recommended the "Apostleship of Prayer," a European devotional movement.<sup>71</sup> *Ave Maria* carried an explanation of one of the agencies of this movement, the "Association of the Perpetual Rosary." This latter existed to counteract the "multitude that prays no longer," "to regenerate the present morbid state of society," to spread the knowledge of Mary, to glorify her, to give her a guard of honor against the forces of the devil, to defend the Church militant, and to provide solace for the suffering people of God.<sup>72</sup> Lastly, at the Plenary Council itself William Henry Elder captured much of the sensibility behind Marian devotion when he described it as a remedy for human weakness, a humbling agency in a world of pride and materialism, a protection against the "age of incredulity."<sup>73</sup>

In a world such as this, people naturally sought intercessory agencies, witnesses to the possibility of life even in an extreme situation. As a result, European devotional practices found a ready environment in the United States. A concern for indulgences was widespread. People banded together in sodalities. Charles Nerinckx, fresh from a successful experience in Belgium, first established the Confraternity of the Rosary in Rolling Forks, Kentucky, in 1806.<sup>74</sup> He greatly influenced Martin John Spalding, who, as a baby, belonged to a rosary society which included even unborn infants. Wilfrid Parsons records three early prayer books dealing with Marian confraternities: *Rule of the Male Confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Established at Georgetown, D.C., 1816; Rules*

<sup>69</sup> As cited in John D. Bryant, *The Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God; A Dogma of the Catholic Church* (2nd ed.; Boston: Patrick Donahoe) 234-37.

<sup>70</sup> Bryant 300-307.

<sup>71</sup> *CL* 3, 527.

<sup>72</sup> *Ave Maria* 2/12 (March 24, 1866) 189-90. On the Apostleship of Prayer, see *Ave Maria* 1/2 (May 13, 1865) 20; 1/6 (June 17, 1865) 93-94.

<sup>73</sup> *Sermons on Subjects of the Day* 127-37.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. W. J. Howlett, *Life of the Rev. Charles Nerinckx Pioneer Missionary of Kentucky and Founder of the Sisters of Loretto at the Foot of the Cross* (Techy, Ill.: Mission Press, 1915) 214, 435-42. For the influence on Spalding, see T. W. Spalding, *Martin John Spalding* 5.

of the Confraternity, 1823; *Confraternity of the Rosary, Established in Frederick, Md., 1824*.<sup>75</sup> Sodalties became more and more numerous as the century progressed. The Jesuits promoted them at their schools in New York.<sup>76</sup> *The Golden Book of Confraternities* was published in 1854. The work listed confraternities associated with the Living Rosary, various scapulars, the Blessed Sacrament, the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Jesus Christ Crucified, the Most Precious Blood, the Most August Trinity, the Cord of St. Francis of Assisi, and a Prayer Association for the conversion of all who are out of the communion of the Church in the United States.<sup>77</sup> In 1866 *Ave Maria* carried a "History of Sodalties" and noted their continual increase.<sup>78</sup> The Apostleship of Prayer was defined as a "Holy League of Christian hearts united with the Heart of Jesus."<sup>79</sup> The legislation of the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore has already been noted.

In addition to promoting charitable works and diffusing literature, these societies were explicitly designed to protect the faith of the people and make intercession for the sins of the world. This was clearly seen in the devotion to the Sacred Heart.<sup>80</sup> As external manifestations of the Christian life, sodalties also demanded rules and organization. By emphasizing programmed group activity and subordination to the teaching authority of the Church—the indulgences could be gained only if the prayers were approved or certain prescriptions followed—the confraternities reflected a religious sentiment which valued regularity and obedience and stressed the weakness of the individual. Although pluralistic in number, the design undermined spontaneity. Uniformity in prayer forms was promoted. The "Introduction" to the *Golden Book* summarized the core of the phenomenon very well:

For in a well-arranged army, each soldier singly may easily be vanquished by the enemy; and nevertheless, by the general conjunction of them all one with another, the files are rendered compact, the battalions strong, and the army invincible. So, likewise, it happens in the spiritual warfare of our souls against the devil, the world, and the flesh, our sworn enemies; in which those who fight alone, although

<sup>75</sup> Wilfrid Parsons, "Marian Devotion in the Early United States," *Marian Studies* 3 (1952) 236-50.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Christa Ressmeyer Klein, *The Jesuits and Catholic Boyhood in Nineteenth-Century New York City: A Study of St. John's College and the College of St. Francis Xavier, 1846-1912* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1976) passim.

