WE BEG TO DIFFER:
THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES
AS A PUBLIC CHURCH

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Martin Marty contends the optimal ecclesial response to the American culture is that of the public church. This dissertation is a response to Marty's challenge to "discover not invent the public church" within the Roman Catholic church in the United States. Relying on the work of Robert Bellah, chapter one examines America's individualism as the primary cultural factor that relegates the role of religion to the private sphere. In the second chapter, the characteristics and manifestations of the nascent public church are examined in light of four twentieth century American Catholics who are antecedents of the public church in the twentieth century. Chapter three examines the shift in ecclesiology that allows the theological and conciliar foundations for the self-understanding of the Roman Catholic church as a public church. Part one of chapter three outlines the growing centralization of the Roman Catholic church in the late nineteenth century and its impact on the church in the United States. Part two shifts focus to the implicit characteristics of the public church contained in two specific conciliar documents. In Gaudium et spes and Dignitatis humanae there exists a theological foundation for the Roman Catholic church as a public church. These implicit characteristics – a critical anthropology, a critical and dialogical mode of ecclesial presence in the world, and the social implications of theology – allow a conciliar foundation for the Roman Catholic church as a public church.

The fourth and final chapter demonstrates how Bernard Lonergan is a resource for
the public church. Not attempting an exhaustive explanation of Lonergan's contribution.
this chapter focuses on four of his categories for consideration — his anthropology;
communities of meaning and value; history as the story of the simultaneous principles of
progress, decline, and redemption; and the redemptive role of the church in the world —
which provide a larger frame of reference for a fuller understanding of the public church.
The task that remains is for the understanding of the public church to be effectively
appropriated in the Roman Catholic church in the United States. This dissertation takes a
step towards this appropriation.
To Kevin Eagleson

who many years ago was my teacher, and still is today.
and this has made all the difference in the world
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Introduction

The relationship between the Church and culture has been a perennial issue in the history of Christianity. Whether this issue has been the subject of explicit theological analysis and reflection, it is always an implicit dynamic in ecclesial life. The recent interest in issues of inculturation, however, reflects the timeliness for an explicit theological consideration of the church/culture relationship. There is renewed attention within the Roman Catholic church to examine its relationship with the larger culture. The impetus for this current concern is generated by the Second Vatican Council’s affirmation of human culture and the council’s reminder to the church in *Gaudium et spes* of its duty of “scrutinizing the signs of the times and interpreting them in light of the gospel.” This renewed attention is not to be an abstract consideration of the church and culture relationship. Rather, in light of the council’s recognition of cultural diversity, coupled with its emphasis on the local church, local churches are challenged to scrutinize their specific “host” cultures in light of the gospel. The post-Vatican II church understands itself as both a critic of its host culture and as an agent of cultural transformation. This critical and transformative role demands a place for cultural analysis utilizing contributions from sociology, economics, and other disciplines.

The focus of this dissertation is the relationship of the Roman Catholic church in the

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United States to the American culture. An analysis of this relationship requires both a consideration of the church's critical engagement with the American ethos and attention to issues of the church's self-understanding. This critical engagement, in the words of Catholic sociologist John Coleman, must be “strategic.” It must, “emphasize the questions of a particular time and place... and seek to counteract what is believed to be the errors that are most tempting at the time.”

What does this mean for the Roman Catholic church in the United States?

In the American context the church must critically engage a culture dominated and defined by a pervasive individualism. In the work, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, Robert Bellah and his associates contend individualism is the dominant cultural “language” in the United States context. The language of individualism overshadows the alternative communal languages of the American tradition leaving Americans unable to draw upon richer and more communitarian understandings of life.

Bellah distinguishes two forms of individualism: utilitarian and expressive individualism. Our private lives are ruled by expressive individualism with its emphasis on self-improvement and personal meaning. Our public lives are driven and defined by utilitarian individualism that advocates a rugged ambition, a “getting ahead” at any cost, toward the goal of material success. This pervasive individualism, in both forms, defines freedom as “non-interference” in the individual’s pursuit of his or her autonomy. The understanding of freedom as “freedom from” fosters the belief that individuals are pitted against institutions, the latter always impinging upon the person’s autonomy. The pervasive individualism of the

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2 Throughout this dissertation the term “American” refers to the United States. Likewise, the term “American church” unless otherwise specified refers to the Roman Catholic church in the United States.

American context has measured freedom and success by the individual's ability to promote his or her emotional, intellectual, and often material success with little or no concern for the larger social fabric. This individualism has led to the belief that certain areas of life, as well as certain subsystems within society, are exempt from critique or scrutiny. This explains to some extent that despite the large percentage of Americans who believe in "a god", the dominant individualism privatizes religion by keeping it at arm's length from too great an impact on the polity or economy. Churches and religious institutions proposing an alternative vision to the rampant individualism are often perceived as intrusive and acting inappropriately. Religion's role is deemed appropriate as a personal choice in one's private life limited to personal meaning and devoid of societal implications. It is often excluded or at least held in suspicion, however, when it attempts to be part of the public discourse.

The dominance of the language of individualism makes it difficult for Americans to think about what a more cooperative, just and equal social order might look like because the very context within which we discuss the ideals of freedom, justice and success is skewed by this individualism. The themes of freedom, justice, and success, as understood through the lens of individualism, are transmitted through various institutional realities such as technology, the free market myth and a legal system based on adversarial notions in a pattern of law that extols individual rights. These dominant themes shape the American ethos and present the contextual challenge for the church's mission of promoting the gospel. Ecclesiological issues surface because these dominant themes shape not only the host culture, but also define the boundaries within society which religion and the churches have been expected to adhere. A pervasive individualism and the constitutional restrictions on the

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establishment of religion are unique factors in the American culture that have fostered the belief that religion should be marginalized to the private sphere.

At the same time however, even the casual observer cannot fail to notice the growing role religion plays in both domestic and international affairs in the world today. Jose Casanova in a recent work, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, describes the growing role of religion as the deprivatization of religion. Cassonova cites empirical evidence that

religion in the 1980s went public... It entered the public sphere and gained, thereby, "publicity". The unexpected public interest [in religion] derived from the fact that religion, leaving its assigned place in the private sphere, had thrust itself into the public arena of moral and political contestation.6

The international movement of religion from the private to the public sphere, or in Cassonova's terminology, "deprivatization", reflects

the revitalization and the assumption of public roles by precisely those religious traditions which both theories of secularization and cyclical theories of religious revival had assumed were becoming ever more marginal and irrelevant in the modern world.7

In light of the growing role religion plays in the world, this dissertation focuses on a particular contextualization of this universal phenomenon: the Roman Catholic church in the American context.

