The Second Vatican Council and the Americanization of Catholicism

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Europe’s exploration of the Americas coincided, roughly, with the age of religious reform in Europe. Due to this coincidental timing, according to historian Mark Noll, the Reformation’s influence extended across the ocean, and “events in the Old World dictated the shape of Christianity’s history in the New.” The Catholic Church certainly managed to gain a foothold in North America—the Spanish brought Dominican priests to what is now Florida, and the French brought Jesuits and Franciscans to what is now Quebec, where they served fur traders and worked to convert the native people to Christianity; nonetheless, Catholicism’s influence in the territory that became the United States at the time of the American Revolution was minimal. The so-called “thirteen original colonies” were religiously, culturally, and, for the most part, even legally Protestant. Some of these colonies, such as Virginia, where the Anglican Church was established, reflected the “systematic reform of England’s religion” brought to fruition by Queen Elizabeth I. Other colonies, such as Massachusetts, reflected an unavoidable byproduct of the Reformation and its “priesthood of all believers” – i.e., religious dissent. The Massachusetts Calvinists believed that the established church in their home country of England was no less corrupt than the Church of Rome, Elizabeth’s “reforms” notwithstanding.

In the minds of many Old World and New World English Protestants, Catholicism was associated with tyranny. This English mindset carried over to the American Colonies, animating the goals and fears of many of the Founders of the United States. Thomas Jefferson wrote “In every age, the priest has been hostile to liberty.” John Adams wrote a letter to his wife describing a Catholic Mass in Pennsylvania, where “poor Wretches [were], fingering their

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1 In the name of understanding and transparency, I wish to explain the meaning of the footer. Coming from my Catholic tradition, each letter stands for the names of the Holy Family (i.e. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph). It is used on letters and documents to highlight one’s piety.
Beads, chanting Latin, not a Word of which they understood, their Pater Nosters and Ave Marias.⁵ Jefferson and Adams saw the Catholic system as being at odds with their own philosophies. To them, Catholicism’s tyranny contradicted their values. Jefferson and Adams heavily believed in the citizenry’s responsibility to be free and active within their government and their actions would prevent any chance of tyranny from coming to fruition. For example, the Church’s hierarchy did not allow lay approval of parish assignments for their priests. For Jefferson, this trend contradicted local control and prevented the Church from accepting republican ideals. He was wary of institutions; Jefferson once called the use of national banks “more dangerous than standing armies.”⁶ For Jefferson and other Founding Fathers, the citizenry were compelled to participate in governance, as “the mass of the citizens is the safest depository of their own rights.”⁷ The Catholic Church did not allow their adherents at the time to do so.

Jefferson and Adams were not entirely wrong in sensing that there was a bit of a disconnect between their understanding of freedom – which became the dominant, cultural understanding of freedom in the United States – and the Catholic understanding of freedom. Historian Jay Dolan describes this disconnect, noting that the Catholics, both pre and post Vatican II, have drawn their values from “the tradition of Thomas Aquinas and Ignatius of Loyola,” while Americans have looked to “the tradition of Jefferson and Lincoln” for their understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.⁸ For Aquinas and Loyola, the Church is the earthly embodiment of the will of God, and because of this reality, human beings, conceived in sin, need the guidance of their priests and the wisdom of doctrine in order to attain the fullness of human freedom.⁹ For Americans such as Lincoln and especially Jefferson, institutions have the potential to inhibit the fullness of freedom; they are necessary, but their power and reach need to be carefully controlled, so as to allow the individual to realize the
freedom he or she has as an individual; Jefferson believed that men who exhibit their full freedom “know their rights…[and those who do] constitute a State.” Although he was not overtly religious, Jefferson’s American understanding of freedom was rooted in the very Protestant – and particularly Calvinist – idea that grace was something people received “through their own merit and endeavor.”

Jefferson’s understanding of freedom was also rooted in a Lockean sense of what religious truth was – and what the limits were to our understanding of that truth. For Locke, faith was a necessarily private affair, heavily linked with one’s reason. He insisted that a knowledge of God was “obscure and relative;” it could not be easily shared between and among human beings, and as a “relative” idea, then, faith should not serve as the foundation of politics. A religious person could, in theory, evangelize to anyone, but no one could truly know whether his or her words took effect because “true and saving religion consists in the inward persuasion of the mind.” Locke proposed, therefore, in his Letter on Toleration, to “distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion and to settle the just bounds that lie between the one and the other.” Because knowledge of God cannot be shared wholeheartedly from person to person, all faiths and religious opinions that did not pose an overt threat to the safety of citizens and the stability of society should be tolerated. As Locke wrote,

“The magistrate ought not to forbid the preaching or professing of any speculative opinions in any Church because they have no manner of relation to the civil rights of the subjects. If a Roman Catholic believe that to be really the body of Christ which another man calls bread, he does no injury thereby to his neighbour… the business of laws is not to provide for the truth of opinions, but for the safety and security of the commonwealth and of every particular man's goods and person.”

Locke’s Letter is a plea for almost universal toleration. He did place limits on the civil rights of Catholics and atheists; he didn’t believe they should be persecuted, but he also did not
think they should be allowed to vote or participate in government, because Catholics “ipso facto deliver themselves up to the protection and service of another prince,” i.e., the pope, and atheists had been rendered incapable of taking oaths to testify in courts due to their disbelief in a divinity. Nevertheless, Locke’s epistemological understanding of faith mandated a certain degree of civil toleration, and this idea was picked up, then, by many of America’s Founders, including Thomas Jefferson and his protégé, James Madison – author of the First Amendment.

Scholars of American Catholicism have noted that the Lockean idea of religion as a private affair was very different from the religious understanding that Catholic priests and lay people brought to America with them in the wake of the Revolution in France, the religious wars in Germany, and the famine in Ireland. Historian and theologian Mark Massa, S.J. notes that for Catholics, God can only be accessed by “an act celebrated by the entire community, [and that is why] that community, the church, is essential in the story of human salvation.” Religion, therefore, is not private, and prior to Vatican II, the Catholic Church insisted that neither people nor their civil institutions should attempt to discern right from wrong without the assistance of the church hierarchy. Catholicism in the early United States “was deeply rooted in European history and culture,” Jay Dolan tells us, and that history and culture did not see church-state separation as a noble idea.

The disconnect between “American” and “Catholic” understandings of freedom, religious knowledge, and the relationship between church and state was noticed by more than just native-born Protestants, who feared in the nineteenth century that the massive waves of Catholic immigration coming over from Europe were threaten the American experiment. Native-born Catholics noticed the ideological disconnect too – and some of them were worried by it. Orestes

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2 Locke’s skepticism concerning Catholics and atheists was not discriminatory in nature. Locke cared more about the state’s role in protecting the rights and liberties of its citizens. If either system could become able to shed these concerns, Locke would not have any objection to their participation in society.
Brownson, who was a Catholic convert, wanted his immigrant co-religionists to abandon their Old World ways and find a way to embrace American notions of freedom while retaining their Catholic identity. “A man may be a true American and a good Catholic,” Brownson argued. The “Americanization of the Catholic body” would require that the laity be educated, and that they come to understand that “the clergy…are not the church, but are functionaries [within it].” For Brownson, the laity, or the Catholic non-ordained, was the key to “establish[ing] harmony between religion and society.”

Isaac Hecker, a Redemptorist priest who, like Brownson, had converted to Catholicism, also believed immigrant Catholics ought to adopt an American posture toward freedom – and that they could do so and still be good Catholics if they simply accepted that the realm of the “church” and the “state” were different. The synthesis of “American” and “Catholic” identity, Hecker insisted, would guide the nation toward “its highest destinies.”

American bishops highly disagreed with the ideas of Brownson and Hecker, believing an “ultramontane” Church would lead to success on the American continent. “Ultramontane” refers to a Church heavily influenced by the Holy See’s opinions concerning faith and religion, and soon demarcated American Catholicism’s differences from European Catholicism. John Hughes of New York believed being American did not mean separating the Catholic identity from the American identity. To be American did not mean to not be Catholic. Hughes believed in an ultramontane church, one where the laity’s role was to “pray, pay, and obey.” This model of the Church, with a strong Roman influence, defined American Catholicism until the Second Vatican Council.

In spite of the strong opposition within the American Catholic community to the idea of Americanization, Hecker and Brownson’s ideas were salient enough – and possibly even popular enough among some lay Catholics – to attract the attention of the Pope. In 1899, Pope Leo XIII
released an encyclical, condemning the idea of Americanization. Written as a letter to Archbishop James Gibbons of Baltimore, the encyclical announced that the Pope was

“...not able to give approval to those views which, in their collective sense, are called by some "Americanism."...For it would give rise to the suspicion that 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.” [Emphasis mine] 

Leo issued his encyclical after reading the biography of Isaac Thomas Hecker. This biography had been translated into French in 1899, and Hecker’s ideas about the importance of church-state separation were beginning to gain traction among French Catholics. This growing international support for a separation between church and state – particularly in predominantly Catholic countries like France – was something that Pope Leo felt he needed to address. With his letter, Pope Leo XIII “put an end to the “Americanism” question,” officially. Church-state separation was to be a necessary evil in countries where Catholics were not the majority, but Catholics in that country should not see it as a stand-alone ideal. This was the Pope’s directive. The horse was already more or less out of the barn, and the cultural realities for Catholics in the United States in the early years of the twentieth century reflected a much different story.

John Courtney Murray wrote that different story and was censured and censored highly for his views concerning religious pluralism and religious liberty. While in residence at Boston College, Murray wrote extensively about free will. He used the doctrine of free will as a central point in the argument for church-state separation, believing the Church must protect humanity’s innate dignity and allow them to survey and find, on their own, religious truth. Church and state separation allowed the religious to worship freely and guard “the integrity of conscience, be it Catholic or Protestant.” Resulting from these views, Murray was censured by the Vatican when Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani became offended at Murray’s writings. Rome’s position...
changed when Communism grew in power, threatening “the concept [of religious belief] itself.” Soon after, the Vatican became open for allies in the fight against Communism, provided they “still believe in God.”

Resulting from fears of Communism, Pope John XXIII summoned the Second Vatican Council, or Vatican II, into existence, which offered places and roles for non-Catholics, lay people, and bishops alike. In his invocation *Humani Salutis*, Pope John XXIII noted the among the forces necessitating the council was “the existence of a militant atheism operating all over the world.” Communism was a threat – not just to the Catholic Church, but also to faith in general – and that threat required the Church to seriously re-evaluate its place in the world. With this reality in mind, John XIII hoped to “offer the Catholic Church and the world the gift of a new ecumenical Council.” He invited non-Catholic Christians to join the Council, noting that “eager for a return of unity and peace...more than a few of them have already promised to offer their prayers for [the Council’s] success and hope to send representatives of their communities...” The Pope also invited American bishops, who according to an observer, “exerted a definitive influence upon the documents of Vatican II.”

American bishops played an important role in the genesis of some of the most revolutionary documents to come out of Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, which defined (some might say redefined) the Church as “the people of God,” and also allowed devotions to saints, especially to the Virgin Mary, as ways adherents could practice their faith, most notably in its statement that “the liturgical cult, of the Blessed Virgin, be generously fostered.” *Gaudium et Spes* noted the laity, as the new “people of God,” had to adopt “certain ecclesiastical functions, which are to be performed for a spiritual purpose.” One example of such was the new endorsement of vernacular language in the Church service, or the Mass. *Sacrosanctum*
Concilium allowed “the vernacular language [to] be used in administering the sacraments and sacramentals.” This also led to “active participation” of the people in their liturgy, which brought religious interiority and republican-like ideals into Church policy. The same document also declared that the religious idea of “active participation” was the focus of the entire Second Vatican Council. 

Apostolicam Actuositatem reignited the passion of the laity, asking their roles within the Church “be broadened and intensified.”

Dignitatis Humanae declared that all peoples, Catholic or not, possess “a right to religious freedom,” changing forever the Church’s positions concerning interfaith affairs.

Other documents, such as Nostra Aetate and Unitatis Redintegratio, dealt with these new concerns about interfaith relations. The former document, Nostra Aetate, concerned relationships with non-Christian faiths, asking adherents to both “forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding.” The latter Unitatis Redintegratio laid philosophical groundwork for Christians of all denominations, Protestant and Catholic, to work together in the name of ecumenism so “the world may be converted to the Gospel.”

These documents, from Unitatis Redintegratio to Lumen Gentium, were radical departures from the Vatican’s previous understanding of piety, the role of the laity in the Church, and ecumenism, signaling a reversal of the Vatican’s former concerns of Americanism.

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This thesis will argue that Vatican II constituted an “Americanization” of the Roman Catholic Church. To make this argument, the thesis will focus on three areas affected most directly by Lumen Gentium, Sacrosanctum Concilium, Apostolicam Actuositatem, Gaudium et Spes, Nostra Aetate, Unitatis Redintegratio, and Dignitatis Humanae: the role of the laity, inwards piety and practice of the Catholic faith, and religious freedom and its subsequent ecumenism. By exploring the ways in which piety, lay authority, and ecumenism are different in...
the post-Vatican II Catholic Church, it becomes possible to see that Vatican II was a quiet, reluctant, but definitive embrace of the individualistic orientation toward freedom, the republican orientation toward government, and the Lockean understanding of religious belief that have been animating American culture since its beginning.

7 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
17 Steven Lukes. “France.” In Individualism. 5.
18 Ibid.
30 Pius XI. Divini Redemptoris. 339.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
36 Paul VI. Lumen Gentium. Article 33.
38 Paul VI. Sacrosanctum Concilium. Article 14.
Chapter 1: Democratizing the Church: The Laity’s Role and the Second Vatican Council

More than a century before Vatican II, the American Catholic laity applied republican principles to Church affairs, enacting participatory duties unseen in most of their European counterparts. Before the increase of immigration in the mid-nineteenth century and its subsequent cultural nativist response, Catholic laymen were trustees: owners and controllers of secular church affairs, such as the “collection of pew rents, purchasing an organ, selling gravesites in the parish cemetery, determining the [priest’s] salary…and paying off debts.”¹ Jay Dolan argues Catholics absorbed trusteeism from American Protestant denominations, which “endorsed the participation of the laity in congregational government.”² Lay governmental control was an inherent American value; Thomas Jefferson wanted local banks to guarantee that communities controlled their money and believed national banks were “more dangerous than standing armies.”³ Republicanism’s idea of an active citizenry relied on mass understanding and transparency; Jefferson sponsored a Congressional bill to convert American measurements and currency to base-10 systems. His justification to both was that “Every one knows the facility of Decimal Arithmetic.”⁴ Jefferson surmised people needed to be involved in their government, as “the mass of the citizens is the safest depository of their own rights.”⁵

Contrastingly, American bishops preferred the laity to only “pray, pay, and obey.”⁶ Trusteeism thrived during a period when the Catholic episcopal infrastructure was weak in the United States, but as that infrastructure became stronger – with more priests and more dioceses – American bishops worked to wean their parishioners off trusteeism, and to place Church property and financial affairs into the hands of the bishops. The bishops made the abolition of lay trusteeism a priority at the First Provincial Council of Baltimore in 1829.⁷ It took them a while to
achieve their goal, but certainly by the eve of the Civil War, the practice of lay trusteeism was essentially gone from American Catholicism.\textsuperscript{8}

The bishops’ effort to squash lay control of the Church’s temporal affairs seemed to confirm Protestant suspicions that the Catholic Church was inherently undemocratic – and therefore incompatible with American values. Due to immigration from Catholic countries, Catholics became the United States’ largest religious group.\textsuperscript{9} Resulting from this, anti-Catholic thought became popular; it questioned Catholicism’s compatibility with American life.\textsuperscript{10} Some bishops, such as John Hughes, combatted publically the academic assumption that the Catholic Church “priesthood held their believers in chains.”\textsuperscript{11} Commenting on the debates, convert writers such as Orestes Brownson and Isaac Hecker proposed Catholic Americanization. Brownson believed American Catholics should “share largely in the American nationality, and [become] disposed to believe that American interests should dictate and control American politics.”\textsuperscript{12} Brownson’s worries made him affirm Catholics’ “first and truest love has always been, and…always will be, for our country.”\textsuperscript{13} According to Brownson, American immigrant assimilators possessed “the [patriotic] sentiment which underlies [us all. It is] as strong in the bosom of American Catholics as it is in the bosom of American Protestants.”\textsuperscript{14} For Catholic Americans to be considered as American by the anti-Catholics, Brownson argued they must become “nationalized as well as naturalized, and merge themselves in the great American people.”\textsuperscript{15} To Brownson, the Catholic laity must be allowed to assume the republican pretentions of their countrymen.

This idea that in order to be fully “American,” Catholics had to be fully republican – even in their approach to their Church – did not sit well with many Catholic leaders, not just in the United States, but in Rome as well. A New York bishop wrote the laity “must not dare to control
him in the exercise of his episcopal authority.” Following the worries of American and French bishops, Pope Leo XIII believed the spread of Brownson’s American ideals, such as church-state separation, needed correction. To this end, he issued an encyclical, *Testem Benevolentiae Nostrae*, which condemned Brownson’s ideas. To some scholars, the document “set back the intellectual and social progress of the church by fifty years.” The document, they believe, relegated the laity to second-class status in church affairs for over a century, until the Second Vatican Council legitimized the laity’s role in the Church.

At Vatican II, the laity became part of the Church; more specifically, Vatican II defined the Church as the entire people of God, ordained and not alike. Documents such as *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, *Lumen Gentium*, and *Gaudium et Spes* republicanismized the Church by involving the laity in church affairs. *Lumen Gentium* defined the laity as those “constituted among the People of God; [and]...made…functions of Christ.” *Gaudium et Spes* placed the laity into church structure and affairs, as laymen “have the capacity to assume from the Hierarchy certain ecclesiastical functions, which are to be performed for a spiritual purpose.” To further the laymen’s understanding of the faith via “active participation,” *Sacrosanctum Concilium* allowed “vernacular language [to] be used in administering the sacraments and sacramentals.” This translation led to more liturgical changes that included priests “consecrating the Eucharist facing the congregation rather than…the altar.” These changes arose to spur the laity’s active participation, “the aim to be considered before all else.” Finally, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* focused on the laity’s role in the Church. The sentiments shown in these 4 documents were, in their own way, republican ones. Similar to Jefferson’s wariness of national banks and desire of an active citizenry to prevent corruption, the Church’s laity now fully participated in their liturgy by understanding the Mass’s language to prevent
priestly corruption. In these documents, Vatican II legitimatized the lay desire to understand and be a part of and understand the governance of the Church. It would be erroneous to say that the Church did not value the laity before Vatican II, but the Second Vatican council gave the laity a new and vibrant character. They alone could “consecrate the world itself to God.”

Bishop John Carroll’s 1785 letter to a New York Catholic community offers a window into one of the earliest documented examples of lay trusteeism, once described as “the most serious organizational issue that confronted the U.S. Catholic Church.” Trustees consisted of lay people in committees that controlled the parish’s secular affairs. John Carroll’s letter reacted to one parish committee’s desire to switch priests; the congregation believed they had the power to do so. Carroll believed granting their request would encourage a “zealous clergyman,” overly concerned with pleasing the trustees who’d chosen him, to give too much attention to “the passions… of the congregation.” This incident showed a growing lay desire to participate in church affairs, and Catholics were not alone in doing so. The Revolutionary “democratic spirit altered the landscape of American religion…[and] affected all denominations.” In 1785, Carroll was the only bishop in the United States, but as the number of bishops slowly grew, starting with the creation of four new dioceses in 1808 in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Bardstown, KY, the tension between the Church’s hierarchy in the United States and the lay people who served on these boards of trustees also grew. Bishops worried lay participation in matters of Church governance would cause the end of “the unity and catholicity of our Church.” This tension was exacerbated by the debate over “Americanization” that was touched off by the massive uptick in Catholic immigration from Europe.
With the introduction of Catholic immigrants, the laity gained new roles in sponsoring parish affairs and bringing to the Catholic Church a heightened status as a religious “other.” Jay Dolan recorded that 4.3 million Irish, 1.6 million German, 2 million Polish, and 3.8 million Italian immigrants were Catholic. With these arrivals, the immigrants practiced their faith in parishes founded and funded by members of their same ethnicity. Catholic immigrants associated with their own for the reasons of simplicity. It was easier to follow a faith if one “could hear sermons and go to confession in their own language.” This led to numerous parishes on the same corner, each serving a nationality under the spiritual auspices of ethnic saints. For example, a street in New York might have St. Patrick’s for the Irish, St. Denis’s for the French, and St. Josef’s for the Germans. Catholic immigrants set up bodies to cater to their communal needs, such as “churches, schools, hospitals, orphanages, [and] social welfare agencies.” This expansion also affected the Church hierarchy; immigrant children of one generation became priests in the next. Thanks to immigrant children entering the priesthood and the overall increase in the Catholic population, the number of priests and dioceses quadrupled in 40 years. These factors led R. Laurence Moore to assume that “the typical American Catholic in the middle of the nineteenth-century began life in the United States as a foreigner.” The growing Catholic infrastructure acted as societal signposts; parishes were readily available for adherents who “might stop in to say a quick prayer or light a candle on their way home from work or the grocery store.” To many immigrants, the Catholic faith was the only constant in a changing world. The immigrants became more numerous, and as James O’Toole terms it, “Catholicism came in the[ir] trunks.”