<sup>77</sup> *The Golden Book of the Confraternities* . . . (New York: Dunigan, 1854; with the approbation of Most Rev. John Hughes, D.D.).

<sup>78</sup> *Ave Maria* 2/47 (November 24, 1866) 741-43; 2/51 (December 22, 1866) 807-10.

<sup>79</sup> *Ave Maria* 1/2 (May 13, 1865) 20.

<sup>80</sup> Although the devotion lost many of its political overtones in the United States, its defensive nature should be noted. Cf. Jacques LeBrun, "Politics and Spirituality: The Devotion to the Sacred Heart," *Concilium* 9/7 (1971) 29-43.

it be under Christ's banner, and that, perhaps, with much valor and generosity; nevertheless, every one is put to try his strength by himself, to combat his adversaries hand to hand, and wrestle against his enemies with his own single force; whereas, in those holy confraternities, the ability of the one is so knit with the ability of the rest, and the good works of all are so common to everyone in particular, that they are all fortified and enabled, not only by their own forces, but by each other's strength and assistance. . . .<sup>81</sup>

Here the romantic movement's notion of the Mystical Body coincided with the individual's need for protection. Confraternities became the vehicles for the expression of a deeper religious sentiment about the world. This vision supported, as did the prevailing anthropology, the demand for disciplinary uniformity. The structures of the immigrant Church thus correlated well with underlying religious feelings.

### *The Church*

The third area in which the demand for structures and inner religious sentiment met was the Church. If the person felt himself to be alienated from the Spirit, and the world afforded only a pageantry of godlessness, the Church was the haven of grace. *The Laity's Directory* for 1817 acknowledged this feeling in poetic fashion:

But a perpetual excellence she shall be,  
And lasting light unto eternity,  
What then remains to satisfy all doubt,  
But instantly to find this woman out.

That we may hear her voice, and not defer,  
T' appease all strife, b' appealing unto her,  
Christ is the door, scripture the lock likewise,  
The Church (Catholic) the only key of Paradise.<sup>82</sup>

The edition for 1822 concluded with "A Beautiful Eulogie Apostrophe to the Church by the Justly Celebrated Fenelon."<sup>83</sup>

Similar sentiments were expressed on different occasions. The liberation of Pius VII in 1814 stood as a symbol for the Church's perpetuity and indestructibility. John Carroll's pastoral proclaimed a day of solemn praise and thanksgiving in St. Peter's Church, Baltimore. This was moderate in tone compared to the sentiments expressed by the Jesuit John Grassi: "Oh Church of Xt. Oh Apostolic See! Oh Rock of Peter! O

<sup>81</sup> *The Golden Book* 14. This Introduction was repeated in *A Short Treatise on the Antiquity, Institution, Excellency, Indulgences, Privileges, etc. of the Ancient Confraternity of Our Blessed Lady of Mount Carmel Called the Scapular* . . . (Philadelphia: H. McGrath, n.d.) 7 ff.

<sup>82</sup> *The Catholic Laity's Directory* 52-53.

<sup>83</sup> *The Laity's Directory* 137-38.

Pius VII! Of what wonderful events have we not been eyewitnesses. If after such marks of divine Providence which *ludit in orbe terrarum*, we have not a very lively faith, a firm confidence in God's protection, we must have lost all feeling."<sup>84</sup> Bishop Henry Conwell's pastoral on the jubilee of 1826 emphasized the Pope's overwhelming generosity in opening the Church's treasury of grace to sinners.<sup>85</sup> Ambrose Maréchal, James Whitfield, and Martin John Spalding repeated these feelings on various occasions.<sup>86</sup> Pius IX's loss of the temporal power afforded many opportunities to exalt the Church as the intercessory between man and God. Travel accounts tended to romanticize Rome and the papacy. John Hughes repeatedly described the Church as a refuge of oneness, universality, and truth: "Under the dome of that Church is his [the Catholic's] hope of salvation, the enjoyment of eternity, the comfort and stability of his heart and of his intellect."<sup>87</sup>