In what manner does the Roman Catholic church in the United States engage in and appropriate its public role? The Roman Catholic church in the United States has been described in the last decade as a "public church."8 The public church is a descriptive term coined by Martin Marty in his work, *The Public Church: Mainline-Evangelical-Catholic*.9

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6 Ibid., 3.
7 Ibid., 5.
Martin Marty defines the public church as:

a family of apostolic churches with Jesus Christ at the center, churches which are especially sensitive to the res publica, the public order that surrounds and includes people of faith. (It)... is a communion of communions, each of which lives its life partly in response to its separate tradition and partly to the calls for a common Christian vocation.  

Marty posits the public church as the optimal ecclesiology for the American ethos because of the pervasive individualism that shapes American culture. The public church is an ecclesial manifestation of the classic issue of faith and culture: to understand the public role of the Roman Catholic church in the United States requires an analysis of the American culture and a consideration of the manner of the church’s critical engagement with the American ethos.

In the American context the church must engage a culture dominated and defined by a pervasive individualism. Marty’s consideration of the public church relies on the sociological categories of totalist, tribalist, and privatist describing how religions are organized. The totalist mode promotes the elimination of the tension between faith and culture, and espouses the political establishment of one religion as the defining agent for the entire culture. The totalist mode uses the political system as an appendage of religion blurring the distinction of religion, society, and state. The tribalists, on the other hand, accept these distinctions but meet the world outside the “tribe” with defensiveness and suspicion. The tribalists’ defensiveness and suspicion generates a dangerous intolerance of pluralism. Finally, the privatist mode of organizing religion not only contradicts the intrinsic communal nature of Christianity but it compartmentalizes and marginalizes the faith to the private sphere. The privatist mode of organizing religion renders the faith and the church ineffectual in the social arena. Marty maintains the ecclesial approaches of the totalist, tribalist, and privatist are

\[\text{\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 3.}}\]
inadequate to respond to the crisis of morale and mission facing the churches in the United States. Marty offers the public church as the most effective ecclesial option for the American context.

The public church rejects the belligerence and exclusivity of the tribalists, refuses the solution of the totalist state religions, and rejects vehemently the privatists' positing the faith in the realm of the private. The public church is a "witness to the communal character of the faith... [it] possesses resources for promoting the social dimension of Christian response."¹¹ This dissertation accepts the public church as the best description for the Roman Catholic church in the United States at this time. Totalist or tribalist modes of ecclesial self-understanding are incompatible with America's political structure and its pluralistic society. The privatist mode of self-understanding stands in stark contrast to the communal nature of Christianity itself, and fails to take seriously the international phenomenon of the deprivatization of religion. Consequently, the public church provides the most effective description for the Roman Catholic church's self-understanding in the United States.

This dissertation is a contribution towards the understanding of the Roman Catholic church in the United States as a public church. To accept the public church as the most effective ecclesial response in the American ethos requires addressing the challenge of Martin Marty "to make its [the public church's] form, and understanding and work ... explicit."¹² Marty's challenge sets the parameters, aims, and structure of this dissertation. This project neither is a historical analysis of the Roman Catholic church in the United States, nor is it my intention to exhaust the expansive topic of religion and society. The current universal phenomenon of the deprivatization of religion presents a challenge to the

¹¹ Ibid., 8.
¹² Ibid., 22.
Roman Catholic church to consider its own self-understanding as a public church, and to come to grips with the manner in which the church will function in the larger social order. The aim of this work is to provide an understanding of the public church as the prerequisite for the task of appropriating the public role of Roman Catholic church in the United States. This work is not an attempt to establish that the Roman Catholic church is now a public church as if it has never been so before. Rather, I agree with the noted scholar of American Catholicism, David O’Brien, who maintains that, “at each historical moment the Catholic Church presents a public face—or better, public faces—to other communities and to society at large.”

O’Brien reminds us that the Roman Catholic church presents different public faces in different historical situations. This dissertation contends that at this moment the most effective public role for the Roman Catholic church in the United States is Martin Marty’s concept of the public church. This work deepens the understanding of Martin Marty’s public church, a church that promotes social transformation through discourse and cooperation with other institutions within the social order, as the optimal public face for the Roman Catholic church in the United States at this historical moment.

The four chapters of this dissertation provide the necessary structure to allow the reader to deepen his or her understanding of the public church. Each chapter focuses on a specific theme but the overall intent is to consider these themes in such a way that the material facilitates and enhances the understanding of the public church. In chapter one, Robert Bellah’s contribution to understanding the role and legacy of individualism in the American culture situates the need for the Roman Catholic church to be a public church. This chapter both uncovers the cultural factors that offer resistance to a public role for religion and

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ecclesial communities, and it eliminates the totalist and tribalist modes as effective ecclesial options for the American ethos. Chapter two enhances the understanding of the public church through the identification of several antecedents of the public church in the experience of twentieth century American Catholicism. This chapter not only discovers several manifestations of a nascent public church in the United States in the twentieth century, it also illustrates characteristics of an effective contemporary public church. The third chapter examines the implicit characteristics of the public church in selected documents of the Second Vatican Council. In part one of chapter three, several factors contributing to the centralization of the nineteenth century Roman Catholic church are considered. Part one of the third chapter is not meant to be an exhaustive account of nineteenth century Roman Catholic ecclesiology; instead, it allows a point of reference in order to accentuate the shift in the understanding of the church-world relationship of the Second Vatican Council. In part two of this chapter, the church-world relationship articulated at Vatican II is examined and established as an implicit conciliar foundation for the public church.

The final chapter further illuminates the understanding of the public church by appropriating several categories of Bernard Lonergan as a resource for the discussion of the public church. Lonergan’s anthropology, his understanding of communities of meaning and value, his understanding of human history as the story, the manifestation of the simultaneous principles of progress, decline and redemption, and his concept of the redemptive role of the church, provide further illumination and illustration for deepening the understanding of the public church. Lonergan, whose corpus does not focus extensively on ecclesiology, is an optimal resource precisely because he contributes a greater depth to understanding the general themes of anthropology, the human world, and the church-world relationship. These
themes underpin the entire dissertation and Lonergan's contribution to their understanding provides a contribution to a deeper understanding of the public church.