Responding to the immigrant population, anti-Catholic thought arose in academic settings and permeated public discussion. Bishop John Hughes participated in debates that discussed
whether Protestantism or Catholicism was the more American denomination. University clubs questioned “the compatibility of Catholicism with American government.” The Know-Nothing Party, a political party championing American-first ideas, discriminated against foreigners and Catholics. Its populist trend led to the election of “eight governors, more than one hundred congressmen, and the mayors of Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia, as well as thousands of lesser officials throughout the United States.”

Bostonian boys walked out on their public school for refusing to say the Protestant 10 Commandments, leading Catholics nationwide to consider them social martyrs for the faith. Arguments that “the papacy and priesthood held their believers in chains because they explained doctrine [and only] interpret[ed] the Bible for their laity” became popular and taught in schools. These uses of anti-Catholic rhetoric showed concerns that to many nativist Americans, the Roman Catholic faith system “was deeply rooted in European history and culture.”

For many who adhered to anti-Catholic thought, American identity consisted of republican tendencies, e.g. transparency and local control in government, which were personified by the Founding Fathers. After the American Revolution, Thomas Jefferson interested himself with the coinage of a new currency. Compared to the British pound sterling, Jefferson’s money supply was simplistic. He wrote currency must “be of convenient size to be applied as a measure to the common money transactions of life [and that] its parts and multiples be in an easy proportion to each other, so as to facilitate the money arithmetic.” Jefferson’s concern was one of easiness. The people en masse must understand the transactions they partook of. Jefferson’s new currency worked under the assumption that “the most easy ratio of multiplication and division, is that by ten. Every one knows the facility of Decimal Arithmetic.” Jefferson’s view of republicanism also functioned on the belief that “the bulk of mankind are schoolboys through
In his first State of the Union address, George Washington echoed the value of a simple and understandable currency. He claimed, “Uniformity in the currency, weights, and measures of the United States is an object of great importance, and will, I am persuaded, be duly attended to.” To ensure proper currency control, Jefferson desired local banks. He referred to national banks as “more dangerous as standing armies” because they removed the citizenry from their money. To prevent tyranny and abuse of power, citizens had to be involved in their government. Jefferson believed “the mass of the citizens is the safest depository of their own rights.” To be American, in the eyes of the anti-Catholics, was to follow the ideals of Jefferson and Washington: the people had to be in control and understand the governing affairs that permeated the American landscape, whether it be in the political or religious realms.

Thinkers such as Orestes Brownson and Isaac Hecker discussed the nativist objections, and concluded a possible solution would be the mass assimilation of Catholic Americans. For them, to be American meant accepting the American identity while not leaving the Catholic faith. Brownson said the Vatican “seem[ed] to have a totally erroneous idea of us Americans…there is not a more loyal people on the earth than the American…[provided they are] governed as free men, not as slaves.” Catholic immigrants could be “nationalized as well as naturalized, and merge themselves in the great American people.” Brownson believed Catholics should “take their position as free and equal American citizens…and throw themselves fearlessly into the great current of American national life.” Brownson endorsed values such as a greater lay role in church affairs and church-state separation. He believed the Church was made up of both non-ordained and ordained alike (a point that would eventually be taken up by Church leaders – but not for another 100 years). Through the laity, the Church could thrive in a church-state separation environment. His contemporary Isaac Hecker agreed; church-state separation
would allow Catholicism to flourish. Hecker also believed the laity’s actions proctored the Catholic Church’s success in the American religious marketplace, helping create the “realization of God’s Kingdom on earth.”

Concerning Americanization of Catholic immigrants, Brownson assumed that the Pope would never question the Americanization process. In this case, Brownson was wrong; Pope Leo XIII spoke out against Americanism in 1899. To be fair, Brownson never lived to see it, as he died 24 years earlier. Although Hecker and Brownson represented an idealized version of American Catholicism, the majority of the laity did not follow their logic and reasoning, preferring to keep the faith the way they practiced it since their families arrived in the country. The way the laity’s families practiced their faith was more “ultramontane.” The word “Ultramontane” comes from a French phrase meaning “over the mountains” and referred to the Alps and the land beyond them: Italy and Rome. This adjective referred to a laity that focused more on personal and interior devotions while also focusing on “the fallen nature of humanity” and how all sin could only be destroyed by the Church’s “wisdom and guidance.” These devotions allowed the laity’s religious life to be individualized. According to Maura Jane Farrelly, the ultramontane view arose and was approved by the Vatican as “it allowed Catholics to practice their faith in a country where they were the minority.” This idea became part of the defining characteristic of American Catholicism. The laity saw its role not as active participants, but as ones whose job consisted of praying and following the Church’s guidance. Some scholars term this facet as being part of a system that told the laity to “pay, pray, and obey.” As Jay Dolan notes, the ultramontane view “had clearly left its mark on the emerging immigrant church.” But as Dolan reports, other forces, anti-Catholic ones, molded the American Church during this period.
Nativism and assimilationist rhetoric led to a doubling down of the faith, the resurrection of a pre-Revolution view of the laity. In response to the idealism of Hecker and Brownson, bishops reaffirmed their authority and used it to guarantee their hierarchical roles and powers. Bishop John Hughes of New York argued against Brownson, noting if Brownsonian ideas worked, “the progress of the Church and the conversion of Protestants would have been far greater.”\footnote{This was not done out of hatred, but rather a serious belief in the success of a Catholic identity.} Hughes’ idea of being American, meant to embrace the ethnic and religious as well as the American identity, not to erase them.\footnote{He felt fervently that being American did not mean that immigrants had to give up a more traditional, hierarchical approach to their Church. Hughes was so strict compared to Brownson and Hecker because the socioeconomic circumstances they lived in: the powerful Know-Nothings had immense political power and cultural influence amongst many.} Even after Brownson and Hecker died, the debate remained unsettled. Bishops agreed with both Roman and American tendencies and argued them out. Eventually, European Catholics noted the American infighting. As a result, Pope Leo XIII wrote an encyclical to the American bishops and settled the issue once and for all.

Pope Leo XIII downgraded the laity in his condemnation of the ideas Brownson and Hecker endorsed. A translated French biography of Isaac Hecker was published in France with a preface written by an American bishop named John Ireland. The popular biography, which praised the Americanist viewpoints of Hecker and Ireland, became powerful in France, to the point when French bishops complained to the Vatican.\footnote{Pope Leo XIII wrote the letter to American bishops where he strongly condemned the idea that “the Church ought to adapt herself somewhat to our advanced civilization.”} Concerning those who supported Americanization, Pope Leo XIII said “The true church is one, as by unity of doctrine, so by unity of government,
and she is catholic also...she is rightly called the Roman Church.” 72 With these statements, Pope Leo XIII “put an end to the “Americanism” question.” 73 Due to the encyclical, the Brownsonian and Heckeran ideas of lay participation vanished from public consciousness. R. Laurence Moore refers to the encyclical as “set[ting] back the intellectual and social progress of the church by fifty years.” 74 Due to this newly re-inspired Roman following, the laity was seen as a class within the Church to follow the faith as the Magisterium defined it; as Jay Dolan terms it, the laity’s existence was defined by the threefold duty to “pay, pray, and obey.” 75 They “ha[d] no actual function in the Church…and were not called to holiness.” 76 This view would continue until the 1960s, when Vatican II redefined the laity’s purpose in a modern world.

After a century, the Second Vatican Council recognized and endorsed some republican ideas regarding the laity’s role and existence in the Church. In *Lumen Gentium*, the laity became the center of the Church and given powers over it. The laity became amongst the People of God, marking their existence as a holy people despite their secular nature. 77 As part of the world, they “seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God.” 78 The laity became “witness[es] and living instrument[s] of the mission of the Church itself.” 79 At Vatican II, the laity gained lost responsibilities from the hierarchy, equalizing them with episcopal members. 80 As the People of God, the laity not only evangelized their faith in the modern world, but also “ha[d] the capacity to assume from the Hierarchy certain ecclesiastical functions, which are to be performed for a spiritual purpose.” 81 One example was more lay participation in the Mass, such as reading the Epistle. Before the Council, the priest chanted the liturgical readings in Latin. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* allowed the laity to gain a new status, one that eventually allowed the laity to read the same readings as lectors and “aloud in the
Another result of the republican changes was a trend towards “active participation.” The Church wanted the laity to take part more via this concept, even defining the entire Council around it; Sacrosanctum Concilium noted that lay interaction in the Church service was “the aim to be considered before all else.” Although we discuss the spiritual effects of these duties on the laity in a future chapter, these changes show a new respect, or at least sympathy, to the republican values that so animated Americans, Catholic and non-Catholic alike.

Lumen Gentium allowed the laity to check and balance certain episcopal powers and promoted episcopal-lay equality in certain realms. The document gave the laity power to complain through its hierarchy. According to Lumen Gentium, the laity should:

“…openly reveal to the [bishops] their needs and desires with that freedom and confidence which is fitting for children of God and brothers in Christ. They are, by reason of the knowledge, competence or outstanding ability which they may enjoy, permitted and sometimes even obliged to express their opinion on those things which concern the good of the Church. When occasions arise, let this be done through the organs erected by the Church for this purpose.”

In this passage, the Church approved checking the balances church government under “a theological breakdown with its image of the Church as the People of God.” Although they are not part of the priesthood, Paul Lakeland argued that as part of the People of God, all possessed a common priesthood, ordained or not. The laity’s responsibilities given at Vatican II were not optional, but necessary. The document noted “The holy people of God shares also in Christ's prophetic office...from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful.” This parity between bishop and laymen comes from a common priesthood, one that is irrelevant of ordination. This parity highlighted by scholars such as Lakeland, combined with the new lay powers to redress inconveniences and power over secular church affairs, noted republican ideas or at least sentiments at the Council. The document mandated bishops to recognize the laity’s growing
power, and “promote the[ir] dignity as well as the[ir] responsibility.”\textsuperscript{89} The Church included all the baptized, including the laity, in the People of God.

In \textit{Gaudium et Spes}, the laity were tasked to be both in the world and above it, even questioning the Church’s authority. Laymen, as part of the People of God, must be willing to “hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine word.”\textsuperscript{90} The lay people’s expansion of power now included the realms of teaching and studying theology. When taking part of these fields, \textit{Gaudium et Spes} gave them new powers that nearly parallel the First Amendment’s freedom of speech. The Council gave the faithful, as part of their common priesthood as People of God, “a lawful freedom of inquiry, freedom of thought and of expressing their mind with humility and fortitude in those matters on which they enjoy competence.”\textsuperscript{91} Being able to question the government and the process behind it, i.e. theology and the powers of the Church, is innately Jeffersonian republican. \textit{Gaudium et Spes} placed the laity at the Church’s forefront and made theology arenas for critical analyses. This laity-centered Church focused now on the “priestly and prophetic people, called to discipleship to Christ, the servant-leader.”\textsuperscript{92} This commonality depicted a republican tendency along the lines of Jefferson and Washington, who both desired activity by nongovernment officials in governmental affairs and the power to question the government if the situation arose.

The republican sentiment for transparency was seen in \textit{Sacrosanctum Concilium}’s enacting the spread of a vernacular liturgy. In \textit{Sacrosanctum Concilium}, it is not the monetary system that became understandable, but the Church’s liturgy. The allowance of a vernacular liturgy arose in Article 21, which declared the Council had the power to adapt “both texts and rites…so that they express more clearly the holy things which they signify; the Christian people, so far as possible, should be enabled to understand them with ease and to take part in them
fully.”

This opened the door to further changes. Despite the document’s instance that “the use
of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites,” the Council affirmed in Article 63
that, “the vernacular language may be used in administering the sacraments and sacramentals.” Latin, which had been and still remained the preferred language, now became secondary to lay understanding and participation.

These liturgical changes happened so the laity could “actively participate” in the liturgy, a sign of republican sympathy concerning governmental involvement. This active “participation” was a new concept, and became the center of the liturgical life. Sacrosanctum Concilium delineated “this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit.” To promote this new concept, it was established that adherents should join in in the worship services even more “by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes.” Sacrosanctum Concilium desired and proctored an active laity. As Jefferson once affirmed, “the mass of the citizens is the safest depository of their own rights,” the Church changed so the citizenry could check on their deposits of faith as they lived it: through their Sunday morning church services.

Vatican II commissioned and approved a document called Apostolicam Actuositatem, which focused exclusively on the laity’s role and purpose within the Church. It favored more lay participation via the institution of the parish. In the modern era, there remained a “demand that the [laity] be broadened and intensified… the areas for [lay action] have been immensely widened.” Robert Oliver noted this focus on lay participation was a “theological point of departure…it was in sharp contrast [by focusing on divine-lay relationships.]” One example of the focus Oliver mentioned was the analogy of the Virgin Mary as the first member of the laity:
she “while leading the life common to all here on earth, one filled with family concerns and labors, was always intimately united with her Son.”\textsuperscript{100} To the documents’ writers, what united both the Virgin Mary and the laity is the secular nature of their bodies and otherworldliness of their souls.\textsuperscript{101} To be part of the laity meant actively consecrating one’s whole life to Christ, whether one was a butcher, a baker, or a candlestick maker. All occupations, secular or not, have a role in salvation, as “It has pleased God to unite all things.”\textsuperscript{102}

*Apostolicam Actuositatem* added a duty to participate; without the laity being involved, “the apostolate of the pastors is often unable to achieve its full effectiveness.”\textsuperscript{103} *Apostolicam Actuositatem* endorsed lay participation in the Church through the parish, which transcended “the many human differences within its boundaries and merges them into the universality of the Church.”\textsuperscript{104} This parish involvement reflected its institutional approval in the immigrant era. It was in the parish where the laity saw “a particular representation of the Church universal.”\textsuperscript{105} With the parish in mind, both laity and pastor should “be so involved in the local [parish] community.... that they will acquire a consciousness of being living and active members of the people of God.”\textsuperscript{106}

Concerning the ordained, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* dictated the laity had a role within parish life. The priests needed to allow lay participation by invoking the laity in “their catechetics [sic], their ministry of the word, their direction of souls, and in their other pastoral services.”\textsuperscript{107} *Apostolicam Actuositatem* legitimized the laity, who were once suppressed, and their parish roles, making it a “springboard for an extraordinary flowering of lay ministry since Vatican II, epically in the American Church.”\textsuperscript{108} It was this republican nature of transparency and involvement the document praised that led to its stronghold in American Catholic life, especially due to American bishops who yearned for a stronger lay presence in the Church.
American bishops spoke highly of the laity at Vatican II, seeing the Council as a way to proctor and foster the faith and ensured that conciliar documents would continue to do so. During the Council, bishops spoke about the documents before voting to confirm them. Concerning *Lumen Gentium*’s view of the People of God, Cardinal Ritter of Indianapolis assured that the Church’s teaching authority, i.e. the Magisterium, must not only be guarded from error by just the hierarchy, but “all the members of the Church, yes even the simple faithful.” Cardinals Spellman of New York noted the laity “enjoy a special effectiveness insofar as they act in the world.” Bishop Wright of Pittsburgh praised the document as the long awaited “positive conciliar exposition …on the place, dignity, and vocation of the laity in the Church of Christ.”

To him, the laity was the Church’s foundation. Without the laity, the Church could not exist. Bishop Primeau of New Hampshire noted lay and clergy cooperation was “absolutely necessary for promoting the common good of the Church.” The Church needed a laity, he surmised, and “the Church can never use their help and advice unless it acknowledges their legitimate freedom of action…and is ready to consult them with due respect about matters within their competence.” Bishop Primeau assumed a republican nature of *Lumen Gentium* concerning the laity. By endorsing a hierarchy-laity respect, dialogue, and acceptance of lay action, Bishop Primeau and his episcopal brethren identified with Vatican II’s refocus on the laity. To these American bishops, the Church needed to endorse the laity and had to start listening to them. In *Lumen Gentium*, it did exactly that.

Concerning *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, American bishops approved the laity’s ability to understand the liturgy. Evidence showed Cardinal Spellman preferred the Latin language, but nevertheless he admitted the sacraments “are ordered for the sanctification of man and…to instruct and nurture his faith…[therefore] a wider place can be given to the vernacular so that
they may more fully attain their pastoral end.” Liturgical reforms were designed to promote lay understanding, and even Spellman admitted it had “to be considered before all else.”

Archbishop Paul Hallinan of Atlanta guaranteed many American bishops “hope[d] for the more vital, conscious, and fruitful participation of our people in the Mass…[by the] use of the vernacular language.” He argued the reforms “will render our people more conscious and knowing, more truly prepared for the sacred action which follows.”

Hallinan noted his republicanism when he urged that “the liturgy of the Church must be public [to the laity so that] they understand enough of it to be a part of it.” The highlighting by Bishop Hallinan and Cardinal Spellman show a desire to promote Church transparency. The laity needed to understand the liturgy because, as Jefferson said, “the mass of the citizens is the safest depository of their own rights.” To protect the laity’s rights, the Church must allow the laity to understand their governing body in all forms, including liturgy.

To certain American bishops, Apostolicam Actuositatem served as how the laity should be viewed by the Church. Cardinal Ritter believed an earlier draft “minimally attain[ed] its pastoral end” for the reason it was not lay-focused enough. He claimed it was too clerical; it spoke the laity’s place was one in “the assistance of the clerics” and he was against it as “it hardly acknowledges the talent and capacities of the laity in a practical manner.” To Ritter, the new document needed more lay participation and activity so it “would call all of Christ’s faithful to engage [within the Church].” Bishop Leven of Texas noted the document’s radical nature, which “for the first time in conciliar history, has spoken of the laity in a positive way.” Instead of being portals that existed to “pray, pay, and obey,” Bishop Leven noted the laity’s role as “the essential nature of the Church.” He also argued simplicity in future drafts: for Leven, the document needed to be “shortened and given more strength.” This view hearkened back to
Jeffersonian Republicanism: simplicity is strength. For Jefferson, it was local control and a simplified money supply; at Vatican II, it was a concise document that allowed local action. Leven also desired a lay-bishop dialogue, one where the laity does more than listen. He closed noting the laity needed to be able “to exercise the [gifts] the Holy Spirit has given them.”

The republicanized changes at Vatican II strengthened and expanded the laity’s liturgical role in the United States’ Catholic population. After the adaptation of the now vernacular liturgy, the laity endorsed other changes supporting the newly desired “active participation”. On the First Sunday of Advent in 1964, parishes saw new aspects of services happen. The priest was standing versus populum, vernacular creeds, and dialogues between priests and adherents in the pews. As the Council desired to add more Bible reading, “to achieve the restoration, progress, and adaptation of the sacred liturgy,” the changes allowed more Scripture to be read more frequently and “in the course of a prescribed number of years.” These passages were even read by lay people in the sanctuary. This arose in a new section of the Mass called “Liturgy of the Word.” Since Vatican II also desired “the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs,” congregational singing became widespread. As Mark Massa, S.J. notes, it was present “within twenty years…[in] over 90% of all Sunday masses…and 70% of Saturday [vigil masses].”