Prayer books added to these conceptions of the Church as the mediator. Oriented towards official Church functions, they stressed institutional life. Jay Dolan has shown how the spiritual focus of the missions contributed to a strengthening of parochial organization by emphasizing participation in the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist.<sup>88</sup> Most of the devotional works promoted miraculous medals, litanies of the saints, May devotions, novenas, the Way of the Cross, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament. Significantly, these activities were indulgenced, thus placing their efficacy under the aegis of the Church. For example, proper use of the Agnus Dei produced a partial indulgence in addition to exciting remembrance of the redemption, scaring away evil spirits, protecting pregnant women, and sheltering the individual from adversity, pestilence, and fire.<sup>89</sup> Bishop Flaget reported a sick child cured by using a scapular and singing Catholic hymns.<sup>90</sup> Some Catholics believed that it was through the intercession of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, confraternity devotions sponsored by the Church, that the cholera ceased in New Orleans in 1832.<sup>91</sup> In addition, saints, representatives of the Church triumphant, occupied a dominant place in the prayer books of the era.

<sup>84</sup> Grassi to Bruté, 29 March, 1814, AUND, as cited in Feedler 20.

<sup>85</sup> Conwell 3 (cf. n. 64 above).

<sup>86</sup> Cf. nn. 63, 65, 67 above.

<sup>87</sup> Kehoe, *The Complete Works* 2, 340; cf. 2, 207, 237, 247-51, 262, 331-32. For reflections on the Pope's loss of the temporal power, see CL 3, 1177-86, 1195-1202; Hennesey, "The Baltimore Council of 1866." An example of a travel account is Fr. M. J. Wheeler to Fr. John Baptist Purcell, January 14, 1829, AUND (photocopy); *Right Rev. James Duggan's Reminiscences and Impressions of a Visit to Rome during the Canonization of the Japanese Martyrs* (Chicago: J. J. Kearney, 1863).

<sup>88</sup> Jay P. Dolan, *Catholic Revivalism: The American Experience 1830-1900* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame, 1978) 168 ff.

<sup>89</sup> *True Piety* 444.

<sup>90</sup> Benedict Joseph Flaget to Fr. Simon Gabriel Bruté, April 16, 1812, AUND.

<sup>91</sup> Fr. Joseph Tichetoli to Fr. Frederick Rese, December 1, 1832, AUND.



In 1858 William J. Barry, a priest-professor at Mount St. Mary's Seminary of the West, Cincinnati, published a book explaining the sacramentals, which had come to play such a large part in Catholic life.<sup>92</sup> His work witnessed to the connection between prayers, devotional practices, and Church organization. Barry included sections on litanies, the Angelus, hymns, the confiteor, blessed candles, holy water, holy ashes, our Lord's cross, the cross and crucifix, relics of the Passion, the golden rose, holy oils, blessed palms, the paschal candle, holy water, and other objects. The seminary professor described the Church as the "Incarnation continued," distributing hidden graces to those who would seek them. Sacramentals, of ecclesiastical origin, assisted the will to pious desires "on account of the Church's blessing." Throughout the book Barry emphasized official approval of certain rites. The forms of prayer needed hierarchical approval in order to be truly efficacious. It was out of this context that the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore legislated "de sacramentalibus."<sup>93</sup>

Other types of evidence support the conclusion that the institution received authorization from a deeply felt religious sentiment. At times this bordered on superstition. People treated the priest and the Church as sources of the miraculous, even physical health and happiness, saviors from the calamities of the world and the powerlessness of the individual. William O'Bryan wrote to John Carroll from Pittsburgh asking for

the remedy or means for curing the falling sickness, fits, etc. Many (some of them protestants) have applied to me to relieve them of the like maladies, of which all the means they have taken from other sources, as medical aid, and the like, have never relieved them. Some have promised if I could afford them any relief, as they had heard priests could, they would have no difficulty in embracing a religion in which they found such relief. . . . I have heard of the Gospel of St. John, and of other things that have had the desired effect, at least when applied by some, but I have none and do not know how to make them, or whence to procure them.<sup>94</sup>

He concluded his letter with a request for the necessary ritual and prayers. Stephen Dubisson, a priest in Washington, reported to Maréchal in 1825 that the letters "IHS" had appeared on a woman's arm:

This was not a fait [*sic*] of such a nature as to produce great effect on the public at large; but, in its bearings and with the attending circumstances, it contributes to increase the devotion to the adorable name of Jesus. Without noise, without *eclat*, it has evidently enhanced piety in many catholic hearts, brought some non-catholics to the church, and favorably operated on the minds of many others of our disunited brethren. . . .<sup>95</sup>

<sup>92</sup> *The Sacramentals of the Holy Catholic Church, or Flowers from the Garden of the Liturgy* (Cincinnati: John P. Walsh, 1858).