This dissertation does not attempt to exhaust the implications of the Roman Catholic church as a public church, nor does it entertain specific social issues and the Roman Catholic church's position on such issues, which are beyond the scope and aim of the present work. A well-articulated understanding of the public church must both precede the Roman Catholic church's appropriation of the characteristics of the public church and influence the manner in which the church formulates its stand on social issues. This dissertation is successful if it contributes to a deeper understanding of the public church and in doing so, allows others to continue to articulate the implications of this understanding.
Chapter One
American Culture and the Public Church

Introduction

Chapter one examines the unique context from which the American Catholic church emerges as a public church, and presents several mitigating factors working against the public dimension of the faith. These factors, the very factors that are likely to be "the errors that are most tempting at the time," become the special concern for evangelization and the mission of the Roman Catholic church in the United States. The pervasive individualism in American culture has often placed religion in the "private sphere," presenting a challenge for the mission of the church and tension, conflict and ambiguity for church members. On the one hand, statistics confirm a large number of Americans profess a belief in God and value church attendance; on the other hand, there is a widespread perception that religious discourse and ecclesial involvement in some aspects of American life are irrelevant or invasive. Americans believe that various segments or subsystems within the larger culture are "neutral" or "off limits" to religion. What is the origin of this perception and what sustains it within the American context? Underlying this perception is an understanding of the "public" and "private" realms as disconnected. In the American ethos, we compartmentalize and marginalize religion to the private realm, relinquishing its contribution to public discourse and action.

Considerable scholarly attention has been directed toward tracing the evolution of the

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"public" and the "private" spheres in modern societies. Chapter one attempts neither an exhaustive examination nor an evaluation of this contemporary conversation, a task well beyond the limits of this dissertation. Rather the first chapter presents a discussion of the pervasive individualism of the American culture, its impact on the shape of the public and private spheres, and the resulting implications for the role of the church within this configuration.

Individualism and individualistic interpretations of the First Amendment foster and encourage the marginalization and compartmentalization of religion to the private sphere. Robert Bellah and his associates are an excellent source of information on this topic because their work\(^2\) not only provides the consideration of the public and private spheres, but also, most importantly, contextualizes the public/private discussion within the United States context. Bellah’s work is also an important precursor for considering the "public church" within Martin Marty’s ecclesial typology.

Bellah centers his analysis of the American culture on language, asking what "language" is available for Americans to describe their experience and to define themselves. Bellah contends the "language"\(^3\) of individualism has overshadowed the languages of the biblical and republican traditions that at one time were more influential in American culture. The dominance of individualism and the waning of the other two languages have affected the configuration of the private and public spheres, often leading to the marginalization of religion to the private sphere. Religion understood as an attribute of the private sphere is a

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\(^3\) Bellah does not use the term "language" to mean primarily what the linguists study. He uses it to refer to modes of moral discourse that include distinct vocabularies and characteristic patterns of moral reasoning. He uses "first language" to refer to the dominant individualistic mode, and "second languages" to refer to the biblical and republican modes of discourse. See Habits, 334.
legacy of individualism, yet the presence of the other two languages protects against a complete loss of religion in the public sphere. The presence of all three languages within the American context underscores an important reality: the role of religion in America is ambiguous.

The ambiguous role of religion in America is evident as the role of religion grows in both international and domestic affairs. Jose Casanova in his recent work *Public Religions in the Modern World*, cites the empirical evidence that religion in the 1980s went public.... It entered the public sphere and gained, thereby, "publicity." The unexpected public interest [in religion] derived from the fact that religion, leaving its assigned place in the private sphere, had thrust itself into the public arena of moral and political contestation.4

This international movement from the private to the public sphere, or "deprivatization,"5 is reflected, for example, in the growing presence of the Christian Coalition in the American political scene in the early 1980s, and in the United States Bishops' Pastoral Letters on Economics and Peace. Acknowledging and accepting the ambiguity of religion's role in America allows the discussion of the Roman Catholic church as a public church to be conducted within the framework of emphasis, not presence or absence. In other words, this work does not propose or assume that the Roman Catholic church was once "private" and now has become "public." Nor does this work contend that all religion and expressions of

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5 Casanova posits a dual purpose for deprivatization. It is meant to call into question those theories of secularization which have tended not only to assume but also to prescribe the privatization of religion in the modern world. It is also meant to signify the emergence of new historical developments which, at least qualitatively, amount to a certain reversal of what appeared to be secular trends. Religions are not simply entering the public sphere to protect their turf but to redefine modern boundaries. "One of the results of this ongoing contestation is a dual, interrelated process of repolitization of the private religious and moral spheres and renormativization of the public economic and political spheres. This is what I call, for lack of a better term, the 'deprivatization' of religion." *Public Religions* 6.
religion in the United States context have been relegated to the private sphere.\textsuperscript{6} This work contends that the church's public role has grown or waned in the American context, not that it was simply present or absent. As religions leave their previously "assigned" places in the private sphere and enter the public arena, how the churches act in the public arena creates its own set of challenges. How religions and ecclesial communions interact and intersect in the public sphere, especially in a context where the dominant cultural forces tend to privatize them, is a question of extreme relevance. This work clarifies some current ambiguity around this question by examining how the American culture tends to privatize religion, and offers Martin Marty's "public church" as the optimal ecclesial response for the self-understanding of the Roman Catholic church in the United States.

The public and private spheres are historical constructs, in other words, "in different historical eras human beings have filled in these spaces in quite distinctive ways."\textsuperscript{7} Chapter one illuminates the configuration of the public and private spheres in the American context. Bellah's work on individualism makes a solid contribution to understanding the public/private spheres in the United States. Once the public and private spheres have been distinguished the ecclesial implications will be discussed using Martin Marty's ecclesial typology. Underlying chapter one's discussion are such important themes as "the role of religion in America," "the distinction between the private and public spheres" and, "church-state relations," but these themes are not the primary intent of the first chapter. The overall concern of chapter one is to describe the context in which the Roman Catholic church

\textsuperscript{6} The Abolitionist, Prohibitionist, Social Gospel, and Civil Rights movements are examples of the "publicness" of religion in America. What is posited here is that the dominant cultural factors in America have a proclivity to keep religion within the private sphere.

emerges, both in practice and in its self-understanding, as a "public church."