Other than Bible reading and congregational singing, the laity also had a hand in the Eucharist, quite literally. The laity “carried the bread and wine…up to the altar before the consecration of…the Eucharist.” Soon after the Council, the laity became able to touch the Eucharist in both bread and wine forms. Before Vatican II, the priest would give only the host to

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1 Latin for “towards the people,” this contrasts itself from the Tridentine way of holding the liturgy ad orientem, or towards the East, with the priest facing the altar with his back towards the people. For more information about the positioning of priests during liturgy and its effects on the laity, see Mark Massa, S.J. “Into Uncertain Life: The First Sunday of 1964.” In Catholics and American Culture: Fulton Sheen, Dorothy Day, and the Notre Dame Football Team. New York: Crossroad Pub., 1999. 160-161.
Catholics kneeling with the priest alone consuming the blood of Christ; after the Council, the laity received the bread in their hands and drink the consecrated wine. In another republican step, the priest would not even be the one to hand the laity the Eucharist; lay members known as Extraordinary ministers would distribute the Eucharist to other members of the laity. The people became active in their own liturgy and grew to accept their role and place within it. As Andrew Greeley noted, an overwhelming majority of American Catholics “approve[d] of the English liturgy.” The republican form of worship that arose from Vatican II’s Sacrosanctum Concilium, combined with the new values and duties of the laity prescribed and endorsed in documents such as Lumen Gentium, Gaudium et Spes, and Apostolicam Actuositatem, allowed the laity to become not only counted among the “People of God,” but its preferred children.

With Vatican II’s focus on the laity and the actions of American bishops, Catholics became infused with the republican spirit found in the ideal visions of Brownson and Hecker. As a result, American Catholics regained responsibilities and new opportunities lost due to responses to anti-Catholic thought and a growing immigrant population. The Catholic laity in both the United States and abroad enjoyed a more active role after the Council. Yet there remains an important question: how did these republican tendencies in Vatican II affect the laity’s faith? The laity’s exterior actions of being involved in their parishes arose as a result of their inclusion as part of the “People of God.” Exterior actions cannot show an exclusive inner change. How does this piety change as a result of the Second Vatican Council? Did the new activities and roles the laity have actually effect their faith? With this newfound republican nature allowed at Vatican II, the laity became more involved. This focus which resulted from Vatican II also acted as an Americanization of Catholic piety itself, especially in the realms of a redefined purpose and role of the Sacrament of Confession, a new emphasis on devotions similar to American religious
individualism, and religious activity amongst the laity in documents such as Sacrosanctum Concilium, which allowed a new understanding of a millennia old faith and how one lived out Catholic theology in an ever changing world.

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2 Ibid., 30.


11 Ibid., 29.


14 Ibid., 286.


19 Paul VI. Lumen Gentium, Article 33.


Chapter 1: Democratizing the Church: The Laity's Role and the Second Vatican Council

Lanoie     30


22 Paul VI. Sacrosanctum Concilium. Article 14.
23 Paul VI. Lumen Gentium. Article 34.
32 Ibid., 95.
33 Ibid.
37 Ibid., 100.
40 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
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54 Ibid.
55 Ibid., 308.
56 Ibid.
60 Ibid., 54.
61 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
79 Paul VI. Lumen Gentium. Article 33.
80 Ibid., Article 32.
81 Ibid. Article 33.
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Paul VI. *Lumen Gentium.* Article 37.


Ibid., 200.


Paul VI. *Lumen Gentium,* Article 37.


Paul VI. *Lumen Gentium,* Article 62.


Paul VI. *Sacrosanctum Concilium.* Article 21.

Paul VI. *Sacrosanctum Concilium.* Article 36.1; Ibid., Article 63a.

Paul VI. *Sacrosanctum Concilium,* Article 14.

Paul VI. *Sacrosanctum Concilium,* Article 30.


Paul VI. *Apostolicam Actuositatem.* Article 4.

Ibid. Article 5.

Paul VI. *Apostolicam Actuositatem.* Article 7.

Paul VI. *Apostolicam Actuositatem.* Article 10.

Ibid.


Paul VI. *Apostolicam Actuositatem.* Article 30.

Ibid.


Ibid.
Chapter 1: Democratizing the Church: The Laity’s Role and the Second Vatican Council

114 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid.
122 Ibid.
123 Ibid. 459-460.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
132 Paul VI. Sacrosanctum Concilium. Article 30.
135 Ibid., 214-215.
136 Ibid., 216.
137 Andrew Greeley. ”They Like Being Catholic.” In The Catholic Myth: The Behavior and Beliefs of American Catholics. New York: Scribner, 1990. 5. Greeley argued the figure was 87% of American Catholics. There were no citations or evidence cited for that figure in his book. Without the citation, I could not verify his claim’s accuracy. For the sake of the republican value of transparency, I include the figure here but do not directly cite it due to his lack of citation.
Chapter 2: *A Whole Remodel: Vatican II and its Effects on Piety*

The word “piety” means lived theology, how “a person's essential religiousness [became] the source for the way one worshipped, for the style and content of one’s actions.”\(^1\) If theology is the answer to questions about the nature of the divine and the nature of the relationship that humanity should have with the divine, then piety is about the effort to live one’s life in accordance with those answers. In a Christian context, piety is about repairing “that gulf that [has] stood between human beings and the divine” as a consequence of the Fall.\(^2\) The Second Vatican Council changed the practice of piety for Catholics in a number of different areas. Devotions and confessions were still central to the Church’s understanding of piety, but the “active participation” of the laity in these exercises was encouraged; piety became more of a complementary relationship between lay people and the clergy who helped them to exercise this piety. Not long after the Second Vatican Council ended, the Church declared that the arena of “family planning” was one that touched upon the relationship between humanity and the divine when Pope Paul VI issued his encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. Although this encyclical was not a part of Vatican II, it will be discussed in this chapter, because the American people’s response to it exemplifies, in many ways, the “active participation” of the laity in the exercise of their piety that Vatican II encouraged. In the case of *Humanae Vitae*, the laity actively rejected the Church’s teaching that a pious life demanded complete abstinence from artificial methods of birth control.

“Active participation” arose from a conciliar desire for the laity to understand and take part in the liturgy, hoping an exterior piety would cultivate an inner one. This inner piety was, for the Council, “the aim to be considered before all else.”\(^3\) Adding more Bible readings and lay involvement in a vernacular liturgy inspired exterior piety. Bible readings were added because
the Council believed that the Bible “is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy.” The Council allowed the vernacular to be used to make the Mass more accessible to people and inspire adherents’ piety. Laypeople were invited to participate more directly in the Mass, as well as serving as lectors and Eucharist ministers, with the Council’s reasoning being that “each person, minister or layman, who has an office to perform, should do all of, but only, those parts which pertain to his office by the nature of the rite and the principles of liturgy.”

The Second Vatican Council also reiterated the Church’s commitment to devotional piety, encouraging the laity to participate in regular devotional exercises that were oriented toward saints, especially the Virgin Mary. In and of itself, this was not new; the Vatican began encouraging devotionalism in the early nineteenth century, as part of its effort to “protect” Catholics who lived in predominantly Protestant and increasingly secular societies. What made post-Vatican II devotionalism different was the unabashed goal of external piety. In the nineteenth century, the Vatican hoped that the external piety displayed in devotionalism would mark Catholics as “different” from the non-Catholics they lived near and worked with; this “self-marginalization” would help Catholics to identify more strongly with the centralized church in Rome. The goal of devotionalism as articulated by a number of Vatican II’s documents was the cultivation of an inner piety, an emphasis on the obligations that individuals had as individuals to God. Centering prayer on the life and example of “a particular person,” such as the Virgin Mary, which is what post Vatican II does, allows individuals to contemplate the individual salvation that was made possible in Christ. After Vatican II, devotions allowed participants to find and take part in communal resources that consisted of “real people with whom they could identify and to whom they could speak through prayer.” The Papacy defined new Marian
devotions after apparitions of her were approved worthy of belief. These Marian devotions became popular with American Catholics, even taking one as patroness of the United States.

Mary’s relatability to believers revealed itself in *Lumen Gentium*, and since then grew amongst minority communities. *Lumen Gentium* recognized Mary’s influence on the faithful, and Marian devotions stemming from apparitions were signs she “intervened in the mysteries of Christ and is justly honored by a special cult in the Church.”\(^{10}\) At Vatican II, these interior devotions were recommended in the command that “the liturgical cult, of the Blessed Virgin, be generously fostered.”\(^{11}\) Her popularity remained, marking her as “one of the most distinctive features of Catholic culture.”\(^{12}\) Other than religious usage, Mary also acted as a religious liaison for minority communities. Feminists saw her as “a prayful young woman...”\(^{13}\) Class activists saw Mary “ as a peasant woman who lived in a colonial culture.”\(^{14}\) Hispanic and African-American Catholics saw her in racially different ways in their piety, using her as a toll keeper to counter a “predominantly white Church [which can make] them feel excluded.”\(^{15}\) She was their mother and she appeared in any form that roused maternal feelings of love in believers.

To the Catholic Church, Confession cleans the soul’s interior dirtiness caused by the Fall, making it an essential part of Catholic piety. Before Vatican II, it served not as a shaming chamber, but as a place of confronting one’s mortality with each confession treated “as it were to be your last.”\(^{16}\) Confession before Vatican II focused on guilt and relaxed that “anxiety of mind” brought on by sin.\(^{17}\) Psychologists comparable to Elizabeth Todd liken this to the Jungian idea of submissive authority: upon hearing the absolution prayers, the confessant’s “burden of shame and guilt is now shared and lessened.”\(^{18}\) At Vatican II, the sacrament was redesigned to inspire “an encounter with a loving God.”\(^{19}\) Most of the sacramental changes happened after the Council. The individual Confession remained and also became part of a specialized church
service. These Confession services made the interior into the exterior, especially considering psychotherapist Gerdenino Manuel’s view that the new public confession service “shares several of its most important insights with group-oriented psychology.” The sacrament changed after Vatican II to feature its psychotherapeutic benefits. Although Confession numbers declined early after the Council, they have remained steady, with 26% of Catholics saying they confess “once a year or more often.” With most of its changes happening post-Council, Confession was not alone in its timing: the Church doubled down concerning its views on birth control, bringing conflict to the laity in a document known as *Humanae Vitae*.

As stated earlier, *Humanae Vitae* has no direct link to Vatican II but the way many Catholics responded to it reflects the “empowered” sense that lay Catholics in America had before Vatican II, and which many Catholics in other countries embraced after Vatican II (as evidenced most starkly by the declining birth rates that Italy has been experiencing in the last few decades). It emerged from discussions that took place within a commission that Pope John XXIII convened in 1963, in the midst of the Second Vatican Council. The strong lay involvement in this commission reflected the spirit of Vatican II. Indeed, it is believed that the Pope convened the commission in response to lay couples’ interventions, including an American couple named the Crowleys. The Pill had been made available to women in the West three years earlier, and the Crowleys noted that in the wake of this medical “technology,” many American Catholics “think it is time for a change.” The change that the Church ultimately adopted,

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however, may not have been the change that the Crowleys – and all of the other members of the commission – intended.

The commission met over the course of five years, and the recommendation it ultimately made to the Pope – who, by this time, was Paul VI – was that the Church should endorse the use of some forms of artificial birth control for its adherents. Several clerical members of the commission disagreed with this recommendation, however, and their dissent proved to be the foundation of Paul VI’s ultimate directive on the topic, *Humanae Vitae*. Taking a natural law view of marriage, where marriage happened in order to proctor the raising of children, Paul VI believed “each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life.” Any artificial form of birth control, according to this reasoning, was a violation of natural law and an affront to the will of God.

Many historians and theologians believe that *Humanae Vitae* complicated the lives of theologians, confessors, and adherents alike. Even at the time the encyclical was released, many feared that the natural law argument’s application in this way could lead to “a very real threat of schism among Catholic moral theologians over the Church’s teaching.” Confessors faced laypeople who were willing to argue over interpretations. Eventually, many lay Catholics privately decided that the question of whether to use an artificial form of birth control was not a question of piety. Rather, it was a lifestyle choice. This attitude toward *Humanae Vitae* was adopted not just by Catholics in America, but also by Catholics around the globe – or at the very least in parts of the world where artificial forms of birth control were easily available, such as in Italy.

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Before one can discuss how Vatican II changed piety, piety itself must be defined. For our purposes, piety is lived religion by the laity. According to Jerald Brauer, piety has one
purpose: to repair the broken link between God and mankind. Christian theology focuses on humanity’s Fall. In Jewish and Christian traditions, God and humankind separated due to Adam and Eve’s actions in the Garden of Eden. When they ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, their God-made purity was tarnished. Brauer asserts, “they fell from this state into sin and so were cut off, estranged, at enmity with God their creator, and with their fellow human beings…only God could bridge that gulf that stood between human beings and the divine.”

To Brauer and to Christian theologians, any action that unites God and man becomes part of the realm of piety. Jerald Brauer’s focus is on Puritan piety, which differs from Catholic piety – and some other forms of Protestant piety – in its strong emphasis on the role and responsibility of the individual to heal the rift with God. “All Christians believe that scripture does not stand alone, that both the Holy Spirit and human reason must be employed to interpret it properly,” according to Brauer. For Protestant denominations without a central hierarchy, however, human reason stands on its own; a single human decides what Scripture demands of him. For Catholics, the Church’s hierarchy, using their divinely inspired teaching authority, or the Magisterium, articulates what piety is. The Second Vatican Council and its subsequent changing spirit affected piety, or how Catholics saw their faith affecting the divine human relationship, in four realms: liturgical participation, Confession, devotions, and birth control.

Vatican II revived exterior piety via the concept of “active participation.” Before Vatican II, lay Catholics were seen to only “pray, pay, and obey.” At Vatican II, the laity became mandated to take part in the Church through “active participation.” This idea first manifested itself in Sacrosanctum Concilium, which stated the purposes of Vatican II. The Council implemented “active participation” in order to “impart an ever increasing vigor to the Christian life of the faithful...[and] therefore sees particularly cogent reasons for undertaking the reform
and promotion of the liturgy.”31 For the liturgy to be effective in arousing piety, adherents must “take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects.”32 This yearning for a religiously educated laity grew strong at the Council. The idea of “active participation” controlled the entire process of liturgical reform, which was to “be considered before all else.”33 With “active participation” in mind, the Church reformed the liturgy to ensure the laity could “understand [the Mass] with ease and to take part in them fully, actively, and as befits a community.”34 The Church believed an educated laity would not only proctor Church affairs, but also strengthen their piety. To the Council, the act of Mass repaired the God-man relationship as it “is made up of immutable elements divinely instituted.”35 The Church wanted the very act of worship to inspire piety by adding to it a sense of exteriority.

“Active participation” was achieved through Sacrosanctum Concilium by the implementation of vernacular liturgical language, the addition of more Bible readings, and liturgical involvement both outside of and within the sanctuary, making Mass more active on the laity’s side. Before Vatican II, the Latin Mass was said ad orientem, only involving the laity at Communion.”36 At Vatican II, the Council decided the liturgical reformation “should be theological, historical, and pastoral.”37 One example was the addition of more Bible readings in the Mass. Before the Council, there were two readings: the Epistle and the Gospel, with verses chanted from Psalms and other parts of the New Testament. The Old Testament was rarely mentioned because the Mass focused around Jesus’s sacrifice on the Cross. Vatican II stated:

“Sacred scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. For it is from scripture that lessons are read and explained in the homily, and psalms are sung; the prayers, collects, and liturgical songs are scriptural in their inspiration and their force, and it is from the scriptures that actions and signs derive their meaning. Thus to achieve the restoration, progress, and adaptation of the sacred liturgy, it is essential to promote that warm and living love for scripture to which the venerable tradition of both eastern and western rites gives testimony.”38

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Following that pleading, the Mass eventually included Old Testament readings.\textsuperscript{39} After Vatican II, the Mass itself would consist of an Old Testament reading, a New Testament reading, and a Gospel reading. These additions to the liturgy reflected a desire of exterior piety. \textit{Sacrosanctum Concilium} stated, “in sacred celebrations there is to be more reading from Holy Scripture, and it is to be more varied and suitable.”\textsuperscript{40} To the Council fathers, an exterior piety revolved around an understanding and reading of the Bible. After the Council, the laity became lectors and read passages “aloud in the vernacular.”\textsuperscript{41} This was one of the Council’s biggest changes: changing the Latin of the Mass to whatever language needed it to be in to unite God and man for the laity.

The Catholic worship changed languages depending on the worshippers’ native languages. The Council affirmed its belief that “the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites.”\textsuperscript{42} In the next paragraph of \textit{Sacrosanctum Concilium}, the Council clarified their position and declared, “since the use of the mother tongue, whether in the Mass, the administration of the sacraments, or other parts of the liturgy, frequently may be of great advantage to the people, the limits of its employment may be extended.”\textsuperscript{43} In later elucidation, the document declared, “the vernacular language may be used in administering the sacraments and sacramentals.”\textsuperscript{44} The Council did want Latin to be retained, as previously mentioned, but knew an understanding laity would be more exteriorly pious, which would pour inwards due to their actions. Mark Massa, S.J. argues this vernacular change ties people into the Mass, as “worshipers were now…asked to do quite specific acts (“Let us pray”) that demanded attention on their part.”\textsuperscript{45} As one priest put it, “there is no time for idle dreaming.”\textsuperscript{46} Instead of an interior piety happening at Mass, an exterior one would allow it to saturate inwards, especially if one “actively participated.”
Adding liturgical involvement would spur an exterior sense of piety, since the laity would be taking part of an action that repairs the break between God and man. Article 26 stated openly, “liturgical services…pertain to the whole body of the Church…but they concern the individual members of the Church in different ways.”\(^47\) The declaration continued, “servers, lectors commentators, and members of the choir…ought, therefore, to discharge their office with the sincere piety and decorum demanded.”\(^48\) In summary, the Council stated, “the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes.”\(^49\) As mentioned in a previous chapter, the laity took part in their services in a republican trend, but they also served due to a religious piety trend. Mark Massa, S.J. notices the mandated singing came “within twenty years…[in] over 90% of all Sunday masses…and 70% of Saturday [vigil masses].”\(^50\) Processional and recessional songs were sung to arouse “active participation.”\(^51\) Soon after the Council, the laity had to move around in Church; members interacted with each other by exchanging a Sign of Peace.\(^52\) The lay interactions and involvement were part of this idea of “active participation” and promoted it to allow an exterior inspiration of piety.

All in all, Vatican II wanted an exterior piety in the Mass spurred by lay involvement, adapting the vernacular, and by adding more Scripture readings to enhance “active participation.” \textit{Sacrosanctum Concilium} mentioned that this exterior “active participation” must enter into an interior one. As the document stated, “the spiritual life, however, is not limited solely to participation in the liturgy.”\(^53\) Adherents must also pray in their homes as they “always bear about in our body the dying of Jesus, so that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest.”\(^54\) To further this interiority, the constitution states, “popular devotions of the Christian people are to be highly commended.”\(^55\) These endorsed devotions had a strong history, acting as interior
religious individualism for American Catholics. The philosophy of religious individualism did not start with American Catholics, but with the Puritans.

Protestant-originated religious individualism merged its way into American Catholic mindsets. Religious individualism is the idea “that the individual believer…has the primary responsibly for his own spiritual destiny.” The idea goes back to the beginning of Protestantism. It became popular with Calvinism, due to Calvinist yearnings for perpetual perfectness. This is shown in preacher Jonathan Edwards’s own experiences. In his *Personal Narrative*, he described his spiritual life as a series of “inward struggles and conflicts, and self-reflections. [He] made seeking [his] salvation the main business of [his] life.” For Edwards, salvation had to be invited in by the individual. Edwards noted that he “had been full of objections against the doctrine of God’s sovereignty, in choosing whom he would to eternal life, and rejecting whom he pleased; leaving them eternally to perish, and be everlastingly tormented in hell.” It was only after a thunderstorm that Edwards pondered “sweet contemplations of my great and glorious God.” Edwards knew he could not earn God’s favor, but he could plead for it alone. This religious mindset became a cultural mindset in America.