<sup>93</sup> CL 3, 489-92.

<sup>94</sup> January 13, 1810, AAB, 1810-1811, 5W4.

<sup>95</sup> April 17, 1825, AAB, 21A-B1.

The Provincial Councils of Cincinnati, 1855, and Baltimore, 1858, both cautioned priests against the continued practice of medicine.<sup>96</sup> These popular attitudes need to be explored.

This religious understanding further buttressed the structural demands of the period because of the tendency to equate "church" with organization, especially after 1815 and the influence of European ultramontanism. The spiritual life of the individual began to be oriented around hierarchical mediation. In the jubilee year of 1825 the Pope alone prescribed the conditions for gaining a plenary indulgence. By promoting the organization of Christian life around sacramental activity, the visiting of churches, and other exercises of piety *which the bishop enjoined*, these events gave spiritual sanction to the exercise of authority. A catechism on the jubilee asked: "What should the pious Christian do at the end of a Jubilee?" Among other things, we should seek

To love and cherish the church with an increased fervor and devotion, for providing her children with means of salvation so abundant, and pray for her exaltation and prosperity, through a lively sense of religious gratitude. . . . To beg that the Almighty God may bless and protect his Holiness Leo XII and grant him the abundance of grace which is necessary to govern the Church with firmness and ability, and so promote more and more the glory of his holy name and the salvation of the souls committed to his spiritual care and superintendance.<sup>97</sup>

As the pastoral of the Second Provincial Council of Cincinnati in 1858 implied, the clergy set the conditions whereby people could "enjoy the liberty of the glory of the children of God."<sup>98</sup>

John Baptist Purcell witnessed to a similar attitude in his own description of the bishop's role in the Church:

So great is his authority, since it is divine, as the Man and representative of Christ. *As my father sent me, so do I send you. He that heareth you heareth me.* So humble, so truly crucified, mortified, since truly to behave as the Man of Christ. He says I live, no [*sic*] I; I rule, not I; I govern, not I.<sup>99</sup>

The antitrust party, according to Patrick Carey, shared this preoccupation with authority and equation of Church with hierarchy.<sup>100</sup> *The Ursuline Manual* of 1844 best indicated what happened when a view of the Church as the sole means of salvation joined the hierarchical values of organization and subordination:

<sup>96</sup> CL 3, 173, 180, 197.

<sup>97</sup> Conwell, *The Brief* (n. 64 above) 23.

<sup>98</sup> CL 3, 1229-32.

<sup>99</sup> John Baptist Purcell, October 1, 1833, AUND.

<sup>100</sup> *John England and Irish American Catholicism, 1815-1842: A Study of Conflict* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Fordham Univ., 1975) 234 ff.

The authority we are obliged to submit to, is not that of any clergyman speaking or acting from himself; but it is the authority of the entire body of the Pastors of the Church. Each clergyman, in the discharge of his functions, acts as the Church's deputy. It is in her name, and by her authority, he instructs and guides the faithful committed to his care. The submission and obedience paid him in this capacity, is paid to the Church itself; and in obeying the Church, we obey Jesus Christ.<sup>101</sup>

In this way the underlying feeling about the Church combined with the evaluation of the person and the negative perception of the world to form a spirituality which supported structural demands. Devotional works, episcopal reflections, and conciliar legislation were all of a piece. They presupposed personal weakness, confraternal protection, and hierarchical mediation. Internal sentiments and external realities combined to form a definite religious sensibility, one which placed a primary value on order, control, subordination, and disciplinary uniformity. As the era progressed from 1791 to 1866, this complex took on more and more the coloration of a mystique of salvation. Although it was not the only option available, it was the dominant one. This religious sensibility assured the survival of the Church. It should also be recognized that it separated the Church from the world, facilitated the mystification of authority, and placed order, external conformity, at the center of the spiritual life. It embedded in the Catholic consciousness an ambiguous feeling about the providential dimensions of modernity. Today the question remains for us: at what price?<sup>102</sup>

<sup>101</sup> *The Ursuline Manual* 510.

<sup>102</sup> The opportunity to research the material for my article was made possible by the assistance of a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Stipend (1977) and a travel grant from the Center for the Study of American Catholicism, University of Notre Dame.