Public and Private Spheres: Historical Constructs

Linell Cady, in *Religion, Theology, and American Public Life*, posits that the public and private spheres are historically shaped and configured: "in different historical eras human beings have filled in these spaces in quite distinctive ways." The private and public realms are not static entities but fluid, shaped and fashioned by the values and ideals of a particular culture at a particular time in history. Cady's examination of the ancient Greeks' configuration of the public and private spheres stands as testimony to the historicity of these spheres. In the Greek world the public realm was literally reserved for "free men"; it was the domain of those who were truly free. The public realm was the arena for the free citizen to participate in an ongoing conversation in the *polis* concerning the appropriate ends of common life. The private sphere, on the other hand, was for those deprived of something, literally the area of "privation." The private realm included those without full citizenship and the financial well being necessary to contribute to the public conversation toward the structuring of common life. Women, slaves, and children, all deprived of full citizenship, were banned to the private sphere.

Greek society held the public sphere in high esteem as the domain of freedom. Freedom was synonymous with the ability and capacity to participate in the larger dialogue and common conversation of the *polis*. Through participation in the public conversation citizens enjoyed the fulfillment of life not possible for those relegated to the private sphere. Participation in public discourse, however, was contingent upon a certain degree of material

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wealth. Financial success and freedom were means for public involvement in the Greek society. For members of Greek society financial success and the exercise of freedom were necessary for the active participation in the larger social context.

The configuration of the public and private spheres in Greek society reflects their unique understanding of values. The Greek understanding of freedom, financial success, the role of men, women and children are the underpinnings of the public and private configuration. The Greek understanding of freedom as participation stands in stark contrast to contemporary understandings of freedom as “free from intervention.” The classical understanding of human fulfillment as dependent upon participation in public discourse contrasts sharply with contemporary notions of fulfillment as a “private” and “personal” enterprise. In contemporary American society, financial success is often perceived as an end in itself. Economic success is often for personal gain and a means of personal fulfillment, rather than an opportunity for engagement in the polis. The public and private configuration, whether in classical Greece or contemporary America, is a manifestation of a society’s underlying values. Consequently, the contemporary understanding of freedom and success and the different conceptions of gender roles shape the contemporary configuration of public and private spheres. Cady’s view of the Enlightenment’s legacy on the modern configuration of the public and private spheres is helpful at this point. The intent is not to scrutinize the divergence between the classical and modern public and private spheres, but to accentuate the historical nature of the configuration of the public and private spheres.

Linell Cady posits that the Enlightenment influence upon the meaning of public and private is rooted in its, “intellectual and practical solution to a very real and prolonged crisis in society. It was not some timeless option dreamed up by theorists but the forging of a
political and philosophical resolution to pacify a conflict-ridden society. The genesis of society's conflict was the ever-present issues of authority in the Reformation and in its aftermath. The religious wars and the civil discord that occurred in wake of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation demanded a common vocabulary that could coexist with the religious diversity present in post Reformation society. A secular language and vocabulary devoid of religious commitment were necessary and the creation of an arena, a "space," was required where it would be possible to transcend the ever-present sectarian strife. As Cady states, "to establish peace religion was relegated to the sphere of the private: and secular discourse was developed to articulate the nature of political and social life." But the secular discourse that generated from this need for a common language was far from "neutral." In fact the language used to discuss the political and social realms had implicit understandings of the human person, the relationship of the human person and society, and the role of the civil polity.

The Enlightenment sought to emancipate the autonomous human person from the constraints of political and ecclesiastical authority and in the process these "Enlightenment thinkers developed a notion of reason that sought to free human thought and practices from control of heteronymous authorities . . . to free human thought from the chains of tradition." Public discourse and the public sphere were characterized by what was believed to be the universal human characteristic: reason. With the advent of the scientific method, true reason was equated with the scientific method, and knowledge with the "facts" derived from this "objective" method. Human reason eventually subordinated and allocated religious belief and

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9 Ibid., 9.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., 11.
imagination to the purely subjective. Tossing the chains of religious tradition aside meant the
relegating of any religious discourse or concepts to another sphere: the private sphere.
Absolute reason, the universal human characteristic *par excellence*, defines legitimate
discourse in the public sphere. The characteristics that define personal uniqueness, of which
religion is one, are allocated to the arena for personal identity and fulfillment, the private
sphere.

The private and public spheres become more pronounced as modern societies develop
economically and society's roles differentiate and specialize. The spheres of public and
private, previously less distinct, now in the modern era become more pronounced and, at
times, polemic. Often, the private sphere, the sphere of personal identity and preferences, is
perceived as a refuge from the competitive nature of the economic and political systems of
the public sector. In the modern era, religion is marginalized to the private sphere where it
resides with other personal choices perceived as having little role or impact in the public
realm. Religion, perceived as any other personal choice, is something to be tolerated but
rarely an influence or aspect of the public discourse.12

The impact of the Enlightenment on the typology of the public and private spheres is
more extensive than the brief aforementioned consideration. What is noteworthy is that the
configuration of the public and private spheres varies over time. The meaning and values of
these spheres is the result of human beings' decisions and actions in a particular place and
time. The public and private spheres are formulated and configured within a given culture at

footnote:

12 This was the conclusion reached by Thomas Luckman in his classic work, *The Invisible Religion* (New York: MacMillan, 1968). Theories of secularization and modernization and their impact upon religion have been
criticized by some as too Euro-centered and inadequate in light of the growing public role of religion. See
especially: Robert Wuthnow, *Rediscovering the Sacred: Perspectives on Religion in Contemporary Society*
a given time. Underpinning the classical configuration of public and private realms is the value system of a specific classical culture. The Greek’s understanding of freedom, success, citizenship and gender affected the public and private configuration. The rise of absolute reason and the belief that it offered a divided pluralist society a common ground, without a religious world-view, is but one factor in the modern configuration of the public and private spheres.

The public and private spheres, as historical constructs, are not static entities and their historical character leaves the configuration of these spheres open to scrutiny. What values underpin the private and public spheres in a given culture at a given time in its history? What events have shaped and perhaps changed these configurations during a society’s history? The historicity of these spheres allows both a critical evaluation of the present meanings of private and public and the possibility and potential to redefine these meanings. The ability to analyze the factors shaping a culture’s configuration of the public and private spheres naturally leads to a consideration of the public and private spheres in the United States.