Consequently, Catholics who grew up in America absorbed this idea of religious individualism in the realms of devotions, or personal prayers that brought Catholics to focus about religious ideas, such as saints’ lives or Biblical passages. The religious individualistic trend of devotional Catholicism surfaced in the Revolutionary Era, when few priests catered to adherents over a large geographic area. John Carroll reported to the Vatican that for about 25,000 Catholics in the American Colonies, he had “nineteen priests in Maryland and five in Pennsylvania.” For Catholics without a set priest, they would have to wait for one to administer the sacraments to them. Priests would constantly travel to cater to widespread Catholics. John
Carroll’s adherents covered a sixty-mile radius in Maryland and Virginia while one priest served all the Catholics in the eastern half of New England. There were cases of lay Catholics starting laity-led services, which let people “read the gospel assigned for the Mass that day, and other prayers…[that were] recited in common.” The laity started to understand their place formed by the widespread inspiration for others to “gain control over their own destiny, spiritual as well as political.” In the early American Church, the hierarchical structure European Catholics were used to was not there. Without set parish priests and with believers being dispersed, being Catholic signified a personal view of religion similar to Puritan religious individualism.

Due to a lack of priests, colonial Catholics used individual devotions to remain Catholic, turning their religion inwards. To spur religious fervor, one family was recommended by a priest to “say your prayers on your knees, morning and evening with attention and devotion.” Jay Dolan notes devotions ensured “the spiritual life of an individual became centered on a particular person.” Without priests, this led to a new way to be Catholic. Without the sacraments, “religion [became] a personal experience; with an emphasis on the interiority of religion as opposed to external acts of piety.” This style of piety where Catholics connected themselves with pious individuals was very similar to the Enlightenment views of religion, in which “everyone joins himself voluntarily to that society in which he believes he has found that profession and worship which is truly acceptable to God.” Devotions did not only arise in the priestless era, but also when parishes and dioceses became solidified on the American continent.

Religious devotions that focused on saints’ lives prospered in the nineteenth century, when American Catholics saw their faith as a continuation of the saints’ struggles. Devotional Catholicism focused on a saint or holy experience, differing with person and with purpose; the vernacular devotions allowed its users to glean meaning from it. Some of the saints and
experiences that attracted devotees during “this time were those dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to Jesus in the Eucharist through public exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, to the passion of Jesus, and to the Immaculate Conception of Mary, as well as the recitation of the rosary, and, of course, devotion to such saints as St. Patrick, St. Joseph, and St. Anthony.” Jay Dolan notes devotions themselves soon became “a distinctive feature of American Catholicism.” Due to the thousands of saints and devotions available, we will focus on a single one, one that differentiated Catholicism from other denominations. The role the Virgin Mary played before and after Vatican II functions as a microcosm of how interior devotionals were approved at the Council.

In the United States, Mary became a predominant force amongst Catholics. When the Church had limited priests, Marian devotions such as the rosary were “seen as a way of focusing mental attention on Jesus himself rather than on his mother.” After the Church hierarchy was established, Marian devotions still remained popular amongst Catholic women, especially Carmelite nuns. Other orders, such as the Sulpicians and Jesuits, “laid important groundwork for extending devotion to Mary in the United States.” When priests and dioceses were formed, orders of nuns dedicated to Mary became popular. Amongst them, Mary Athens includes “the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, established in Philadelphia in 1833 by five young women from Ireland.” Included amongst these orders were growing sodalities, which were Church-approved lay-organized groups to pray and unite under a saintly devotion. In 1897, the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary was resurrected from its 1563 origins to “foster in the hearts of members a more than ordinary devotion to our Blessed Lady, in order that, helped by her special protection, they may lead a pure Christian life.” Members were required to pray daily to the Virgin Mary and to “give some time to pious meditation [about her].” These actions and
societies were devotional Catholicism personified. The inherent religious individualism of American Catholics used devotions that allowed them to find “real people with whom they could identify and to whom they could speak through prayer.” Devotionals allowed not only a three-way relationship with God (adherent, the Virgin Mary, and the Godhead), but also heightened papal power over the laity, as “the Papacy vigorously promoted this type of religion through encyclical letters, indulgences, and the establishment of new religious feasts.” Rome saw the power of Marian devotions and followed through on them, especially concerning the Marian apparitions at Lourdes.

In the 1850s, Pius IX declared the Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which defined Mary as being conceived without the tendency to sin, a special status that only she and her son had. This became popular amongst American Catholics when a few years later, a poor French girl named Bernadette Soubirous saw the Virgin Mary at a town dump. Once the Church claimed her visions were “worthy of belief,” John McGreevy notes the popularity this Marian apparition underwent, mentioning, “an astonishing two hundred fifty thousand descended upon Lourdes in 1873.” The Lourdes phenomenon was also popular due to the healing waters Bernadette found: American late-term pregnant mothers frequently and earnestly requested these waters to help them in childbirth. Americans organized pilgrimages there starting in June 1874; the first pilgrimage worldwide to Lourdes consisted of one bishop, thirty priests, and seventy-five lay people who piously “carried small images of Bernadette aloft.” These devotions to a new title of the Virgin Mary, the Immaculate Conception, not only spread nationwide in rebuilding local versions of Lourdes, but also amongst the episcopacy: the Immaculate Conception became the patroness of the Americas. This apparition inspired new devotion and
shows how Marian-based piety expanded in the American Catholic populace, giving life to a papal-approved “turn toward a more elaborate, devotional style of religion.”

This American trend of Marian devotions continued into the 1900s until right before Vatican II, especially amongst women and those who prayed the Rosary. Jay Dolan notes the Rosary, May crownings, and Marian feast days “still occupied a central place in the religious life of Catholics.” Nine day prayers to Mary, known as novenas, covered events in the life of the Virgin Mary. They “became the most popular devotion in the Catholic community.” Other apparitions at Fatima during World War I focused on Russian conversion as well as “prayer and repentance.” These prayer communities and sodalities revolved around parish women. James O’Toole notes, “women’s groups had long been staples of local church life…priests were eager to see them develop regular devotional practices.”

The Virgin Mary helped women in their piety, bringing them closer to God. Women saw “this image of the perfect Mary they were to emulate [and] wanted to aspire to be like her, this most beautiful and serene woman who had fascinated God so much that He made her His mother.” This relating view of Mary had shown itself at Vatican II, especially in Lumen Gentium, where a whole chapter addressed Mary.

The last chapter of Lumen Gentium saw the Virgin Mary as a force of her own as members of the sodalities did, and not just as an intercessor between lay Catholics and Jesus. The Council said, “she is endowed with the high office and dignity of being the Mother of the Son of God…she far surpasses all creatures, both in heaven and on earth.” The Council also saw her as special because the Church “honors her with filial affection and piety as a most beloved mother.” The Council called her “prophetically foreshadowed in the promise of victory over the serpent…She stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord.”

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one of two, in addition to Jesus, whose existence was prophesied from the beginning of the Old Testament. The Council also highlighted her choice to bear Christ, believing Mary “devoted herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord…freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience.”  

Mary cannot save humanity from its sins, but the Church knows many see Mary as a way to proctor piety. Therefore, the Council legitimized Marian devotions, even advocating they be “commend[ed] it to the hearts of the faithful.”  

The Second Vatican Council legitimized an American view of Marian devotions, seeing them as interior wells of piety that worldwide Catholics could use. Citing its beginnings, the Council saw Marian devotions as evidence that she “intervened in the mysteries of Christ and is justly honored by a special cult in the Church.”  

The Church officially taught and recommended that “the liturgical cult, of the Blessed Virgin, be generously fostered, and the practices and exercises of piety…be religiously observed.”  

The American devotions and novenas were approved and endorsed because they led people to Christ through Mary. 

After Vatican II, Marian devotions remained popular amongst the American Catholic laity, showing that devotions to her remained “one of the most distinctive features of Catholic culture.”  

According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University, which surveys Catholics about Church and parish issues, Mary has remained popular in individual devotion and piety. 59% of American Catholics “have a statue or picture of Mary on display in their home.”  

45% of those who go to Mass weekly carry a rosary and amongst all Catholics, 52% pray the rosary at some point during the year.  

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html. Article 55. In Catholic tradition, Mary’s existence was prophesized to in Genesis 3:15, right after the Fall. The verse consisted of God punishing the Serpent by promising he “will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.” (Genesis 3:15, Douay-Rheims). This reference to “seed” is, in Catholic eyes, Jesus and the woman in this case is Mary.
those polled believe having devotion to Mary made up what they thought meant to be Catholic.\textsuperscript{103} The newer generations were the most likely to “have a statue or picture of Mary displayed in their home.”\textsuperscript{104} Marian devotions remain popular, especially amongst the younger generations, because they were able to relate to her.

Many use Mary as the channel to relate to God along gender, racial, and class lines. According to scholars like Lawrence Cunningham, post-conciliar Mary began to be viewed in different ways. One way was from a feminist perspective, as “the rise of feminist theology in the period after Vatican II has reconceptualized [the depiction of] Mary.”\textsuperscript{105} Feminist believers now see Mary as “a prayful young woman whose body had no ostensible association with maternal functions.”\textsuperscript{106} To proctor support for their causes, class activists use the image of “the more historical reality of Mary as a peasant woman who lived in a colonial culture, bore Jesus in the poorest of circumstances, [and] fled with him to escape oppression.”\textsuperscript{107} The Marian apparition in Mexico, Our Lady of Guadalupe, showed Mary in a non-Caucasian light, acting as a link to adherents who do not associate with European portrayals of Mary.\textsuperscript{108} African-Americans who “profess to pray to a black Madonna [do so] to feel Mary’s presence more deeply.”\textsuperscript{109} To Cunningham, Mary’s role as Mother of God has “stood ready to meet people of color on their own terms.”\textsuperscript{110} Mary, as she did before the Council, serves as the heavenly representative best suited for human intervention. But after Vatican II, this includes modeling Mary in different lights to individualize piety. Some African American and Hispanic Catholics use Mary’s depictions as ways to bridge God and man via a “predominantly white Church [which can make] them feel excluded.”\textsuperscript{111} Mary is seen as the figure best suited to do so as she was not God nor God and man, but just an ordinary woman. She humanizes the divine in a way Jesus could not. She was the person whom Catholics “could pin their highest hopes, a figure immune to the very
forces Catholics yearned to eject from themselves.”¹¹² Unlike Jesus, Mary would not and could not judge. One cannot confess their sins to Mary, but one must confess their sins to priests acting as Jesus to be Catholic. Every priest is Jesus in the confessional, and they judge.

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Before Vatican II, the laity went to Confession due to a hunger for forgiveness: penitents came to acknowledge their addiction to sin. They needed a sign that they could re-enter God’s good graces. In a popular devotional guide for examining sin, Confession was heightened as a life or death matter. The guide focused on Confession as being “one of the most serious duties of a Christian [sic].”¹¹³ An interior regret was necessary to approach the confessional; without it, the sacrament “will not assuredly remit the real guilt of sin.”¹¹⁴ The manual asked readers to treat each Confession “as it were to be your last. What would be your deposition, if you were actually stretched on your death-bed...[and it] would be followed by that tremendous judgment that has cause the greatest saints to tremble.”¹¹⁵ Confession was associated with death, making one confront their own mortality every time they partook in it. The guide also listed questions for the adherents that were designed so that they would focus on their sins. These questions were relatively common and “virtually every prayer book offered what was called an examination of conscience.”¹¹⁶ These accusatory tone of these questions created a duality of victim and prosecutor in the adherent with their soul in the balance. For example, “have you been guilty of heresy, or disbelief of any article of faith, or of voluntary doubting any article of faith?”¹¹⁷ If the answer to any question was yes, it was a sin that needed to be confessed. The laity’s understanding on how to mend the rift between God and man focused on their death and their mortality, at least concerning Confession.

A century later, the Third Plenary Council at Baltimore also highlighted this view of Confession: the seriousness of penitence and the confrontations with one’s mortality. Question
724 of the Council’s Baltimore Catechism lists the sacramental benefits as “it gives us in our confessor a true friend...to whom we can confide our secrets with the hope of obtaining advice and relief.” If a priest refused a penitent’s confession, the laity should “humbly submit to his decision, follow his instructions, and endeavor to remove whatever prevented the giving.”

Even with the spirit of friendship, the penitent had strict regulations in making a confession valid and erasing sin. They had to be vague in telling the sin (one could not implicate another), be accurate in the sin’s number and frequency, and timely—pausing to recollect words and sins was not allowed. The life and death of guilt was the motivation behind the sacrament, bringing each confessant eye to eye with their mortality. As Jay Dolan notes, fears of Hell “sought to move people to convert from their sinful ways [and had] people flocked to the confessionals.”

During this time, “the dominance of sin in the Catholic culture mean that guilt was a very important influence in shaping the minds of people...[Confession] relieve[s] that ‘anxiety of mind’ brought on by sin.” Why would Confession relieve the laity’s anxiety? For that question, psychology must be consulted.

To psychologist Elizabeth Todd, Confession relieves anxiety as it adds a human sense to divine forgiveness. She says both “are twin elements of a process encountered in basic human relationships...in that place where psychology and religion meet—guilt.” To her, Confession is a natural aspect “arising from human need to de [sic] reconciled to significant others.”

Relying heavily on Carl Jung, she believes “the religious [impulse] in man is as powerful as the instinct of sex or aggression.” This need shows itself in guilt-freeing rituals, “which ha[ve] two parts: the need to confess and the need to be forgiven and reconciled.” Todd believes the act’s exteriority made it important. In the Church, the priest, “whose authority is recognized by the penitent” absolving penitents acts as a moral slate being wiped clean.
authority recognized by the penitent, the sinner realized he is “no longer alone. His burden of shame and guilt is now shared and lessened…His moral exile is ended.”¹²⁸ In the eyes of Jung and Todd, the emotion of the shame and guilt mindset that Dolan alludes to needs releasing. Guilt is the great secret “the individual wishes to hide…from the world.”¹²⁹ Due to the psychological release, the authority is necessary, as they grant absolution. From the granting of absolution, the confessing layperson “seeks help and guidance for the conduct of his future life.”¹³⁰ In the acts of therapy and Confession “the psychogenic secret [i.e. sin] is confronted and accepted…it is no longer injurious.”¹³¹ The institution of Confession as shown before Vatican II served a therapeutic and religious role for a society with a “culture of sin.”¹³²

At Vatican II, Confession underwent reforms but most of them occurred after the Council. In Lumen Gentium, Confession lets those who take part “obtain pardon from the mercy of God for the offence committed against Him and are at the same time reconciled with the Church.”¹³³ In Sacrosanctum Concilium, Penance fell under the purview of Article 63: “The vernacular language may be used in administering the sacraments and sacramentals.”¹³⁴ Additionally, the document stated, “the rite and formulas for the sacrament of penance are to be revised so that they more clearly express both the nature and effect of the sacrament.”¹³⁵ In Leo Rosten’s book, Religions of America, which collected frequently asked questions about American religions to sponsor interfaith understanding, Father Donald Hendricks of New York described the changes that Confession underwent. In February 1974, he notes the main philosophical change, “the penitent is to regard the occasion…as an encounter with a loving God.”¹³⁶ He also delineates the esthetic changes. There are now “various options for satisfying particular needs, such as the chance to sit (instead of kneeling) while speaking to the confessor (for those who prefer this as well as those who simply need more time for counseling).”¹³⁷ This
reflects the new role of Confession, one that was more therapeutic and less self-demeaning than its previous version. So what changed about confession psychologically after Vatican II?

To scholars like Gerdenino Manuel, the sacrament’s changes call out to its “contemporary helping group processes.” Contending that “the Catholic rite of reconciliation is intended as a paradigm of all human reconciliation,” he differs from Todd’s Jung-based thesis in believing Confession’s social benefits arose from a past history and believes that “the original form of Catholic reconciliation was in fact a form of communal confession.” He cites Pope Clement of Rome’s description of public Reconciliation and declares that the community’s intervention was “so highly valued that penitents were willing to subject themselves to this lengthy process of restoration just to experience the community’s visible sign of support.” To Manuel, the lack of the communal was why Confessions declined pre- and post-Vatican II. According to O’Toole, Catholics never liked Confession and after Vatican II, “they felt newly free to act on their dissatisfactions.” Responding to the fall in demand for Confession, parish priests cut back on the supply and fewer hours were made available for confession; they were reduced to thirty minutes before daily Mass and thirty minutes before Saturday Vigil Masses. Confession declined before the Second Vatican Council, but it was after Vatican II when the Church updated the rite to call back to its original status, regaining communal aspects that scholars like Manuel believe it had lost. By adding a communal framework, “this community-focused theology shares several of its most important insights with group-oriented psychology…[which] is especially attentive to the human environment, the interpersonal network of relationships.”

The sacrament was redesigned to highlight its therapeutic nature and gained new communal qualities in its rites. The sacrament of Confession or Penance became known as
Reconciliation, “which had a softer…sound than…the traditional name.” Hendricks’s “chance to sit (instead of kneeling) while speaking” recalled a confessional style which flowed much more like a discussion where both “priest and penitent sat together and talked, often without the usual ritual formulas…it was intended to be ‘more personal, more human.’” After Vatican II, the Church wanted to embolden forgiveness’s communality. This expanded Confession or Reconciliation to three rites. The first rite was the classic priest-penitent confessional type. The second rite was “private confession in a communal context” where confessions happened in a service, which “included scripture readings, time for personal reflection, and (only if they wanted) the chance to confess to a priest.” To scholars like W. David Meyers, this way of confession “provides a communal frame…surrounding the individual confessions and absolutions.” The third rite was designed for tragedies, with it giving en masse absolution. Manuel describes it as “completely public and communal.” Manuel believes the new rites do not “encourage the emotional catharsis elicited by the early rite [but] these communal rites often creatively adapt helping group processes.” These Confession services bring parishioners together and make them recognize their own sinfulness. For people with problems, it shows them that they are not alone; everybody sins and all need forgiveness. Manuel also highlights Confession’s ability to make “everyone concerned with a problem rather than simply the therapist and patient.” By making everyone confront a common problem and offering a solution, Manuel argues that the Church does a therapeutic good. Manuel claims “Confession facilitates a change in orientation from self to God and others.” Vatican II moved the devotional exterior to Confession, while keeping its interior focus intact in order to communalize the sacrament.
Today, individual penance remains stagnant. A Gallup Poll showed “just one-in-twenty Catholics (5%) say they have been going to confession…more often over the last 12 months, while 22% say they have been going…less often, and 65% say their frequency of confession has not changed.” Although overall numbers at the confessionals have remained the same, the value of the sacrament has remained strong. According to CARA, Catholics valued Confession the least out of the seven sacraments; only 39% of adult Catholics placed the sacrament in high regard. 26% of Catholics, the same survey showed, went to Confession “once a year or more often...” Conversely, 45% of those polled claimed they never go. 62% of Catholics believe going to Confession is not necessary to be a good Catholic, reflecting the empowered mentality that allowed an earlier generation of Catholics to decide for themselves that the decision to use birth control was not a question of piety. Even though 67% agree with its necessity, only 52% strongly believe that it remains a part of piety, which “by participating in the sacrament of Reconciliation they are reconciled with God and the Church.” Although scholars argue the confessional is a therapeutic release, its use by modern American Catholics does not show an overall dependence on Confession as compared to the other sacraments.

When the data is broken down generationally, Catholics who lived pre- and post-Vatican II differed mostly concerning confession due a rising sense of individual thought concerning religion. According to CARA, “the older Catholics are, the more likely that they express agreement with statements that are consistent with Church teachings on the sacrament of Reconciliation.” 51% of the pre-Vatican II generation believes one needs confession with contrition while only 33% of Millennial Catholics agree. The reason for this, according to sociologists Anthony Pogorelc and James Davidson, comes from a religiously moderate view of faith, one where “American Catholics do not appear to be polarized...[but] they seem to have a
variety of different and mixed views about authority.” Pogorelc and Davidson studied a growing trend of religious individualism that took place before and at Vatican II. For them, Confession was necessary due to the hierarchical instance in its necessity. To the believer, “frequent confession was the mechanism by which one was restored to the state of grace.” The results of Pogorelc and Davidson show American Catholics’ view of Confession reflects the religious individualism Vatican II inspired. By not following the Church’s line, such as in the realm of confession, American Catholics used religious individualism in defining piety, whether it be concerning the new psychological views and benefits of penance or not.

Due to Vatican II’s relaxation on Confession and its inspiration of interior piety, Confession became known as Reconciliation in order to allow Catholics “recourse with humble perseverance to the mercy of God, which is poured forth in the sacrament of Penance.” This statement arose from a controversial post-Vatican II document, *Humanae Vitae*, which according to Mark Massa, S.J., conflicted with the Second Vatican Council’s lay focus in the realms of interior piety. It “seemed problematic to many theologians and lay Catholics in the United States.” History seems to have proven him right, since despite Church teaching, 77% of American Catholics believe the Church should not ban birth control and should instead allow adherents to use their own consciences.