The American Context

The purpose of examining the American configuration of the public and private spheres, “... is to help us understand and interpret our contemporary experience, [and] the context of our ministries.”13 Every culture is unique and analyzing a culture is a complex task. John Coleman, a leading Catholic sociologist, accepts the complexity of the American culture but does not accept the opinion of some that its complexity disallows or prevents analysis. Mindful of those who reject the notion of “one American culture” due to its multi-

cultural composition, Coleman uses a "value hierarchy" approach to cultural analysis. This allows him to acknowledge the complexity of the American culture and leads him to identify dominant characteristics or traits that exist to such an extent that we would not adequately define American culture without these characteristics. Coleman maintains that four salient themes – equality, freedom, materialism and individualism – are constitutive of American culture. Individualism is so pervasive in the American ethos, Coleman contends, that it is the lens through which the themes of freedom, justice and equality, and success are in fact understood. These values are transmitted through various institutional realities such as technology, the free market myth, and a legal system that extols individual rights. These themes, however, exist within a value hierarchy that acknowledges other values as coexisting subordinately in the culture. In other words, there are competing values within society; for example, those who reject individualism through communal living and solidarity with others, and those who espouse a simplicity of life in the face of consumerism and indiscriminate technological advancement. Coleman contends we often maintain and support the dominant values to benefit a particular privileged class in society. These dominant values become the "norms" for American society, and individualism, as the lens for interpreting the dominant values of equality, freedom, materialism, shapes and defines the "taken for granted reality" of what it is to be an American.

Robert Bellah and Individualism

In their work, Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life, Robert Bellah and his associates seek, "to know what individualism in America looks and

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feels like, and how the world appears in its light." The title "Habits of the Heart" refers to the "mores" spoken of by Alexis de Tocqueville, the eighteenth century French observer of American culture, and the originator of the term "individualism." In his classic work, *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville observed the American experiment of democracy fifty years after its conception. Tocqueville praised the associational life of the American people but warned that its weakening would promote the unique self-sufficiency and spirit of "individualism" already evident in the American ethos.

Tocqueville coined the term "individualism" to describe that "calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself [sic] from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends, with this little society formed to his [sic] taste, he [sic] gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself." As early as 1830, individualism was evident but not dominant in the American ethos. It existed within a context still shaped by the biblical and republican traditions. At this time there existed a strong sense of the local community and the larger agrarian milieu of the American ethos fostered a broader context, a moral framework, for the expression of this nascent individualism. Tocqueville maintained that if individualism would dominate the American ethos, it could contribute to an undermining and a lessening of the democratic experiment. Citing the republican spirit of public engagement and the framework of duty to the wider community that kept in check this self-determination and self-sufficiency, Tocqueville contended that the *mores*, which he defined as "habits of the heart, [as] notions, opinions, and ideas that shape mental habits, and the sum of moral and intellectual

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dispositions of men [sic] in society,"\textsuperscript{18} prevented individualism from dominating the American ethos. Included in these \textit{mores} are "habitual practices with respect to such things as religion, political participation, and economic life."\textsuperscript{19} To the extent that these \textit{mores} are preserved and supported, so too the new democratic experiment would be kept from falling into a new form of despotism. In other words, if these "habits of the heart" were to diminish, the rise of individualism would have a dramatic and detrimental effect on the new country. As Tocqueville predicted, individualism has in fact lost its larger moral framework, and the results have been detrimental to American culture.

Robert Bellah defines culture as "dramatic conversations about things that matter to their participants."\textsuperscript{20} These conversations about, "what matters and what is meaningful," are dramatic because conflict or disagreement stimulates and motivates cultural conversations. Bellah contends that a vital cultural tradition of a people, its symbols, ideals and ways of feeling, is always an argument about the meaning of the destiny its members share.

Americans conduct the cultural conversation in the United States using three languages: the biblical, republican and the language of individualism. Bellah and his associates conduct their analysis of contemporary American life through a series of personal interviews that reveals many Americans cannot adequately articulate the wealth of their experience in the dominant language of individualism.\textsuperscript{21} His research shows Americans struggle with explaining their commitments, public interests, values, and dreams, in essence "who they are", when limited to the dominant language of individualism. Without neglecting

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{21} Bellah acknowledges the pool of those surveyed for his study was primarily middle-class and that certain cultures which are more communitarian in nature, Asian and Hispanic for example, were less representative among those interviewed.
individualism's positive characteristics, such as the dignity of the human person and the premise that the individual has a say in choices about one's life, Bellah contends that the present cultural crisis results from individualism's domination of the other "second languages."

Bellah's work encompasses a tremendous amount of information; therefore several focus questions are advantageous in gleaning the pertinent information most useful for this work. Once a description of the origin and the general characteristics of the three languages are presented, the following questions ensure a framework for examining Bellah's work while maintaining the focus of the dissertation. First, how did the language of individualism separate from the moral context provided by the biblical and republican traditions and what are the implications for American life? Secondly, how does this shift affect the configuration of the private and public spheres? Finally, how does this contemporary configuration of public and private perceive the role of religion overall, and specifically, what are the implications for the role of the church?

*America's Three Languages*

The biblical tradition in the United States originates from the colonial Puritan communities who understood and interpreted their arrival in North America in the biblical language of the covenant. In John Winthrop's *A Modele of Christian Charity*, written aboard the *Arbella* in 1630, Winthrop describes the founding expedition as an act of providence. God provided this "new land" and expects a fitting response if the newcomers hope to prosper. The covenant relationship between God and the founding ancestors must be manifested in a covenant community. In the words of Winthrop, "wee are a Company professing our selves fellow members of Christ, . . . wee ought to account ourselves knit
together by this bond of love and live in the exercise of it. if wee would have comforte of
being in Christ."22 The Puritans understood themselves as part of a community, members of
the body of Christ. Faithfulness and integrity to their membership in the body of Christ
demanded a community of "mutual consent through a speciall overruleing providence, and a
more than an ordinary approbation of the Churches of Christ to seeke out a place of
Cohabitation and Consorteshipp under a due forme of Government both civill and
ecclesiasticall."23 Participation in civil polity was inherent to their understanding of the
demands of the covenantal relationship. The early founders recognized the need for both civil
and ecclesial governance and understood these structures as helping them to live as God
intended them to live. The covenant shaped the understanding both of their present
experience and of their destiny. Divine providence gave them this land and they in return are
called to a specific way of life. Faithfulness to the covenant and to preserve themselves and
their descendants from evil required the early settlers to structure their lives in an appropriate
way. The Modelle of Christian Charity reveals the use of biblical images, language, ideas
and symbols to speak about the reality of the lives of Americans and their life as a nation.

The Puritans understood the values of freedom and success in light of the biblical
tradition. Participation in community, both ecclesial and civil, was intrinsic to the identity of
the Puritan colonists. They connected freedom to participation. Freedom was not mutually
exclusive of community. Freedom was not a freedom from the constraints of authority or
community expectations; rather, true freedom was a moral freedom exercised in a moral
community. Heeding the counsel of the prophet Micah, "to do justice, to love tenderly, and to

22 John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," in Individualism and Commitment in American Life:
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23 Ibid., 25.
walk humbly with God,\textsuperscript{24} they exercised freedom within, and for, the ethical and moral
good of the community. It is the moral community that in fact protects and safeguards true
freedom. They defined success, too, in light of the covenant community relationship.
Although these early Puritans saw material prosperity as a blessing and approval from God,
material success was not the singular criterion for success. Success was the creation and the
attribute of a community in which a genuine ethical and spiritual life could be lived. The
institutional order of the society as a whole, and its justice and fairness, was of primary
concern to the early colonists. They understood success as intrinsically tied to the moral and
ethical fabric of the larger community and they did not perceive it as a purely individual
enterprise, or at the expense of the larger community. In the biblical tradition, the larger
community is the communitarian expression of each individual’s call to a life of justice and
love. The actions and choices of the individuals within the community have an impact on the
larger community. Likewise, the community’s faithfulness in their common quest for justice
and love hinders or enhances the moral environment of all the individuals. The biblical
tradition envisions a moral community as the integrating factor for all aspects of life. The
individual finds his or her identity in a mutual relationship to the larger community, a moral
and ethical community, and the community’s moral and ethical integrity relies on the moral
and ethical choices of individuals.

The republican tradition originated in the classical cities of Greek and Rome and is an
important factor in the formation of modern Western democracies such as the United States.
Two presuppositions are foundational to the republican tradition. First, citizens of a republic
are motivated by civic virtue as well as self-interest. Secondly, public participation is a form

\textsuperscript{24} Micah 6:8.
of moral education with the goal of attaining justice and public good. This tradition cherishes the belief that continual public discourse to discern the common good provides an avenue for the continual moral formation of the participants. In the United States, Thomas Jefferson, the political activist and the author of the Declaration of Independence, best exemplifies the modern continuation of the republican tradition. Well remembered for his belief that "all men are created equal," he understood equality as a political equality most effective in a republic where citizens participate. "The ideal of a self-governing society of relative equals in which all participate is what guided Jefferson all of his life."  

A strong proponent of individual freedom, religious freedom was central to Jefferson because it safeguarded any legal powers from forcing their views upon others. The true intention of freedom of religion was to allow even the most diverse citizenship to participate in the quest for the common good. It did not intend to silence the voice of religion in public discourse, but on the contrary to ensure the critical voice of religion in the public conversation which is made possible only when religion is free from state establishment. The republican tradition stresses the participatory role of the citizen that the biblical tradition encourages. The republican tradition understands freedom in relation to participation in the larger society. It is not a personal attribute freeing the person from societal or community constraints; rather, "freedom only took on its real meaning in a certain kind of society with a certain form of life. Without that, Jefferson saw freedom as quickly destroying itself and eventuating in tyranny."  

Thomas Jefferson envisioned a society without an aristocracy and without the division of economically produced class structures. It was this type of society that would promote the civic mindedness and true freedom he cherished. A class society with a ruling  

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25 Bellah, Habits. 30.  
26 Ibid., 31.
aristocracy, and its underlying preoccupation for economic self-interest, would be the end of the citizens’ concern for the common good. The exercise of the citizen’s freedom was within the social context of an ethical community seeking justice and the public good. Like the biblical tradition, the republican tradition does not view the individual as at odds with the larger society, but holds the individual in a mutual relationship with society. The community’s integrity is the result of the quality of the lives of its citizens. The community safeguards and preserves the citizen’s dignity when the community holds fast to its quest for justice and the public good.

Americans continue to use the biblical and republican traditions to describe their lives and their lives together; yet, individualism has eclipsed these second languages. In the contemporary American culture the biblical and republican traditions vie for a place in the shadow of individualism. The “belief that the individual has a primary reality whereas society is a second-order, derived or artificial construct,”27 is a legacy of this individualism. How has individualism in the United States undermined the mutuality of the individual and society relationship? How is individualism contextualized within the American ethos? The individualism that characterizes contemporary American society is a combination of two “strains” of individualism: utilitarian and expressive. These two types of individualism are so pervasive in the American ethos that they strongly influence the configuration of the public and private spheres in American contemporary culture.

While Thomas Jefferson exemplifies the republican tradition, it is Benjamin Franklin who exemplifies utilitarian individualism. A man from modest beginnings, Benjamin Franklin was a self-educated and self-made man. In his autobiography and in Poor Richard’s

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27 Ibid., 334.
Almanac, his collection of maxims, Franklin attributes his success to hard work and careful calculation. Through the dissemination of both the Autobiography and Poor Richard's Almanac, Franklin became an archetypal figure of the "poor boy makes good," literally, "a rags to riches" story. We still repeat many of the maxims found in Poor Richard's Almanac in our day: "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise," and, "God helps those who help themselves." Franklin's life became a living example of hard work and self-improvement as the way for each person to get ahead and truly succeed. True success included economic gain. The quest for self-improvement and personal economic gain was a seed that would soon blossom into defining success as an "individual attribute" available for all people.

Although remembered more as the archetypal "poor boy makes good" and exemplar of the rewards of self-improvement, Franklin held strong beliefs about the type of society and community that must endure. He, like Jefferson, was a defender of society protecting the rights of the ordinary citizen and guaranteeing equal treatment before the law. Although Franklin rooted his understanding of success in his own success story of self-improvement and hard work, Franklin was not without a sense of the larger society. Those whom he influenced, however, often did not have this social sensitivity. In fact, "for many of those influenced by Franklin, the focus was so exclusively on individual self-improvement that the larger society hardly came into view." Benjamin Franklin gave classic expression to what many felt in the eighteenth century and many have felt ever since as the most important thing about America: the chance for the individual to get ahead on his [sic] own initiative.  

Utilitarian individualism became more prevalent in the United States and met

28 Ibid., 33.
29 Ibid.
resistance from a movement highly critical of its preoccupation with financial success and the acquisition of goods. The "American Renaissance," was a literary movement composed of such writers as, Herman Melville, Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Walt Whitman. Expressive individualism, the second strain of American individualism, has its genesis within this literary movement. This movement promoted a return of the individual to nature, and encouraged self-expression against all constraints and conventions. A principal tenet of expressive individualism is the belief that each person has "a unique core of feeling and intuition that should unfold or be expressed if individuality is to be realized." The individual's connection with the larger cosmos, with nature or with other persons is primarily on the sensory level. Success, unlike the material and economic gain of utilitarian individualism, is dependent upon sensory experience, true and authentic expression of the self, and a myriad of experiences. Society and the larger cosmos were in place, but the central figure, the pivotal point, the place from which all else takes its place, is the individual. The separate and autonomous person is the true "modern person." The expressionist movement perceived life in the sensory images of passion and power. This world-view is very different from the legacy attributed to Franklin, a world where the individual's cunning and careful calculations are the keys to successful living manifested in economic well-being. Undoubtedly, this literary movement challenged the utilitarian themes of self-improvement and economic success. At the same time, the glorification of the autonomous individual, free from the constraints of societal and community demands and expectations to achieve authentic self-expression, would have lasting effects on the American scene.