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After the Second Vatican Council, the movement for active participatory changes and clergy-laity dialogues turned toward the realm of family planning. The Church had long condemned birth control, but after Vatican II, the issue became an issue of debate amongst theologians. It remains obligatory to note that *Humanae Vitae* is not of Vatican II per se. Although not one of the sixteen conciliar documents, it arose three years after the Council, and it came out of an investigation done by a commission that was initiated by John XXIII, the same
Pope who launched Vatican II. Vatican II played an important role in the document’s creation for two reasons. Firstly, Paul VI admits his encyclical could not exist without “what was recently set forth in this regard...by the Second Vatican Council in its pastoral constitution ‘Gaudium et Spes.’” Secondly, the Council authorized a commission of both lay and clergy to reconsider the Catholic dogma of birth control, reflecting the changes in transparency and lay participation that the Council proctored.

The commission consisted of both laity and clergy, and had an American couple serve and testify concerning birth control. As a result, the commission approved a recommendation to the Pope which allowed birth control. The American couple Patrick and Patricia Crowley testified before the committee at the behest of Pope Paul VI in the name of transparency and lay “active participation.” They founded the Christian Family Movement and conducted surveys amongst their members, who consistently supported a relaxation of the ban. At least three lay couples—the Crowleys from the United States, a Canadian couple named the Potvins, and a French one—testified to the committee and conducted additional surveys to “solicit personal accounts of how the [allowed] rhythm method was actually experienced.” The Crowleys’ surveys highlighted dissent in the sanctuaries and the pews, offering a “rather startling frankness...a middle-aged mother of eight explained...[before the Pill] ‘I can remember crying in despair, praying to God to let me die rather than continue living as a source of sin for my husband.’” Mrs. Crowley testified that many in the laity believe “there must be a change in the thinking on birth control.” She expressed her survey respondents believed in individual choice about family size that “should be determined—by the couple alone.” Mrs. Crowley also highlighted how many women disagreed with the rhythm method, testifying, “no amount of theory by man will convince women that this way of making and expressing love is natural.”
At the end of her testimony, she affirmed that the people that she surveyed believed that “the sacredness of conjugal love [must] not be violated by thermometers and calendars.” Mrs. Crowley received her request and the commission approved a report that allowed birth control. The report said the change needed to happen due to “social changes in matrimony and the family, especially in the role of the woman; lowering of the infant mortality rates; new bodies of knowledge in biology, psychology, sexuality and demography.” The report was submitted to the Vatican and awaited papal response.

As a response to the Commission’s recommendations, Paul VI issued *Humanae Vitae*, which established that the Church saw sex and procreation as a way to express piety. In *Humanae Vitae*, Pius VI saw birth control as what happens when humanity applies “his reason and his will, rather than to the biological rhythms of his organism, [to] the task of regulating birth.” Since the commission recommended the allowance of birth control, Paul VI felt compelled to thank them and then explain why their recommendations were erroneous. To Paul VI, marriage was a life-long covenant “in which husband and wife generously share everything, without undue reservations or selfish calculations...[and] ordained toward the begetting and educating of children.” Due to this natural law view of marriage, where marriage is oriented towards children and not sexual activity, Pope Paul VI affirmed in *Humanae Vitae* that:

“The Church, calling men back to the observance of the norms of the natural law...teaches that each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life. That teaching, often set forth by the magisterium, is funded upon the inseparable connection, willed by God and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative, between the two meanings of the conjugal act: the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning. Indeed, by its intimate structure, the conjugal act, while most closely uniting husband and wife, capacitizes them for the generation of new lives, according to laws inscribed in the very being of man and of woman. By safeguarding both these essential aspects, the unitive and the procreative, the conjugal act preserves in its fullness the sense of true
mutual love and its ordination towards man's most high calling to parenthood.”

To some Catholic scholars, Paul VI’s focus on natural law in *Humanae Vitae* was a philosophical and theological shift, leading to confusion amongst priest and theologian alike. Paul VI explained how the Magisterium, as the Church’s teaching authority, needed to delineate “a teaching founded on the natural law, illuminated and enriched by divine revelation.” To him, Jesus made the Apostles, and by extension the Church, “guardians and authentic interpreters of all the moral law, not only, that is, of the law of the Gospel, but also of the natural law, which is also an expression of the will of God.” It was this natural law interpretation that caused so much confusion. Before *Humanae Vitae* was issued, George Lynch, S.J., noted that birth control could cause “a very real threat of schism among Catholic moral theologians over the Church’s teaching.”

Mark Massa, S.J. notes before Vatican II, the majority agreed in the existence of “an empirically knowable natural law that offered data for making moral decisions.” After the encyclical’s publishing, critics started to believe proponents used an outdated view of the world with old scholarship. Resulting from this, Catholic theologians and priests worried this view “would breed a larger contempt for Church teaching in all its forms.” Some scholars, such as philosopher Germain Grisez, came to the same conclusion through other arguments that focused on the societal good of raising children. Many Catholic scholars attempted to bolster Church teaching “from every imaginable point on the Catholic theological spectrum.”

These numerous defenses and critiques of *Humanae Vitae* not only confused theologians, but also confessors who had to issue penances and offer advice for communicants who used birth control. Priests became concerned on whether to be should be firm and condemning in the confessional or to use a light touch to the point where one petitioned penitents to “follow their own consciences.” These priests also differed in opinions on other uses of birth control, such
as the regulation of menstruation; they could not definitely answer whether its use for that purpose alone was a sin. These theological questions confused the laity; they “engage[d] in long arguments in the confessional stating different priests g[a]ve contradictory answers.” The educated laity started to academically question priestly advice, even disregarding it. This in turn led to confusion in the confessional. Could priests forgive sins when the penitent offers no sense of apology? Would not mentioning birth control invalidate the absolution for other sins? Although priests were willing to not ask nor tell, this was not enough, as what “many penitents wanted was priestly approval.” Over time, two trends occurred in the confessional and one occurred outside it. Firstly, priests succumbed to lay demands by telling confessing adherents to “follow their informed consciences with regard to contraception.” Secondly, the laity “simply stopped mentioning birth control” in the confessional; this shows that they believed the Church was divided on the issue, “since the Church no longer spoke with a single voice.” Outside the confessional, the precedent was set. If the laity could choose to follow their consciences on birth control with the Church’s implicit approval through silence, “what was to stop them from doing so in other matters?” This slippery slope concern highlighted a new trend—the laity started to decide what was part of the religion they practiced and what was not.

As a result of academic dissent amongst theologians and priests, the laity started to see birth control as a matter of lifestyle and not one of piety. Paul VI admitted, “no believer will wish to deny that the teaching authority of the Church is competent to interpret even the natural moral law.” Paul VI’s words rung true amongst American Catholics. Many practiced birth control despite considering themselves good Catholics. They saw birth control as outside the realms governed by the Church, who they still believed were the “guardians and authentic interpreters of all the moral law.” In *Humanae Vitae*, Paul VI condemned “directly willed and
procured abortion…[and] direct sterilization, whether perpetual or temporary, whether of the man or of the woman.” 197 With this, Paul VI assigned abortion, vasectomies, and hysterectomies as sins. With the rhythm method, Paul VI was a bit more lenient by allowing the spacing out of births in this way “without offending the moral principles which have been recalled.” 198 Even with his relenting, American Catholics dissented because to some, the Church did not realize “just how very important sex is to people…It is one thing for a religion to make people give up [vices] but apparently another thing to demand married couples to sacrifice some sexual activity.” 199 Due to this appreciation of sex, the laity started to see the Church not as overstepping its bounds per se, but they did choose whether or not they used birth control, regardless of the Church’s view. The use of birth control was a lifestyle, not part of piety.

Surveys from the 1960s and 1970s showcase the resulting separation of birth control from the realms of piety—the American Catholic laity overwhelmingly accepted its use and role in their lives. When asked about the Catholic view of birth control, Donald Hendricks explains, “birth control can have several meanings, some acceptable, some not.” 200 Hendricks’s definition follows Humanae Vitae, which he cites as the origin. 201 When asked if Catholics must support anti-birth control laws, he takes a different tone. He argues Catholics must not argue for anti-birth control laws, stating, “a church whose members pursued a policy of benign neglect in these areas would not be true to its prophetic mission.” 202 This separation of belief and policy that Hendricks cites appeared in the lay Catholic populace. In 1965, a poll found that 49% of Catholic women under the age of 45 used birth control; five years later, that number jumped to 65%. For those under 30, the numbers went from 51% in 1965 to 76% in 1970. 203 According to the Gallup Report, “54% of the Catholics queried opposed the ban, with 28% in favor of…the encyclical.” 204 In 1968, the same year Humanae Vitae was published, 65% of American Catholics believed a
good Catholic could “ignore the ban on artificial methods of birth control.” Even though the laity overall disregarded the link between birth control and the repair of the God-mankind relationship, Pope Paul VI nevertheless confirmed his belief that married couples “must remember that their Christian vocation, which began at baptism, is further specified and reinforced by the sacrament of matrimony.” If they do not listen and use birth control, Paul VI advised an option that remains part of American Catholic piety, the new physiological counseling view of Reconciliation that inspired “recourse with humble perseverance to the mercy of God.” To follow the Church’s teaching on birth control in the eyes of Rome remained part of “the vocation of the laity a new and most noteworthy form of the apostolate” even though American Catholics at the time disagreed.

For Catholics today, the debate still occurs. High acceptance of birth control runs amongst the laity. A 2014 poll shows current American Catholics support birth control beyond a shadow of a doubt; 77% responded that they think the Church should allow birth control in some form. The poll further demonstrated that a simple majority of 56% think the Church would accept this change, believing “this change will definitely or probably happen by 2050.” Another realm with growing support that might also show new separations of piety and practice is the support of priestly and homosexual marriage. 72% of American Catholics believe priests should have the option to marry and 50% believe the sacrament should change to allow gay and lesbian couples to take part. The question of whether these issues will leave the realm of piety can only be answered with time. Unlike birth control, the possibility that Catholics may come to see marriage as something other than an exercise in piety in complicated by the reality that for Catholics, marriage is a sacrament. Although the process of de-pietization would have to be different from birth control, to natural law adherents like Paul VI, accepting new views of
marriage equality and birth control could “contradict the nature both of man and of woman and of their most intimate relationship, and therefore it is to contradict also the plan of God.” 212


2 Ibid. 43.


5 Paul VI. Sacrosanctum Concilium. Article 28.


7 Ibid.


11 Ibid., Article 67.


13 Quoted in Lawrence Cunningham. “The Virgin Mary.” In From Trent to Vatican II: Historical and Theological Investigations. Edited by Raymond Bulman and Frederick Parrella, New York City, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. 188.

14 Ibid.

15 John Portmann. “What Would the Virgin Mary Do?” In Catholic Culture in the USA: In and Out of Church. 137.


28 Ibid.


32 Paul VI. *Sacrosanctum Concilium.* Article 11.

33 Paul VI. *Sacrosanctum Concilium.* Article 14.

34 Paul VI. *Sacrosanctum Concilium.* Article 21.

35 Ibid.


37 Paul VI. *Sacrosanctum Concilium.* Article 23.

38 Ibid., Article 24.


40 Paul VI. *Sacrosanctum Concilium.* Article 35, Subsection 1.


42 Paul VI. *Sacrosanctum Concilium.* Article 36, Subsection 1.

43 Ibid. Article 36, Subsection 2.

44 Paul VI. *Sacrosanctum Concilium.* Article 63a.


48 Paul VI. *Sacrosanctum Concilium.* Article 29.

49 Ibid., Article 30.


52 Ibid., 205.


54 Ibid.

55 Ibid., Article 13.

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57 Ibid., 94-95.
58 Ibid., 95.

60 Ibid. 387.
61 Ibid. 389.
70 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid., 108.
79 Ibid., 226.
83 For a less academic and highly dramatic telling of the perils of Bernadette Soubirous, see Franz Werfel’s novel *The Song of Bernadette* and the 1943 film. John McGreevy describes these media outlets as proof of Lourdes’ influence on the American Catholic populace, to which I wholeheartedly agree.
85 Ibid., 414.
86 Ibid., 415.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid., 385-386.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid., 56.
97 Ibid. Article 62.
98 Ibid. Article 66.
99 Ibid. Article 67.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid., 130.
104 Ibid., 132.
105 Lawrence Cunningham. “The Virgin Mary.” In From Trent to Vatican II: Historical and Theological Investigations. Edited by Raymond Bulman and Frederick Parrella, New York City, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. 188.
106 Quoted in Lawrence Cunningham. “The Virgin Mary." In From Trent to Vatican II: Historical and Theological Investigations. 188.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid., 189.
110 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
117 Ibid., 156.
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Ibid.

Ibid., 41.

Elizabeth Todd. “The Value of Confession and Forgiveness According to Jung.”


Ibid.

Ibid. 43.

Elizabeth Todd. “The Value of Confession and Forgiveness According to Jung.”


Ibid. 46.


Paul VI. Sacrosanctum Concilium. Article 63; Ibid., Article 63a.

Paul VI. Sacrosanctum Concilium. Article 72.


Ibid. 45.


Ibid., 120-121.

Ibid. 121.


Ibid.

Gerdenino Manuel. “Group Process and the Catholic Rites of Reconciliation.”


Gerdenino Manuel. “Group Process and the Catholic Rites of Reconciliation.”


David Meyers. "From Confession to Reconciliation and Back: Sacramental Penance." In From Trent to Vatican II: Historical and Theological Investigations. 259.

Ibid.
151 Ibid.
153 Ibid., 126.
157 Ibid.
158 Ibid.
159 Ibid.
161 Ibid.
167 Paul VI. Humanae Vitae. Article 7.
169 Ibid.
173 Ibid., 78.
176 Paul VI. Humanae Vitae. Article 3.
177 Paul VI. Humanae Vitae. Article 6.
178 Paul VI. Humanae Vitae. Article 9.
179 Paul VI. Humanae Vitae. Articles 11-12.
180 Paul VI. Humanae Vitae. Article 4.
181 Ibid.
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184 Ibid.
185 Ibid.
189 Ibid., 241.
190 Ibid.
192 Ibid.
194 Ibid.
196 Ibid.
197 Paul VI. Humanae Vitae. Article 14.
198 Paul VI. Humanae Vitae. Article 16.
199 John Portmann. “A Brief Sketch of Catholic Dissent in the United States.” In Catholic Culture in the USA: In and Out of Church. 87.
205 Ibid.
206 Paul VI. Humanae Vitae. Article 25.
207 Ibid.
208 Ibid., Article 26.
210 Ibid.
Chapter 3: Divorce of Church and State: Vatican II and Ecumenism

In the United States, the concept of religious toleration reflects the influence of John Locke on the Founders’ personal philosophies. Locke believed religious truth was an interior force that governed “men's lives, according to the rules of virtue and piety.”\(^1\) Religion was a conscious choice of will, being part of the “genuine reason of mankind.”\(^1\) Due to religion’s innate interiority, Locke surmised the state had no authority over its regulation, unless it conflicted with societal interests. All religions could receive toleration in theory if they “do not tend to establish domination over others.”\(^2\) These Lockean ideals appeared in the Founders’ writings. Thomas Jefferson famously noted that to him, there was “no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg.”\(^3\) Concerning James Madison, the unification of religion and state would lead to situations where “the majority may trespass on the rights of the minority.”\(^4\)

Locke’s understanding of the nature of religious truth conflicted with the Catholic Church’s view that religious truth was absolute and beyond individual experience. Locke’s sense that religious truth could be understood purely through the exercise of individual reason

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conflicted with the Church’s belief that individual reason was flawed, and that people therefore needed the collective wisdom of the Church’s “teaching authority” (called the “Magisterium”) in order to understand religious truth.

Human reason, on its own, led to errors, and until very recently, the Catholic Church’s teaching was that “error has no rights.” According to this understanding, religious freedom, as it has been exercised in the United States, was the freedom to be wrong, which contradicted the Church’s teaching. Popes such as Gregory XVI believed religious freedom was “a pestilence more deadly to the state than any other.” They called for the Church to make the state moral and virtuous, following “that concord which was always favorable and beneficial for the sacred and the civil order.” His successor Pius IX agreed, affirming that the Church believed “kingdoms rest on the foundation of the Catholic Faith.”

Growing up in the United States, the Jesuit theologian John Courtney Murray accepted the Lockean/Jeffersonian/Madisonian view of religious belief. He insisted that the aforementioned popes’ position were not “part of our technical theological vocabulary,” and as we will discuss shortly, he suffered heavily for his opinion. Reading Church theology with a Lockean mindset, Murray surmised religious interiority was made necessary by free will. Free will, which could not be divorced from the human condition, allowed each human to survey “the whole range of truth and goodness.” Murray believed the Church’s role was not to define or reject the truth that individuals arrived at because of free will, but instead to guide humanity in finding truth. To ensure this, Murray believed a church and state separation could protect personal opinion concerning religious belief. His ideas led to his censuring by the Vatican, which
rejected the “inter-religious cooperation with Protestants and Jews that Murray and other Jesuits were urging” at the time.\(^\text{10}\)

Murray was writing at the beginning of the Cold War – a time when many Catholic leaders, including, eventually, the Pope, worried that the atheism of Communism “represented the very Antichrist himself”\(^\text{11}\) and constituted a dire threat to the virtue and stability of the world. On this point, the Catholic Church was in agreement with many Protestant leaders in the United States. Americans believed Communism could threaten their very way of life, explaining the popularity of figures such as Joseph McCarthy and how he was able to be popular despite no proof that he had a collection of names of “members of the Communist Party.”\(^\text{12}\)

Television figures such as Bishop Fulton J. Sheen appealed to the fear of Communism, believing it was the American faithful’s duty to ensure the defeat of Communism and the conversion of all the world’s people – even those in the Soviet Union – to Christ.\(^\text{13}\) To ensure that conversion took place, Sheen pled to Americans that they had to “Take up that cross of all the starving people in the world!”\(^\text{14}\) His message grew popular among Americans of all faiths; non-Catholics wrote 30% of his fan mail.\(^\text{15}\) In the Vatican, Pius XI reaffirmed that Communism undermined “the very foundations of Christian civilization.”\(^\text{16}\) He pleaded for interfaith help, believing all faithful were needed to “ward off from mankind the great danger that threatens all alike.”\(^\text{17}\) His successor John XXIII summoned the Second Vatican Council into being due to fears over “the existence of a militant atheism operating all over the world.”\(^\text{18}\) John XXIII asked for an interfaith presence, “so that the Council may also be to their advantage.”\(^\text{19}\) This interfaith presence against Communism would only work out with mutual respect, something the Catholic Church’s official position towards other religions did not have. The leaders who convened at
Vatican II, therefore, elected to give serious consideration to John Courtney Murray’s Lockean ideas about religious freedom. Catholic ecumenism was the outcome of this consideration.

The Vatican II documents concerning religious freedom and ecumenism reflected and defined the shift from an external view of truth to a Lockean interior one, spurring new interfaith alliances in the process. *Dignitatis Humanae* used human dignity as an example of “the human conscience that these [religious] obligations fall and exert their binding force.” For this reason, the Second Vatican Council declared, “the human person has a right to religious freedom.” The sense of human dignity was the Catholic version of Lockean reason; both highlighted the “internal, voluntary and free acts whereby man sets the course of his life directly toward God.” Both senses also cited the role of secular society, one where the state watched over “the religious freedom of all its citizens.” American bishops highly favored *Dignitatis Humanae* believing it to be “an example to the governments of the world on how to conduct themselves.”

Concerning the relationships between the Catholic Church and non-Christian faiths, the Council approved a document known as *Nostra Aetate*. The text stated all religions had examined “the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men.” About Islam, the Church looked to Abraham and Mary to foster brotherhood, even asking directly to Muslims to forget past Christian-Muslim wars (i.e. the Crusades) and “work [together] sincerely for mutual understanding.” *Nostra Aetate* also condemned any and all anti-Semitism, which destroyed Church-Jewish relations in the past. The declaration also swore the Jewish people were never guilty of Jesus’s death and the Church cannot use “what happened in His passion…against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today.” For this document, American bishops exerted their influence at
Vatican II as well. Cardinal Cushing of Boston believed the declaration perfectly defined “what the Jews and Christians share in common…As sons of Adam, they are our brothers; as sons of Abraham, they are blood brothers of Christ.”