The legacy of both strains of individualism is manifested in the current context

30 Ibid., 334.
shaped by the eclipse of the biblical and republican traditions. The current context is the result of several streams of America’s experience coming together to create an extreme individualism. The belief in the inherent dignity and sacredness of the human person is a part of all the American traditions: the biblical, republican and both the utilitarian and expressive strains of individualism. The belief that the individual has a primary reality and that the larger society is no more than the aggregate of individuals’ preferences and ends, however, is indicative of the domination of expressive and utilitarian individualism. The authentic value of respect for the dignity of each person has become separated from a parallel value of social responsibility. Individualism has eclipsed the traditions more committed to the common good and become the dominant tradition in American culture. Individualism is so pervasive that, “the split between public and private life correlates with a split between utilitarian individualism, appropriate in the economic and occupational spheres, and expressive individualism, appropriate in the private life.”

How did the language of individualism overshadow the other two languages? How has individualism affected the configuration of the public and private spheres? Using “representative characters.” Robert Bellah both traces individualism’s rise to dominance and describes the contemporary configuration of the public and private spheres in contemporary America.

*Representative Characters*

Bellah provides an account for the social and cultural shifts that gave individualism dominance over the biblical and republican traditions and describes the present situation in a progression of representative characters. Representative characters “bring together in one constructed image the way people in a given social environment organize and give meaning

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31 Ibid., 45.
These characters include a society’s vision of life, illustrate society’s values and aspirations, and define what is legitimate and thus what is worthy of the efforts of members of society. Representative types demarcate the values and virtues in a historical era and expose the tensions of particular times and places. Bellah describes the foundation of contemporary culture by tracing the succession of the representative types of the “independent citizen,” “the entrepreneur,” “the therapist,” and “the manager.”

The Independent Citizen

The harmonious blend of Calvinist covenant theology and the republican Enlightenment principles of Jefferson characterized the early republic. This context provided a harmonious coexistence among the three languages. As early as Alexis de Tocqueville’s visit to America, however, he observed a potential conflict between the democratic citizen’s concern for individual advancement and security on the one hand, and religious and local political participation on the other; this was the era of the “independent citizen.” Individualism’s values of self-improvement and the quest for self-advancement were becoming more prominent yet the values of participation in civil, church and other community structures still dominated. The values of political and community involvement nurtured citizenship, while the opportunities for westward expansion proved a catalyst for the values of self-initiative and individual gain. Individualism’s values of self-initiative and self-improvement existed within a social context that balanced these values with the value of the common good. America’s largely rural character continued to support associational life through the local community, “the basic unit of association, and the practical foundation of

32 Ibid., 39.
both individual dignity and participation."\textsuperscript{33} This practical foundation allowed the values of concern for others, the quality of life together, and the values of religion to continue to provide a moral environment for utilitarian individualism's propensity for economic and material success. The "Independent Citizen" represents the tension between the unique spirit of individualism on the one hand, and the call to civic mindedness and associational life, on the other.

\textit{The Entrepreneur}

The eventual evolution and transformation of the agrarian and local economic system to a national market in the era known as the "Gilded Age", in the late nineteenth century, is the catalyst for tremendous changes within America. This transition produces a new representative type in American society, "the entrepreneur" and this era spawned many challenges that remain with us today. Contemporary American institutions have given great emphasis to individual initiative. These contemporary institutions and their operating ideologies are a result of the legacy of the one hundred years from the end of the Civil War in 1865, until the "watershed" year of 1968. This period often referred to as the "American Century." includes the economic boom of the Gilded Age, the "Great Depression" wedged between America's involvement in two world wars, and the post World War II establishment of middle-class American society. By the end of the Second World War, America's institutions shaped, fashioned and fostered a strong individualistic perception of life, which "perceived and evaluated life in terms of economic advance and a sense of personal well-

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 38.
being." The result was the polemic nature of the configuration of the public and private spheres and the disengagement of the individual from the larger public sphere.

The United States changed from a society that held in balance the values of self-initiative, self-improvement, religion, and citizenship, to a society represented by "the entrepreneur," whom Bellah describes as "self-sufficient, competitive, tough, and freed by wealth from external constraints." The catalyst for this transformative experience was the growth of the industrial national market and the widespread ramifications it created for social and political life. In the post-Civil War era, developments in technology, transportation, and communication fostered the growth of a national market for the manufacturing, production and distribution of goods. The national market eventually dominated or replaced local centers of commerce creating a new social form: the business corporation. The business corporations, mainly the creation of private individuals, generated unprecedented private wealth and control. The business corporation, with the legal rights of an individual, eventually replaced the local community as the new social form with dramatic consequences for the American ethos.

The domination of the business corporation as the new social form meant the loss of the local community's effectiveness to provide the moral framework for economic success and the incentive for civic involvement. The concern for a business-friendly environment that would generate economic gain eventually overshadowed the values of civic participation and concern for the local community. Utilitarian individualism, once contained within a moral

34 Bellah, et al., Good Society, 58.  
35 Bellah, Habits, 44.  
36 In response to the growing rights of corporations was the labor and other reform movements that generated the "rights of individuals." Rights language has always found a place in the American experience and in the legal tradition has promoted the interdependence of the individual and society when the rights people are understood to enjoy are protected against arbitrary violation.
ecology of local community. now was set free to influence every aspect of American life. In addition, the dismantling of local centers of commerce in the wake of a growing national market demanded a shift in focus from local to more complex national concerns. Where the local community once gave citizens opportunities and incentives for civic participation, the thrust to national concerns and politics created a “larger than life” perception of the political structures. This new focus on national concerns soon revealed the inadequacy of the social, economic, and local and regional political structures to contend adequately with the new situation. Forced to contend with the “national” problems that were often of an economic nature, the constituencies of the growing national market system, private investors and labor interests, to name a few, lobbied for their own interests. Soon these special interest groups, intent on economic benefits, found a prominent place in the political process. These interests groups sought privilege and profit and inevitably, special interest politics pitted civil responsibility and the public good in a losing battle with the corporate understanding of economic success. The national political arena similar to the national market was becoming a world unto itself overshadowing both local politics and commerce. The homogeneity of the local associational life and community soon became a separate sphere, the private sphere, where the average citizen sought respite from the growing complexities of economic and political life.