The last document about ecumenism was the Church’s relationship to other Christian denominations, setting the standards for ecumenism itself: *Unitatis Redintegratio*. The document demanded that Catholics and Protestants work together, “for the restoration of unity among all Christians.” It called for Protestant adherents to be “accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church.” The Council desired an ecumenism that included interfaith education, worship, and dialogue. About the Eastern Christians, i.e. the Orthodox, the Catholic Church allowed ecumenism in the name of the common “true sacraments, above all by apostolic succession, the priesthood and the Eucharist.”

American bishops exerted their influence over the document, agreeing there was a need for complete and utter cooperation amongst different denominations and religions. For a modern-day example of this cooperation – and specifically, its roots in a sense that religious belief, broadly defined, is under threat -- we turn to Dr. Robert George at Princeton, whose life can be summarized as living this cooperation out.

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Robert George is Princeton University’s professor of jurisprudence. *The New York Times* once called him “this country’s most influential conservative Christian thinker.” In 2009, he was

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2 David Kirkpatrick. "The Conservative-Christian Big Thinker." *The New York Times*. December 19, 2009. Accessed March 25, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/20/magazine/20george-t.html?pagewanted=all. I take this moment in the name of transparency, a republican value, to note that I met Dr. George thrice at conferences in D.C over a period of three years. I also take this moment to say that we are friends on social media. Other than at these conferences and an e-mail asking for use of his materials and story, we have not spoken. In the email, he wished me good luck but other than that, we have had no contact.

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able to unite members of numerous Christian denominations together to sign “a 4,700-word manifesto that promised resistance…against any legislation that might implicate their churches or charities in abortion, embryo-destructive research or same-sex marriage.” This became the Manhattan Declaration, which used natural law theory in its argument against homosexual marriage. Natural law is concerned with the relationships that necessarily govern all forms of life on earth; it is different from “positive” law, in that it is not dependent upon humanity for its invention or its implementation. Natural law is what makes it necessary for men and women to come together in order for children to be born and the species to continue. Because of its natural law orientation, the Manhattan Declaration insisted that the idea that “marriage between a man and a woman…[is] grounded not just in religion and tradition but in logic,” and that heterosexual marriage, therefore, is “the most basic institution in society.”

The Manhattan Declaration was an example of Catholic ecumenism in the face of a development that is perceived as a threat by Catholics and non-Catholics alike. The document calls for cooperation between and among people of all faiths in an effort to defeat “ill-advised policies that contribute to the weakening of the institution of marriage, including the discredited idea of unilateral divorce.” The document had more than 140 signers, including the Catholic archbishop of New York, Timothy Dolan, the heads of the right-wing group Focus on the Family Jim Daly and James Dobson, Bill Donahue of the Catholic League, Writers Dinesh D’Souza and George Weigel, Professor Matthew Levering of Ava Maria University, preacher Ravi Zacharias, and.

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Peter Kreeft of Boston College, and Robert George himself.\textsuperscript{35} George’s widespread influence brought different faiths together for a common goal.

Dr. Robert George speaks at countrywide conferences sponsored by Young America’s Foundation. His talks highlight the natural law view of marriage that the Manhattan Declaration espoused. In an interview for Young America’s Foundation’s magazine \textit{Libertas}, Sawyer Smith asked George what he believed to be the “most pertinent and impending” issues today.\textsuperscript{4} Dr. George responded that the “collapse of the marriage culture… is having and will continue to have profound negative consequences.”\textsuperscript{36} George also co-teaches a Great-Books seminar at Princeton with liberal icon Cornel West – suggesting that his ecumenism may, occasionally, apply to issues that aren’t overtly religious in nature.\textsuperscript{37} Because of his experience with explaining Catholic ideas to non-Catholics, the Vatican invited George to participate in a colloquium in Rome in 2014.

\textit{The Complementarity of Man and Woman: An International Colloquium} invited representatives from a variety of faiths and denominations to discuss the value of heterosexual marriage in today’s society. Pope Francis opened their conference by saying, “children have the right to grow up in a family with a father and a mother.”\textsuperscript{38} The conference consisted of numerous people: Rick Warren, former Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks of Britain,\textsuperscript{5} as well as “Anglican, 

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{5} In Britain and other countries, the Chief Rabbi is a title for the head of the country’s Jewish population. Jonathan Sarna refers to it as “the Jewish equivalent of the Archbishop of Canterbury.” (Sarna 103).
\end{itemize}
Muslim, Pentecostal and Hindu leaders. For the first time, a top Mormon leader – Henry Eyring – is in official attendance at a Vatican conference.”\textsuperscript{39} The pastor Russell Moore, upon receiving his invitation, hoped “this gathering of religious leaders can stand in solidarity on the common grace, creational mandate of marriage and family as necessary for human flourishing and social good.”\textsuperscript{40} As Time properly noted, Warren, Moore, and Eyring have met before in the face of a perceived threat: cooperating “against the government’s Affordable Care Act’s contraception mandate.”\textsuperscript{41} This inter-faith cooperation and its implicit respect for the interior nature of religion is remarkable, coming from a Church that once said religious freedom and religious interiority would lead to “the greatest loss of souls and detriment of civil society itself.”\textsuperscript{42}

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To John Locke, religious toleration was a necessity for both the church and the state. Religious truth, according to him, could not be truly transmitted to another person because the effect it had upon the declarant was untranslatable to another human being. In his “Letter Concerning Toleration,” Locke argued religious toleration was “the chief characteristic mark of the true Church.”\textsuperscript{43} Assuming “everyone is orthodox to himself,” Locke believed religion was internal; it alone confined “men's lives, according to the rules of virtue and piety.”\textsuperscript{44} Locke believed that accepting God was a personal choice and could not be forced into one’s consciousness by another’s will. State-forced religion caused men to “persecute, torment, destroy, and kill other men.”\textsuperscript{45} Locke considered a laissez-faire way of evangelization, i.e. toleration, would cause one to “tread in the steps and follow the perfect example of [Jesus] who


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sent out His soldiers to the subduing of nations, and gathering them into His Church, not armed with the sword...but prepared with the Gospel of peace."\(^{46}\) For this reason, Locke averred that religious toleration was “agreeable to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to the genuine reason of mankind.”\(^{47}\) To Locke, religion was part of the “genuine reason of mankind,” which existed inside each man. Reason and consciousness defined a person’s identity. Conscience alone defined who the person was, not anything of an exterior realm. Locke believed “All the life and power of true religion consist in the inward and full persuasion of the mind; and faith is not faith without believing.”\(^{48}\)

Locke believed the state had no power to regulate what the rational, interior conclusions of the individual, unless those conclusions contradicted state interests in some way. To Locke, the state existed “only for the procuring, preserving, and advancing their own civil interests [which concerns] life, liberty, health, and indolency [sic] of body and the possession of outward things, such as money, lands, houses, furniture, and the like.”\(^{49}\) Locke did not include religion on his list of civil interests because “the care of souls is not committed to the civil magistrate, any more than to other men.”\(^{50}\) Locke noted that if God wanted a state religion, He would have made one.\(^{51}\) Locke saw God’s silence on the issue of state religion as an endorsement of religious toleration.\(^{52}\) Societies have not regulated religion because God did not give them the power to do so.\(^{53}\) Laws and imprisonment may have been able to change outward behavior, but they will never change interior views. =The state, therefore, should not and cannot mandate particular beliefs; it can, however, marginalize the behavior associated with particular beliefs, if that behavior the “civil interests” of the secular society.\(^{54}\)
In two cases Locke saw conflict: atheists and Roman Catholics but these conflicts arose not from discrimination but instead in the name of secular state interests. Roman Catholics should possess rights as human beings but their religion could not be granted political rights in the English kingdom due to Papal influences from Italy. Locke believed Catholics should not be allowed to participate in English political life because adherents “deliver themselves up to the protection and service of another prince.”

At the time that Locke was writing, the Pope controlled the Papal States, which consisted of over half of modern-day Italy. Since the Papal States were monarchical, the country had no balance of political powers, the monarch demanded compliance “on pain of eternal fire.”

Locke felt the Pope had too much authority over Catholics, and he worried that English Catholics had conflicting loyalties to two monarchs: the English Crown and the Holy See. His concern with atheists was a little different. Since all testimony in court took place after one had sworn on a Bible to be truthful, Locke saw the value of truthful testimony was a state interest. Locke believed “Promises, covenants, and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an atheist.”

Locke’s reasons for excluding Catholics and atheists from the political life in England had nothing to do with the question of whether what Catholics and atheists believed about the existence of the Divine and the nature of humanity’s obligation to the Divine; his reasons were purely about the security of civil society. If it were possible for Catholics and atheists to maintain their beliefs about God in a way that would not threaten the security of the state, “there can be no reason why they should not be tolerated.”

Toleration resulted from one simple idea: salvation existed outside the realm of the political arena. This idea, formulated in the late
seventeenth century, made its way into the thought of America’s Founders in the late eighteenth century, especially the thoughts of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

One of the most vocal adherents of Lockean views was Thomas Jefferson, as seen in the Religion section of his *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Jefferson, like Locke, believed the state only “can have authority over such natural rights only as we have submitted to them.”\(^{59}\) In Jefferson’s mind, states had no legislative power over religious affairs because religion was personal. He also felt that state toleration fostered prosperity. Thomas Jefferson famously said religious toleration had no effect on his piety. It did him “no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg.”\(^{60}\)

Like Locke’s, Jefferson’s understanding of the nature of religious belief was rooted in a deep respect for the capacities of human reason. He believed “Reason and free enquiry are the only effectual agents against error.”\(^{61}\) Human reason questioned everything possible, allowing truth to be accessed. It was only through the use of reason that one could find truth and apply it to their lives. As Jefferson alluded to in his Notes, the potato was once thought to be poisonous but soon became the staple of many diets.\(^{62}\) The truth will convince people through reason and evidence, “it is error alone which needs the support of government. Truth can stand by itself.”\(^{63}\)

Since, according to Locke, men discovered truth on their own, Jefferson concluded a church-state unification would hinder mankind’s process of seeking the truth. To affect a person’s interior piety at all, one used only “Reason and persuasion.”\(^{64}\) Citing the examples of Pennsylvania and New York, as thriving and successful colonies that had a similar view of religion and state affairs, Jefferson affirmed that Lockean religious tolerance works. For Jefferson, a Lockean society of religious toleration succeeds because it alone realizes “that the
way to silence religious disputes, is to take no notice of them." These Lockean influences show themselves in the logic of another Founding Father, James Madison.

Lockean views of toleration and religion revealed themselves in James Madison’s *Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments*. Writing to Virginia’s General Assembly protesting the protection of Anglican ministerial positions and salaries that were to be paid for by state, Madison believed that the unification of church and state constituted “a dangerous abuse of power” to be. Madison believed faith must “be left to the conviction and conscience of every man.” He saw faith as the process by which each man or woman chose to repair the bonds between humanity and God that were broken by the Fall. Madison wrote it was “the duty of every man to render to the Creator such homage and such only as he believes to be acceptable to him.” Piety was personal in a Lockean society, and the state had no right to regulate it. In this case, by supporting Anglican ministers, Madison feared it was a case when “the majority [could] trespass on the rights of the minority.” To Madison, the idea that a state could enforce a single denominational subsidy would “violate that equality which ought to be the basis of every law.” It was a sin to force a man to contribute to what he did not believe, to violate his own beliefs broke the basic Lockean law: “everyone is orthodox to himself.”

Madison reaffirmed the Lockean ideal of personal authority by condemning the idea that “the Civil Magistrate…may employ Religion as an engine of Civil policy.” Locke and Madison agreed that state churches weakened Christian piety: “ecclesiastical establishments, instead of maintaining the purity and efficacy of Religion, have had a contrary operation.” Madison believed that if the state formally supported and sanctioned the Anglican Church, it would be the first step that could lead to “the Inquisition…the last [step] in the career of intolerance.”
state’s neutrality in defining religious ideals prevented new spilling of “Torrents of blood” that so marked “the old world.” To Madison, the best way for religion to thrive was to leave it alone politically, which is why he wrote into the First Amendment, the culmination of his Lockean understanding of the nature of religious belief. His views were not universally accepted, especially in “the old world” which Madison condemned. The Catholic Church disagreed with Locke, and made their policy and disagreements known: keep Church and State together to protect the Church’s teaching and protecting religious truth.

The pre-Vatican II Catholic Church did not tolerate religious dissent, as seen through the encyclicals of 19th and 20th century popes. The Catholic Church believed truth was independent from human experience and reason, and that because human reason was flawed (exhibit A: The Fall), human beings needed the collective wisdom of the Church to help them access truth. In his encyclical *Mirari Vos*, Gregory XVI declared the separation of church and state could not be successful, as the Church’s wisdom was the force “by which alone kingdoms stand.” Later in the encyclical, Gregory derided religious tolerance, claiming it to be indifferentism or relativism run amok, saying that religious toleration is rooted in a “perverse opinion…[that says] it is possible to obtain the eternal salvation of the soul by the profession of any kind of religion.” Gregory XVI alleged freedom of religion was “a pestilence more deadly to the state than any other.” To him, religious tolerance would destroy a society by taking away the Magisterium’s influence in state affairs, which protected truth that the Church had revealed. *Mirari Vos* states Gregory XVI’s desire: the state must foster “that concord which was always favorable and beneficial for the sacred and the civil order.” Gregory XVI believed the Church had a role in state affairs to ensure the spread of truth amongst the laymen of the world. Gregory XVI feared...
religious toleration would damn souls and weaken Church power by defining truth as an interior and partially subjective force, instead of exterior law outside the human mind that only the Church could teach through the Magisterium.

For Gregory’s successor, Pope Pius IX, church and state unification had to be protected from dissenting opinions. Pius IX expressed his disdain for religious toleration and freedom, saying they would cause “the greatest loss of souls and detriment of civil society itself.” Pius IX argued the Church would not have the same “salutary influence…not only over private individuals, but over nations, peoples, and their sovereign princes” if religious toleration were approved. Pius IX even called the freedom of religious expression a “liberty of perdition.”

Letting Church and state be separated weakened the Magisterium itself: secular governments “dare with signal impudence to subject to the will of the civil authority the supreme authority of the Church.” Afraid of the Church’s magisterial authority being lessened, Pius IX emphasized the idea that “kingdoms rest on the foundation of the Catholic Faith.”

In a later encyclical, Pius IX condemned as heresy the idea that the Church should be silent on erroneous philosophies. The Syllabus of Errors taught that it was a heresy to believe in interior religious truth. The encyclical claimed that all forms of Protestantism were heresy, condemning the notion that any denomination of Protestantism was “another form of the same true Christian religion.” Concerning church and state, the Syllabus of Errors declared it was an error to believe “The Church ought to be separated from the State, and the State from the Church.” This theory did have its dissidents, most notably the Boston College Jesuit John Courtney Murray.
John Courtney Murray wrote highly of religious freedom, tying Catholic theology to the American concept. In his essay “Freedom of Religion, I: The Ethical Problem,” Murray argued that the Church’s views religious freedom and church-state separation remained “entirely open to legitimate criticism and even rejection, since neither of them has any status in official sources—from Mirari Vos onwards, or backwards.” To Murray, the Church’s idea of religious exclusivism became counterproductive. He lamented that in the minds of most Americans, “Catholic attitudes are widely, and wrongly, characterized as ‘intolerant,’ and Protestant (and secularist) attitudes are customarily regarded as ‘tolerant.’” Murray believed the best way to counter this perception was to avoid “the use of words that are emotionally explosive.” The Jesuit hated strong language because strong words darken ideas “formed in the light of the full truth and impregnated with profound charity.” To Murray, the Church was the guardian of human reason. In order to find God, people needed to use their reason because God had given reason to human beings so that they might access “the whole range of truth and goodness.” Through reason, one accessed God as a function of his human dignity. When he endorsed freedom of religion through a philosophy of free will and human dignity, Murray showed that the Church’s role was to foster this dignity. Human beings used their reason to define what God was to them. It was their innate human dignity that allowed them to do so. For Murray, the best way to foster this dignity was through a cooperation of church and state, by keeping them separate.

Murray believed the state and the church needed to be separate, but that they did have a common responsibility: the protection of “the integrity of conscience, be it Catholic or Protestant.” Murray feared that if the Catholic Church did not recognize this protection as one of its responsibilities, “the secularists and totalitarians will move in and solve the problem…by
forcibly destroying the concept [of religious belief] itself, whatever its content.” Murray believed an interfaith effort could fight “against secularism, which makes freedom of religion mean freedom from religion.”

In an article appropriately titled “Separation of Church and State,” John Courtney Murray argued that the First Amendment taught that “All churches are simply voluntary societies, of equally human origin and of equal value in the sight of God, each of them offering to man an equally good way to eternal salvation.” Murray believed “the rights of conscience will be most securely protected…by guaranteeing the equality of all religious consciences (and, by implication, of all religious bodies) before the law.” Like Jefferson, Murray noted the Church-state unification methods actually harmed religion. To best ensure the formation of a “the bond of national unity,” the state “was to remain "separate" from the church’s authority.” Separating Church and state esteemed the human dignity of all people by fostering a respect for a growth in “the rights of conscience.” The “rights of conscience” allowed religious growth because they recognized both the societal and religious sides of humanity as coexistent: both were “inherent in the very nature of man.” Murray adored the First Amendment and its role in protecting religious liberty because it solved “the political problem put by the existence of many religions within one political community.” The First Amendment was consistent with Catholic doctrine, Murray declared.

Responding to his ideas about church and state separation, the Catholic Church censured Murray. According to Joseph Komonchak, Murray’s problems started in 1943 when he argued that the Pope’s previous encyclicals responded “to the type of secularism then being aggressively used in Europe but did not apply to the quite different political experience of the United
Murray believed the United States faced a new secular force, which needed interfaith action to stop its spread and power; it needed “an adaptation of traditional Catholic principles to the American political experiment.”

When Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani spoke about Church and State affairs in 1953, he mischaracterized Murray’s thoughts from a summarized article; Murray was annoyed with the misattribution, even sending a concern in writing to Rome. This writing led to his downfall. Murray later used its clarifying response as proof that Pius XII agreed with him and not Cardinal Ottaviani. Resulting from that, Ottaviani started a blacklist that had Murray at its top. As a result of Ottaviani’s efforts, “Murray was placed under prior censorship.” Rome punished him for believing “full religious liberty can be considered as a valid political ideal in a truly democratic State.” Ironically, less than ten years after his censure, Murray was invited to the Vatican to help craft a position on religious liberty. The change can be attributed to what Murray was afraid of: a “general social and cultural crisis that had exploded into the Second World War.” After World War II, the remnants of this crisis remained and grew in power. It became the Big Bad Wolf of the United States and the Vatican. Catholics, Americans, and American Catholics all had a common enemy: Communism.

When Communism arose in power, the American Catholic populace hated it as seen in the rise of McCarthyism. According to scholars such as Donald Crosby, American Catholics feared Communism because “the church itself had prepared its members to take up arms against the Marxist infidel by conditioning its followers to believe that communism represented the very Antichrist himself.” American Catholics had a contentious history with Communism due to the state persecutions of Russian Catholics; when President Roosevelt accepted the USSR as a
nation in 1933, American Catholics took the act personally. Catholic supporters of the president believed his action was futile because “it was useless to recognize a government opposed to international law and mortality.” Crosby argues that when American Catholics argued against Communism, they received “nothing but encouragement from a large part of the American press and electorate, which shared the same [feelings toward Communism.]” Cardinal Spellman of New York believed only a joint effort between the United States and the Catholic Church could finish Communism off once and for all; Cardinal Spellman also feared a Communist influence in the United States. This fear was best defined in the political realm by the efforts of Catholic Senator Joseph McCarthy, who let American policy become vehemently anti-Communist, uniting denominations together against a common atheistic enemy.

Joseph McCarthy’s vehement ranting against Communism emphasized the political arguments against it and the American Catholic hatred of it. Donald Crosby describes McCarthy’s religious identity as foundational to the senator; “he would no more question his religion than he would miss Mass on Sunday.” Later in his life, McCarthy elaborated on how he saw his faith as an interior fuel by saying, “I’m a good Catholic, but not one of your ‘candle-lighting’ Catholics.” What McCarthy became infamous for was his Communist critiques. On February 9\textsuperscript{th}, 1950, the Ohio County Republicans Women’s Club invited McCarthy to speak and during his speech, he claimed he had “in my hand a list of 205—a list of names that were made known...as being members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping policy in the State Department.” After his statement, a Gallup poll revealed 49\% of American Catholics and Protestants believed McCarthy’s accusations.
McCarthy was not the only prominent American Catholic to lead a charge against Communism. Bishop Fulton J. Sheen was a highly respected priest with a television show that had a solid following among Catholics and Protestants. On his show, Sheen explained Catholic teaching, and these explanations often included condemnations of Communist thought. On his first season finale on the Dumont Network, he started out stating, “The whole world is sick.”\textsuperscript{124} Not being vague, Sheen went on to diagnose the disease, and declared “Our great problem, of course, is Communism.”\textsuperscript{125} Later in the episode, he claimed, “Communism will never be defeated. Communism will be converted.”\textsuperscript{126} Describing Stalinist Communist ideology, Bishop Sheen compared it to vultures that pick at carcasses.\textsuperscript{127} To Sheen, Communism proved the world had forgotten its godliness, acting as “the scavenger of decaying civilizations.”\textsuperscript{128} To Sheen, the United States had an important role in reforming the world. The people of the United States “have truth but have no zeal. [Communists] have zeal but they have no truth!”\textsuperscript{129} Sheen tied religiosity to patriotism, believing to be a good American meant to discuss God and science to others.\textsuperscript{130} On the show, he stated America’s job was one that “rolled up the curtain of the Eastern world.”\textsuperscript{131} It was America’s job to save the world by “writ[ing] to our President, to ask him for a day of prayer and reparation, penance and fasting for the peace of the world.”\textsuperscript{132} To Sheen, religion needed to end the Communist system, the same system that allowed “two thirds of the people of the world to go bed hungry every night.”\textsuperscript{133} Sheen believed America was “undergoing a crucifixion of Communism and the long arm of Providence…is saying to America, ‘Take up that cross! Take up that cross of all the starving people in the world! Take it up! Bear it!’”\textsuperscript{134} America had to rid the world of Communism, and Sheen believed a common religiosity was the way Communism would end.
Fulton Sheen’s show became popular amongst Americans, and the anti-Communist rhetoric only got stronger. Mark Massa, S.J. describes his efforts as those of “celebrity “convert maker” in 1952.” Before his television show, his popular radio show let him become “the most famous preacher in the U.S., certainly the best-known Roman Catholic priest.” His show was widely seen; statistics say his show “was watched in 2.3 million homes by 5.7 million people.” The rhetoric Sheen used was certainly anti-Communist. One of his most memorable shows had him read from Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* “with the names of Caesar, Cassius, Marc Antony, and Brutus replaced by Stalin, Beria, Malenkov, and Vyshinsky.” As Stalin died soon after the broadcast, “Sheen’s performance made front-page news across the nation in the reporting of the Russian’s death.” Sheen’s use of anti-Communist rhetoric allowed him to explain Catholic theology to Protestants and Jews as well as Catholics, allowing him a wide audience, such as Robert George does with non-Catholics today. Mark Massa, S.J. records that even “Jewish cabbies jump[ed] out of taxis with still running meters to find a bar with a TV [airing the show] and of Protestant “PKs” (preacher’s kids) lined up in front of the tube before bed.” Over 30% of his viewer mail came from non-Catholics, showing the common fear of Communism spread amongst all the faithful.

Before the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church had a healthy wariness of Communism, seen especially in papal encyclicals. Pope Pius IX argued for church and state unification to protect the truth from being violated by those who succumbed to “the most fatal errors of *Communism* and *Socialism*.” Two Piuses later, Pope Pius XI’s *Divini Redemptoris* lambasted the Communist view of the world, saying it “threatens everywhere, and it exceeds…anything yet experienced in the preceding persecutions launched against the...
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To him, Communism was an “imminent” peril, which desired destroying “the very foundations of Christian civilization.” Pius XI declared Communism to be in direct opposition to the Magisterium, and he offered his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* to the world to help the world’s people “be saved from the satanic scourge.” To Pius XI, Communism had “no room for the idea of God.” It was “intrinsically wrong.” To silence and squash the rising Communist power, Pius XI asked “all those…who still believe in God” to help “ward off from mankind the great danger that threatens all alike.” In this statement, Pius XI used a form of, or at least remained open to, interfaith affairs to achieve a goal: the end of Communism. This openness to interfaith cooperation was a foundation force in the convening of the Second Vatican Council.

Pope John XXIII’s *Humani Salutis*, the document that “offer[ed] the gift of a new ecumenical Council,” responded to the fear Piuses IX and XI had: the rise of Communism. In his opening words, John XXIII noted, “the Church is witnessing a crisis underway within society...the existence of a militant atheism operating all over the world.” To counter this, John XXIII summoned the Second Vatican Council into being. Like Pius XI, who asked other people of faith to “ward off from mankind the great danger that threatens all alike,” John XXIII asked for an ecumenical respect, so that the Council “will make even more alive in our separated brethren the desire for the hoped-for return to unity… [and] peace which can and must come above all from spiritual and supernatural realities.” To achieve that, John XXIII asked for an interfaith presence, inviting

> “all Christians of Churches separated from Rome, so that the Council may also be to their advantage. We know that many of these children are eager for a return of unity and peace, in accordance with the teaching and the prayer of Christ to the Father. And we also know not only that the announcement of the Council was received by them with joy, but that

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more than a few of them have already promised to offer their prayers for its success and hope to send representatives of their communities to follow its work at close hand.”

John XXIII’s use of interfaith representatives at the Second Vatican Council mimicked the desires of Communist-hating popes such as Pius XI: using them to “ward off from mankind the great danger that threatens all alike.” To use an interfaith coalition force, one built a respect for ecumenical affairs; one could not use adherents of other faiths as allies and yet have the official Magisterial position attribute them as heretics of “who claim that it is possible to obtain the eternal salvation of the soul by the profession of any kind of religion, as long as morality is maintained.” One needed religious toleration, such as what John Courtney Murray believed in. Only the American concept of liberty of conscience would let all people of faith be respected and valued; that respect and value, then, would facilitate the kind of cooperation that was necessary to defeat (or “convert,” in Fulton Sheen’s words) Communism. To achieve the necessary respect for all people of faith, Vatican II issued a document that allowed for religious toleration and ensured “the Church has learned the practical value of the free exercise clause of the First Amendment.”

Responding to the fear of Communism and following the logic of John Courtney Murray, the Vatican endorsed a more American view of religious toleration and freedom, as shown in the keystone document *Dignitatis Humanae*. The declaration started with the acknowledgement of common human dignity and how it believed “that constitutional limits should be set to the powers of government, in order that there may be no encroachment on the rightful freedom of the person.” The declaration continued with the inclusion of “the free exercise of religion in society” as part of the aforementioned human dignity, something that John Courtney Murray
knew of well.\textsuperscript{158} This broke from the traditional view that popes such as Pius IX attributed freedom of religion as a “\textit{liberty of perdition}.”\textsuperscript{159} The document legitimized the American individual view of Lockean reason, as “The truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth, as it makes its entrance into the mind at once quietly and with power.”\textsuperscript{160} Like Locke yearned for in his \textit{Letter on Toleration}, the Second Vatican Council believed one must tolerate differing views in the religious realm because it “is upon the human conscience that these obligations fall and exert their binding force.”\textsuperscript{161}

According to \textit{Dignitatis Humanae}, the Church’s view of religious freedom arose of its acknowledgement of human dignity, which had to be protected by separating the powers of the state and the Church. To be human means that one is “immune from coercion…that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly.”\textsuperscript{162} This tying of the recognition of human dignity and religious freedom occurred due to mankind’s innate compulsion to discover what truth is.\textsuperscript{163} Even if a person does not follow through on this obligation, the Council declared their “right is not to be impeded.”\textsuperscript{164} This resulted from humanity’s free will. Through free will, lived religion consists itself of “internal, voluntary and free acts whereby man sets the course of his life directly toward God. No merely human power can either command or prohibit acts of this kind.”\textsuperscript{165} This view of religion could not be oppressed by governmental affairs, and it truly allowed the Catholic Church to endorse Church-state separation. \textit{Dignitatis Humanae} desired states to “to assume the safeguard of the religious freedom of all its citizens, in an effective manner, by just laws and by other appropriate means.”\textsuperscript{166} The document also claimed that even if a state religion happened by chance, “the right of all citizens and religious communities to religious freedom should be recognized and
made effective in practice." The government had to be neutral in the religious realm, and its actions had “to be controlled by juridical norms.” This idea drew upon the Lockean view of religion in society: because no one can truly share the personal interiority of religious experience to all, it becomes necessary that religious freedom “be the chief characteristic mark of the true Church.”

To set standards for interfaith relations, the Second Vatican Council approved a declaration to be sent to non-Catholic faiths called *Nostra Aetate*, which attempted to repair the broken bonds between them and the Catholic Church. The document surveyed the commonalities between Catholicism and other faiths, citing all religions’ determination to confront “the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men.” Concerning Hinduism, the Church complimented its “inexhaustible abundance of myths and through searching philosophical inquiry...[by] ascetical practices or profound meditation or a flight to God with love and trust.” About Buddhism, *Nostra Aetate* admired how adherents could “acquire the state of perfect liberation, or attain, by their own efforts or through higher help, supreme illumination.” These religions are not of Abrahamic origin, yet *Nostra Aetate*’s growth of an interfaith respect declared the Church “regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life...[that] often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men.” An absolute notion of truth as standing outside the realm of human remained, but a Lockean respect for the interior nature by which an individual accesses truth took precedent. This was how the Church reconciled and promoted dialogue with religions that did not believe in a version of their own view of God. As theological children of Abraham, the Church reached out to the physical children of Abraham: adherents of Judaism and Islam.
Concerning Islam, the Church cited closer connections as sources for interfaith relations: Islam’s Father Abraham and Catholicism’s Mother Mary. While discussing Islam, the Church praised their belief in “the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful.” The Church also bonded itself to Islam through Abraham. As spiritual children of Abraham through Isaac, the Catholic Church lauded Muslims for their commitment “to submit [to God] wholeheartedly…just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God.” Although Islam does not see Jesus as the Son of God, they believe him to be of God. The Church saw the Islamic view of Mary as a route for interfaith dialogue as Muslims “also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion.” Under these two sainted figures, the Church asked for a new beginning of Catholic-Muslim relations. Nostra Aetate asked Muslims to “forget the past [i.e. the Crusades and other episodes of Christian-Muslim tension] and to work sincerely for mutual understanding.” This desire for a new start was not the only renewal between Abrahamic faiths at the Council. Nostra Aetate became famous for its insistence that the Jewish people were not responsible for the death of Jesus, a claim that had led to much anti-Semitism worldwide; the document also lambasted any and all “displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.”

In the spirit of Nostra Aetate’s desire to “forget the past,” the Council asked the Jewish people for forgiveness of past anti-Semitism. The Church acknowledged its connection to the Jewish people, who possessed “the beginnings of [Catholicism]…among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets.” The Council declared they desired “to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues.” Radically, the Council used Nostra Aetate to clarify that the Jewish
people did not kill Christ, and what happened on Good Friday “cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today.”  All hatred towards the Jewish people that the Church sponsored or allowed in the past was apologized for; the Council now decreed, “the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God.”  The Church wanted newer relations with the Jewish people, and were willing to put the past behind them to do so. Yet, there was no outreach to Protestants in *Nostra Aetate*. Since the Church had new friendships and let bygones be bygones, the Church decided to take part in the new ecumenical movement between Christian denominations. It did so in the decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, which believed “The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council.”

*Unitatis Redintegratio* was the Catholic Church’s declaration of how the Church should foster dialogue with and interact amongst those of different faiths. The decree started by insisting that denominational conflict within Christianity “openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature.” Desiring unity across denominations, Protestants had started a movement to look beyond denominational lines known as ecumenism; *Unitatis Redintegratio* offered Catholics a way to join that ecumenical movement “fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, for the restoration of unity among all Christians.” Before Vatican II, the Church made itself clear to Catholics: it was wrong for them to believe Protestantism was “another form of the same true Christian religion, in which form it is given to please God equally as in the Catholic Church.” At Vatican II, this language was toned down and communal language was highlighted. *Unitatis Redintegratio*’s recounting of Church history started with Jesus’s prayer for unity in the Book of
John and continued in noting that the denominational breaks that fractured Church history “for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame.”189 In the spirit of forgetting the past, the Catholic Church admitted that those who were outside of the Church in another denomination “who believe in Christ and have been truly baptized are in communion with the Catholic Church even though this communion is imperfect… have a right to be called Christian, and so are correctly accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church.”190 As part of this statement, the Catholic Church became willing to work with Protestants; Unitatis Redintegratio ordered Catholics to “take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism.”191 This followed Murray’s examples in language: when Murray asked to avoid “the use of words that are emotionally explosive,” the Catholic Church answered his question: the document asked Catholics to “avoid expressions, judgments and actions which do not represent the condition of our separated brethren with truth and fairness.”192 Like in Nostra Aetate, the Church asked for forgiveness on past wrongs, even imploring a “beg pardon of God and of our separated brethren, just as we forgive them that trespass against us.”193 To bring the Church together in an ecumenical movement, the Church redefined the importance of understanding amongst faiths.

The document Unitatis Redintegratio asked a “spiritual ecumenism” which included interfaith education, worship, and dialogue. The decree believed an effective ecumenism started with a clean heart; one needed to “pray to the Holy Spirit for the grace to be genuinely self-denying, humble, gentle in the service of others, and to have an attitude of brotherly generosity.”194 The decree allowed Catholics to “join in prayer with their separated brethren [to find]…the grace of unity.”195 With this common worship, it was expected Catholics use the experience to understand the “respective doctrines of our separated brethren, their history, their
spiritual and liturgical life, their religious psychology and general background." The Catholic Church wanted to find common ground on which to discuss faith and “a just evaluation of the dignity of the human person.” Concerning the Eastern churches, the dialogue had to consist of the common ideologies that permeated both: the “true sacraments, above all by apostolic succession, the priesthood and the Eucharist.” When it came to Protestants, there were more differences than commonalities, so the document went broader to achieve more discussion, noting that both “look to Christ as the source and center of Church unity.” But regardless of whether the ecumenism was applied to Protestants or to members of the Eastern churches, the Church was clear: the ecumenical action must follow the Magisterium, “the truth which we have received from the apostles and Fathers of the Church.” American attendees, like John Courtney Murray, had a significant influence over the accepting of these religious freedom and interfaith documents, and that influence was seen at the Second Vatican Council.

American bishops had differing views of what Unitatis Redintegratio should ask for, but nevertheless agreed with its content. Ambrose Senyshyn of Philadelphia believed in unity, but thought the document should differentiate between the Orthodox and Protestants because only the former “have a true hierarchy, a true priesthood, they offer a true Mass, they recognize and have the same seven sacraments as we do.” Cardinal Spellman of New York admitted that he had personal doubts, but believed ecumenism “among men this is impossible, but that with God all things are possible.” Cardinal Ritter of St. Louis believed heavily in the Decree, enjoying the document as “the final end of the counter-Reformation with its unfortunate polemics.” The Murray influence on his opinions exceeded the detestation for polemical language. Ritter believed “religious liberty to be the foundation and prerequisite for ecumenical relation with
other Christians.” Like Murray, he noted the value of “the dignity of the human person…[and] the total incompetence of civil laws in passing judgment on the Gospel of Christ and its interpretation.” These Murrayian views of human dignity showed itself amongst the American cardinals, who allowed ecumenism due to those ideals taking hold in their hearts.

Concerning *Nostra Aetate*, American bishops tremendously approved of the document, seeing it as the way to forge new relationships with other religions. Cardinal Cushing of Boston believed the document highlighted “what the Jews and Christians share in common…As sons of Adam, they are our brothers; as sons of Abraham, they are blood brothers of Christ.” Cushing especially praised the condemnation of anti-Semitism, believing they “cannot judge the leaders of ancient Israel…[and] we cannot dare tribute to later generations of Jews the guilt.” Cardinal Ritter agreed, believing the decree did wonderfully in its goal “to repair an injustice of the centuries.” Like Cardinal Cushing, Cardinal Ritter wanted to emphasize the Church’s relationship with the Jews, in order to “grow between us and them the sharpest unity of love and esteem.” The American Catholic bishops, as seen through Cardinals Ritter and Cushing, definitely followed the Murrayian advice to avoid “words that are emotionally explosive.”

Overwhelmingly, American bishops supported *Dignitatis Humanae*. Cardinal Cushing agreed with the document, as it defined a “practical question of great importance…[which] has not yet been declared clearly and unambiguously.” Cardinal Meyer of Chicago praised the document’s methods that allowed “the innate freedom of the human person in religious affairs.” He also lauded the Church’s actions that highlighted human dignity and how true religion existed “in conscious, free and generous submission of a man to the will of his Creator.” Cardinal Ritter affirmed the idea of religious liberty being “an innate right of all men
founded on human nature.”

The American value of personal religion, as seen first in Locke, and then in Madison and Jefferson, showed itself in Dignitatis Humanae’s Murrayian view of human dignity. This new understanding of religious truth and the means by which human beings come to understand religious truth had profound implications for the Catholic Church’s relations with people of different religious beliefs. This meant the Catholic Church could now start to work together with members of other faiths, under the name of ecumenism, against causes that threatened societal acceptance of Catholic doctrine.

It is in this trend that the Catholic Church commissioned Dr. George and others, using interfaith dialogue to unite against a growing secular movement: the acceptance of societal homosexual marriage. According to the Colloquium’s website, the Vatican-sponsored meeting desired “to examine and propose anew the beauty of the relationship between the man and the woman, in order to support and reinvigorate marriage and family life for the flourishing of human society.” Those who went and spoke before them testified “to the power and vitality of the complementary union of man and woman.” Robert George was one of them. He told the members of the Colloquium that “the demand for the redefinition of marriage to accommodate same-sex partners is not the cause of the erosion of the marriage culture…It is the fruit of the sexual revolution.” Dr. George explained to the Colloquium that society must “restore in law, where it has been displaced, a sound understanding of marriage. As a result of this, we will draw ridicule.” He was correct about the ridicule his position would receive. Jeremy Hooper of GLAAD (formerly standing for Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) claimed the Colloquium was “designed to reinforce an exclusionary church position in contrast to a world
that is quickly coming to know, love, accept, and bestow legal rights upon its LGBT humans.”

Hooper referred to the entire process as “another example of conservative religious groups and leaders getting together to talk about [gay people] rather than with [gay people].” Regardless of the justified criticism, the Colloquium saw its goal as spurring an interfaith effort to redefine marriage’s purpose in a changing world.

In a speech he delivered to the whole Colloquium, Pope Francis publically supported this interfaith effort; he hoped the “colloquium will be an inspiration to all who seek to support and strengthen the union of man and woman in marriage.” He thanked them for noting the “benefits that marriage can provide to children, the spouses themselves, and to society.” These statements showed a sense of importance the Church now placed on heterosexual marriage and what they were and are willing to do to find cultural allies in fights against the spread of secular ideals. The Church, the same organization that once derided adherents of other faiths as heretics, now embraced members of other faiths under the banner of human dignity. After the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church’s opinions on religious freedom met the Murrayian and Lockean standards of religious tolerance. Due to this, the Church now had allies, as seen in Robert George’s efforts and the Colloquium’s meetings, to help guide humanity in its journey towards finding “the whole range of truth and goodness.” These efforts would not have been viable had it not been for *Dignitatis Humanae* and the Second Vatican Council, with their statement that every “person has a right to religious freedom.”
Chapter 3: Divorce of Church and State: Vatican II and Ecumenism


2 Ibid.


9 Ibid., 245.


17 Ibid., 339.


Chapter 3: Divorce of Church and State: Vatican II and Ecumenism

21 Paul VI. *Dignitatis Humanae*. Article 2.
22 Paul VI. *Dignitatis Humanae*. Article 3.
26 Paul VI. *Nostra Aetate*. Article 3.
30 Ibid., Article 3.
31 Ibid., Article 15.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
45 Ibid.

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48 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
78 Ibid., 7.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid., 11.
Chapter 3: Divorce of Church and State: Vatican II and Ecumenism


82 Ibid., 17.

83 Ibid., 18.

84 Ibid., 20.

85 Ibid., 22.


87 Ibid., Article 15.


89 Ibid., 35. Article 55.


91 Ibid.

92 Ibid.


95 Ibid., 246.


97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.


100 Ibid.


102 Ibid.

103 Ibid.

104 Ibid.


Chapter 3: Divorce of Church and State: Vatican II and Ecumenism

109 Ibid., 33-34.
110 Ibid., 35.
112 Ibid., 39.
116 Ibid., 5.
117 Ibid., 6.
118 Ibid., 8.
120 Ibid., 26.
121 Ibid., 35.
125 Ibid., 4:21-4:25.
126 Ibid., 5:04-5:09.
127 Ibid., 5:55-6:55.
128 Ibid., 7:25-7:33.
130 Ibid., 14:50-15:10.
131 Ibid., 19:28-19:34.
132 Ibid., 20:28-20:45.
136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
139 Ibid.

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Chapter 3: Divorce of Church and State: Vatican II and Ecumenism

140 Ibid.
141 Ibid.
144 Ibid., 306.
145 Pius XI. Divini Redemptoris. 308.
146 Ibid., 309.
147 Pius XI. Divini Redemptoris. 333.
148 Pius XI. Divini Redemptoris. 339.
149 Ibid.
151 Ibid.
154 Pius XI. Divini Redemptoris. 339.
158 Ibid.
161 Ibid.
162 Paul VI. Dignitatis Humanae. Article 2.
163 Ibid.
164 Ibid.
165 Paul VI. Dignitatis Humanae. Article 3.
166 Paul VI. Dignitatis Humanae. Article 6.
167 Ibid.
168 Paul VI. Dignitatis Humanae. Article 7.
Chapter 3: Divorce of Church and State: Vatican II and Ecumenism

171 Paul VI. *Nostra Aetate*. Article 2.
172 Paul VI. *Nostra Aetate*. Article 2.
173 Ibid.
174 Paul VI. *Nostra Aetate*. Article 3.
175 Ibid.
176 Ibid.
177 Ibid.
178 Ibid.
180 Paul VI. *Nostra Aetate*. Article 3.
182 Ibid.
183 Ibid.
184 Ibid.
186 Ibid.
187 Ibid.
189 *Decree on Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio)*. Article 3.
190 Ibid.
191 *Decree on Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio)*. Article 4.
193 *Decree on Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio)*. Article 7.
194 Ibid.
195 Ibid. Article 8.
196 Ibid. Article 9.
197 *Decree on Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio)*. Article 12.
198 *Decree on Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio)*. Article 15.
199 *Decree on Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio)*. Article 20.
200 *Decree on Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio)*. Article 24.
204 Ibid.
205 Ibid.
Chapter 3: Divorce of Church and State: Vatican II and Ecumenism

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Ibid.


Ibid.


Ibid.


Ibid.


Ibid.


Paul VI. Dignitatis Humanæ. Article 2.
Unresolved Resolutions: Applications of Americanized Catholicism

The Catholic Church adapted to the modern world and embraced the “American” approach to faith at the Second Vatican Council, particularly with regard to the issues of ecumenism, piety, and the role of the laity. In this sense, Vatican II can be properly seen as an “Americanization” of the Roman Catholic Church. Sixty years later, this Americanization of Catholicism is still a controversial issue, and the question of the Church’s relationship with modernity is still far from settled. Accepting that the Catholic Church must make room for the rights of the individual to exercise his reason does not mean that the Church does not still see individual reason as too flawed to operate without guidance in some realms. Recognizing these realms continues to be a struggle for the Vatican. The Second Vatican Council showed that Americanization was possible and could be applied to the Catholic Church, which saw the dreams of Brownson and Hecker and appealed to them in an inversed way. Brownson and Hecker wanted individual Catholics to “merge themselves in the great American people,” but Vatican II made the Church more aligned with “the great current of American national life.”

For our purposes, “Americanization” has been used to describe a respect for and commitment to citizen participation and understanding in government to ensure its transparency; as Thomas Jefferson said, “the mass of the citizens is the safest depository of their own rights.” In a Catholic context, Americanization comprises a personalized and interior religious piety that lets individuals decide what actions are parts of lifestyle and what actions build bridges to cover “that gulf that [has] stood between human beings and the divine.” Americanization resides in a religious toleration, embraced now by the Catholic Church, which hearkens back to Jefferson, Madison, and Locke, one that believes freedom of worship to be “the chief characteristic mark of
the true Church.”

Americanization also functions with a church-state separation, one that believes “the care of souls is not committed to the civil magistrate, any more than to other men.”

These nods toward Americanization were spread to the worldwide Church at the Second Vatican Council. *Lumen Gentium* declared the laity had the right to appeal decisions made by the bishops. It said the laity could “openly reveal to the [bishops] their needs and desires with that freedom and confidence which is fitting for children of God and brothers in Christ.” As Jefferson made the currency system understandable to “the bulk of mankind [who] are schoolboys through life,” *Sacrosanctum Concilium* made the liturgy understandable to all of the Church’s laypeople by letting “the vernacular language...be used in administering the sacraments and sacramentals.” The laity could control their liturgical involvement and became more active within the Mass, even distributing the Body and Blood of Christ to other members of the laity.

American Catholics, who grew up and were molded by an ultramontane style of religion, turned religion inwards with devotions to various events and saints, links their experiences of faith to themselves, their saints, and their God. *Lumen Gentium* legitimized this system of devotion with its insistence that “the liturgical cult of the Blessed Virgin be generously fostered.” Americanization occurred by religious toleration became a faith-based imperative to the Church, which had once believed “kingdoms rest on the foundation of the Catholic Faith.” At Vatican II, an innately American Lockeian system of religious toleration, under the Murrayian paradigm of human dignity, became Catholic policy and dogma with the declaration that stated each “person has a right to religious freedom.”

As these examples show, the Catholic Church Americanized by endorsing and spreading the American republican ideals of transparency, citizen (or lay) participation, personal politics (or faith), and religious toleration. The application of these principles was an attempt to solve
problems the Church faced in the modern era. In the new millennium, these Americanized principles are being lauded as the solution to problems the Church faces today, including the sex abuse crisis.

The sex-abuse crisis that has been plaguing that Church for the last few decades highlights the fact that Catholics still don’t agree on how open the Church should be to modernity – or how “American” its approach to governance should become. For example, one of the most prolific and influential scholars on American Catholic history, Jay Dolan, believes the Church should become even more even “American” in response to the crisis. Dolan argues that his scholarly status gives him a “responsibility to comment on this crisis that has gravely wounded a community of believers, a church that I love. There has been nothing like this in the history of American Catholicism.”

Believing the pre-Vatican II version of the “monarchial church” failed in the modern era, Dolan stands for the religious involvement of the laity. Hearkening back to Jefferson’s desire for transparency and commitment to having the people understand the process of government, Dolan expresses his support for the idea that Catholics laypeople should be able to choose their leaders. He argues that the laity should be able to participate in “the selection of future bishops and the appointment of local pastors” to have the laity and the Church interact in the modern world. John Carroll suppressed this argument in his tenure as bishop at the turn of the nineteenth century because he believed it would make the priest subject to “the passions… of the congregation.” Now, Dolan argues it should be done in the name of inspiring “confidence in the church’s leadership.”

Responding to the priest shortage, Dolan argues for more Americanization concerning ordination, as well. Problems providing priests for American adherents have always been challenging. At the country’s birth, for the entire Thirteen Colonies, John Carroll had nineteen
priests. In the modern era, James O’Toole notes, “the infrastructure of American Catholicism is shrinking rather than expanding.” He records the numbers of American priests have declined since 1975 with their “average age rising towards 70.” O’Toole notes that less than 400 men being ordained in the United States per year. To be fair, O’Toole was correct at the time, but currently, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) released statistics showing an increase in vocations: “The total number of potential ordinands for the class of 2015, 595, is up from 477 in 2014 and 497 in 2013.” Nevertheless, O’Toole’s point remains the same: this number is not “sufficient to replace those who died, retired, or left the ministry.”

To ensure there are enough priests, Catholic men of other countries have emigrated here to serve American Catholics. Even in the Class of 2015, statistics show that “One-quarter (25 percent) were born outside the United States, with the largest numbers coming from Colombia, Mexico, the Philippines, Nigeria, Poland and Vietnam.” Believing it to be “a shameful admission that…the church cannot recruit an American-born clergy,” Jay Dolan supports female and married priests in hopes to raise the ordination numbers. Dolan’s views show the Americanization debate continues to this day and in newer and more modern realms.

Dolan is not alone: millions of American Catholics believe the Catholic Church should Americanize more – again, meaning that there should be more transparency, more lay empowerment (in this sense, with an emphasis on women), and more pluralism. These Catholics also believe in changing policy towards two of the Church’s sacraments, marriage and clerical orders, in the process of Americanization. A Gallup poll taken after Pope Francis’s one-year anniversary showed 72% of American Catholics support a married priesthood and 50% believe the Church should sanction gay marriages. In October 2014, during the meetings of the Synod of Bishops on the Family, the Vatican released a relatio post disceptationem, or in English, a...
"report after the debate," summarizing testimony given to the Synod during its sessions, which were devoted to topics relating to orders and marriage. This relatio received international attention and its release spurred much discussion concerning those who did not follow the Church’s teachings on marriage: divorced Catholics, remarried Catholics, and LGBT Catholics.\textsuperscript{27} The struggles around this document’s release between those who desire “a more democratic church” and those who want “a monarchical model of church” resemble the tensions that Brownson and Hecker lived through and indicate that those tensions are still alive today.\textsuperscript{28} The relatio is the best modern example of how the Church understands and lives out a post-Vatican II problem: what should the Church Americanize? As the fights around the document show, it is not as easy to fight for one side or the other.

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In October 2014, a Vatican commission for the Synod of Bishops on the Family published a relatio that argued support for the rights of cohabiting and divorced people in the Church. Divided into five parts, the relatio was designed to be an agenda-like document for the discussed subjects at the Synod proper in October 2015. The introduction cited Vatican II’s Gaudium et Spes to define that “the family is truly a ‘school of humanity.’”\textsuperscript{29} The introduction also defined the Synod’s threefold mission “to look at the situation of the family today…to re-evaluate with renewed freshness [what] the Church tells us about the beauty and dignity of the family; and…discern the ways in which the Church and society can renew their commitment to the family.”\textsuperscript{30} Parts 1 and 2 did not attract much media attention, but it remains worthy to note that Part 2 cited exclusively Vatican II documents or documents from after Vatican II. Article 17 quoted Lumen Gentium.\textsuperscript{31} Article 19 cited Nostra Aetate and Article 20 cited Gaudium et Spes again.\textsuperscript{32} Article 26 hearkened back to the active role of the lay people by recognizing the special
duty “that Catholic families are called upon…to be the active agents in every pastoral activity on behalf of the family.”³³ Concerning the loss of adherents, Article 29 alluded to Dignitatis Humanae and John Courtney Murray’s thinking about human dignity, claiming evangelization of the Gospel “responds to the deepest expectations of a person: a response to each person’s dignity and complete fulfillment in reciprocity and communion.”³⁴ To ensure that dignity, themes of Sacrosanctum Concilium concerning spiritual transparency were alluded to; the relatio recommended, “biblical-theological study…accompanied by dialogue at all levels.”³⁵ The pastoral perspectives needed new consideration, and it was in the relatio’s third part that those concerns were controversially addressed.

It was the relatio’s third part that brought issues to the Synod’s agenda that conflicted with traditional Catholic views on marriage – and it was the third part, therefore, that attracted the most media attention. The relatio discussed issues that have baffled priests seeking to guide and advise adherents living in the modern world. Although the Church’s position is officially against cohabitation, the fact is that many men and women do live with each before marriage – sometimes for years – and the relatio stated that the Church had to “indicate the constructive elements in these situations which do not yet or no longer correspond to [the Church’s] ideal.”³⁶ The relatio discussed cohabiting couples that want to marry within the Church, noting that cohabitation is becoming part a lifestyle choice and is no long and expression of piety. “To live together is often a choice based on a overall attitude,” the relatio observes, “opposed to anything institutional and definitive, but also an expectation of a more secure existence (a steady job and income.)”³⁷ The relatio also asked the upcoming Synod to consider the value of cohabitation and how those who cohabitate “can display authentic family values or at least an inherent desire for them.”³⁸ Concerning divorced Catholics, the relatio stated that the Church’s past position of
criticizing divorce in all forms “based on a logic of ‘all or nothing’ is not wise.” Resulting from that statement, the *relatio* argued the Church should ease its annulment process, making annulments “more accessible and less time-consuming.” Finally, the *relatio* recommended a change in Communion policy, that “divorced people who have not remarried should be invited to find in the Eucharist the nourishment they need to sustain them in their present state of life.”

The *relatio* discussed a relaxation in birth control limitations, similar to what Mrs. Crowley argued before the Commission in the 1960s. In Article 53, the *relatio* noted, “economic factors are burdensome, contributing to a sharp drop in the birthrate which weakens the social fabric.” Although “Openness to life is an intrinsic requirement of married love,” the *relatio* declares “realistic language is probably also needed in this instance.” Article 54 recommended the Synod reconsider the ban on birth control, returning “to the message of the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* of Pope Paul VI, which highlights the need to respect the dignity of the person in the moral evaluation of the methods of regulating births.” The Synod might now allow, in the eyes of Mrs. Crowley, that relationships “not be violated by thermometers and calendars.”

The most controversial parts of the *relatio* were not the paragraphs concerning the divorced or birth control; they were the parts concerning homosexual rights. The area of the *relatio* that received the most media attention was its recommendations concerning LGBT people. The *relatio* stated, “Homosexuals have gifts and qualities to offer to the Christian community.” It questions whether the Church’s position against LGBT rights makes bishops “capable of providing for these people, guaranteeing to them a place of fellowship in our communities?” The bishops continued and said, “often [homosexuals] wish to encounter a Church that offers them a welcoming home. Are our communities capable of providing that, accepting and valuing their sexual orientation, without compromising Catholic doctrine on the
family and matrimony?" The *relatio* asks the Synod to “devise realistic approaches to affective growth, human development and maturation in the Gospel, while integrating the sexual aspect.” The *relatio* does not resolve the question of the value of homosexual unions in society, but it raises the question – something the Church has not previously done – bringing the bounds of human dignity to the reality that some men and women are gay.

As expected, the *relatio*’s language concerning the divorced and homosexual rights received a lot of media coverage. *The New York Times* called the *relatio* a “marked shift in tone likely to be discussed in parishes around the world” for its desires and recommendations. The article also reported that some members of the Synod compared it to Vatican II’s changes in the realm of lay participation, piety, and ecumenism. *The New York Times* also noted that the reasoning behind these recommendations originated at Vatican II; the Synod’s secretary Archbishop Bruno Forte cited *Dignitatis Humanae*’s idea of human dignity, saying, “The fundamental idea is the centrality of the person independently of sexual orientation.”

The article noted that there was some deep opposition to the Synod’s agenda, focusing on the opposition of Cardinal Raymond Leo Burke. *The New York Times* recorded that Burke, believed the *relatio*’s views “are supporting the possibility of adopting a practice that deviates from the truth of the faith.” The *New York Times*’ Editorial board discussed the *relatio*, saying it “set a ringing tone of compassion…toward gay people, unmarried couples, divorced Catholics who remarry, and children in these unions.” The board also believed the *relatio* will resonate with the American Catholic laity because they “have shown themselves motivated by individual conscience more than doctrinaire prelates on such issues as birth control.”

American websites covered the document’s changes; LGBT human rights groups overwhelmingly approved of it. The Human Rights Campaign released a statement that heavily
praised the relatio’s “new, inclusive language in referring to the LGBT community.” The organization noted the document “for the first time, referred to LGBT couples as “partners” instead of sinners.” The organization’s president stated, “This new document is a light in the darkness—a dramatic new tone from a Church hierarchy that has long denied the very existence of committed and loving gay and lesbian partnerships.” The Human Rights Campaign’s statement quoted a higher administrator, Lisbeth Meléndez Rivera, who claimed the relatio was proof that the faith Americanized to “something that can include LGBT people, and honor their lives and relationships.” She thought it had taken a “huge step toward making LGBT Catholics feel welcomed in their communities of faith.”

The media also reported the feelings of those who opposed the relatio’s avoidance of “words that are emotionally explosive,” as John Courtney Murray termed it. The Huffington Post recorded the thoughts of Rotare Caeli, a traditional Catholic blog that endorses pre-Vatican II styles of worship, where critics have insisted the duties of the laity are to “pray, pay, and obey.” The blog’s thoughts were ones of disgust, claiming “The words of Our Lord and the New Testament are in absolute opposition to the [relatio]. Because what the Church has always taught she received from the Lord directly and through the Apostles.”

Dissenting bishops took to the Internet, as well, to share their opinions on the relatio. Cardinal Burke did not support the document. The Catholic World Report interviewed the cardinal to discuss his previously “expressed concern over several aspects of the Synod.” Burke argued the relatio was proof that secular forces were distorting the document to suit their agendas and that one did not “have to be a rocket scientist to see the approach at work, which is certainly not of the Church.” Burke also believed the work,

“The words of Our Lord and the New Testament are in absolute opposition to the [relatio]. Because what the Church has always taught she received from the Lord directly and through the Apostles.”

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lacks a solid foundation in the Sacred Scriptures and the Magisterium. In a matter on which the Church has a very rich and clear teaching, it gives the impression of inventing a totally new, what one Synod Father called “revolutionary,” teaching on marriage and the family.” [Emphasis Mine].

Burke’s opposition to the way the relatio has been interpreted shows that he does not want the Americanization of Catholicism to touch the sacrament of marriage. Surveys of American Catholic opinion on gay marriage, such as the aforementioned Gallup Poll, indicate that American Catholics are starting to see marriage as a lifestyle choice, regardless of the sexual orientations involved, and not as an act of piety. They are, in other words, challenging the notion that marriage is sacramental. Traditional minded Catholics, such as Burke, do not want what happened to birth control to happen to the sacrament of marriage. Burke’s statements unavoidably reflect the pre-Vatican II view of truth as something that cannot be accessed solely through the exercise of individual reason and therefore needs an interpreter.

The reason the world knows that the Synod discussed the place of gays and lesbians in the Church is that the Vatican released the relation, even though elements of it had not yet been put to a vote. Church leaders who were critical of the discussion – men such as Cardinal Burke – emphasized to the press that “the report on gays and lesbians was a ‘working document,’ not the final word from Rome.” [Emphasis Mine]. In fact, when put to an approval vote, the controversial paragraphs that garnered acclaim and criticism alike were not passed. According the Catholic News Service, the paragraphs “failed to gain the two-thirds supermajority ordinarily required for approval of synodic documents.” This development leaves many questions unanswered: Should the Church extend the Second Vatican Council’s reforms to this realm of civil rights? Does doing so violate the Magisterium, as Cardinal Burke argues? Or should Murrayian desire to foster “the centrality of the person independently of sexual orientation” take precedent?
Regardless of one’s opinion on the *relatio*, the argument over the limits of Catholicism’s Americanization will continue. The debate on this *relatio* will end in October, when the Synod will meet again to discuss the subject that caused so much “jousting in the court of public opinion.” At that time, the Synod will decide whether to extend the process of Americanization launched by Vatican II to the matter of LGBT rights. The challenge facing the Synod is a contemporary example of a now-old tension between American and Catholic values. From Hecker and Hughes, from Murray and Ottaviani, and to Burke and the future, the process of Americanizing the Catholic Church will only stop when the Church halts the process. Vatican II may have been definitive in Americanizing the Catholic Church, but it did not end the debate.

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5. Ibid.


20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.


30 Ibid., Article 4.

31 Ibid., Article 17.


Conclusion: Unresolved Resolutions: Applications of Americanized Catholicism

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36 Ibid., Article 36.
37 Ibid., Article 38.
38 Ibid., Article 38.
40 Ibid., Article 43.
41 Ibid., Article 45.
42 Ibid., Article 53.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid., Article 51.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
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65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.