The age of “the entrepreneur” included the era of the “Gilded Age,” an age in contradistinction to the “old order” of town and civic responsibility. Unbridled capitalism and economic growth at any expense, including human, became the operating principle of the times. “By releasing the untrammeled pursuit of wealth without regard to the demands of social justice, industrial capitalism was destroying the fabric of democratic society,
threatening social chaos by pitting class against class." and this reality was no more evident than in the urbanization of America. America bore the effects of industrialization in the waning of the moral ecology of the local town and community and the subsequent urbanization and fragmenting of American society.

Industrialization in the United States was the stimulus for the "division of life into a number of separate functional sectors: home and work place, work and leisure, public and private." The new social form of the business corporation also became the dominant mode of organization for society. As the corporation was divided into departments each with its own function, so too, society was departmentalized into sectors each with a distinct function. Life, like the world of business, became organized and delineated by functional parts that make up "the whole." The organization endemic in working life drew definitive lines between occupational life and the rest of life. This pronounced distinction was in contrast to traditional society of family farms or small town commerce where fewer distinctions were evident. Toward the 1890s and early 1900s, the fabric of American life became compartmentalized into various spheres of life, quite different from the permeable boundaries of life in the earlier nineteenth century. This compartmentalization caused the configuration of more distinct public and private realms, both realms rooted in the dominant language of individualism, and each comprising various components of life.

What caused the rise of individualism over the other two languages and eventually

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37 Bellah, Habits, 43.
38 As centers of manufacturing and industry, the cities mirrored the social consequences of an age preoccupied with economic gain. The teeming slums of immigrants seeking the American dream of economic prosperity resided in the cities. It was the urban experience that overshadowed the egalitarian and homogenous life of the town and provided the context for the rise of a distinct class structure based on economic well being or political influence. A lasting legacy of the Gilded Age is the common notion that success is intimately tied to economic gain and well being.
39 Bellah, Habits, 43.
led to its pervasive influence in both the public and private spheres? The moral ecology of the previous years was dismantled due to industrialization and the rise of the national market. This in turn unmoored individualism from the larger moral and social context present in the nation’s earlier years. Utilitarian individualism’s self-interest and self-improvement, equated with economic and material gain, soon overshadowed the concern for the larger community and the well being of others. The political process, concerned initially with the public good, soon found special interest politics limiting the notion of the “good” to what enhanced a “business-friendly” environment. The unfettered values of utilitarian individualism infused the public sphere of economics and politics.

At the same time, expressive individualism shapes and defines freedom as liberation from external constraints possibly hindering economic advancement. The notion of the “unencumbered self” defines and expresses oneself as opposed to or separate from the larger public sphere, which overshadows the notion of the free citizen who values civic participation. The successful person is the one who is cunning and enterprising enough to “work” the system for his or her personal benefit. American life continues a process of fragmentation and consequently, the public and private realms become more pronounced in the twentieth century. In fact, the public and private spheres are so distinct in contemporary American culture that two representative types are necessary to define contemporary culture; the “manager” characterizes the public sphere and the “therapist” represents the private sphere. Individualism, without the moral context of an earlier era, shapes both spheres. What do the public and private spheres in contemporary American culture look and feel like, and how does the world appear in the light of this pervasive individualism?
The Manager and The Therapist

Why is the public sphere best represented by "the manager?" The manager, through the organization of human and nonhuman resources, ensures that the corporation realizes its primary goal of economic success. The public sphere in America is organized in the same manner. The media and advertisement industry promotes and inundates the American public with the clear message that success and material well being are the same thing. America's consumerism is a testimony to the success of the media and advertisement industry in "selling" this ideology to the American public. Economic success is the underpinning of many institutions in the public sphere. The value of economic gain defines and organizes much of the behavior in the public sphere, and transmitting values that challenge the ideology of economic success is met with much resistance.

Business corporations' employees often uncritically accept the corporate ideology in order to assimilate the attitudes and qualities that will enable him or her to be a "needed employee." The precarious free market system indirectly promotes economic security as a primary value for most Americans. Likewise, the individual in the larger culture accepts uncritically the perception concerning the economic and political institutions in the public sphere. The perception of institutions as "objective mechanisms that are essentially separate from the lives of the individuals who inhabit them," reveals a chasm between the public and private sphere and reflects American society as a "managed society." More often than not,

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40 The manager reflects developments in the role of the business corporation from the earlier era of the entrepreneur. The post–WWII era business corporation differed from earlier nineteenth-century corporations in two ways. First, the modern business corporation had the status of a private economic actor. Secondly, the modern corporations, unlike earlier nineteenth-century corporations, were not held to any obligation to provide for public and social needs in exchange for concessions granted to them by civil and legislative entities. This allowed the corporations to compete freely as individuals in the free market without concern for the public good. Economic efficiency was the operating criteria of for decision-making.
41 Bellah, Good Society, 11.
Americans do not see the institutions of the economy or political order as open to transformation and change. At best, many Americans view these institutions as neutral mechanisms for individuals to use to attain their separate ends. In this view, the public sphere is an established interrelated network of institutions with preset rules and regulations. The consequences of this perception are twofold: first, there is minimal, if any, acknowledgement that individuals are engaged in creating and recreating the institutions that constitute the larger social order. Secondly, the tendency to see these institutions as “givens” allows Americans to accept a position of “being managed.” Uncritically accepting the “rules” and “regulations” of public institutions as “that’s how things are,” the individual allows him or herself to be “managed” by the experts who keep these institutions operating.

Institutions, however, are products of human agency and, consequently, espouse and promote a specific concept of the “good.” The notion of institutions as “neutral” is a crippling misconception placing people in a self-imposed position of powerlessness. Americans rely on the experts who have the technological, scientific or political expertise to keep these institutions in place, that is to manage them, and by that abdicate their responsibility for the public realm. Statements such as, “our problems are so complex and difficult, what can a person do?” or, “things never change, all you can do is try to look out for your family,” reflect a powerlessness that entices people to seek refuge in the private sphere. In other words, there is a tendency to “let the experts run the government, or the economy.” In a “managed” society Americans understand institutions as beyond effective critique or transformation and existing primarily as a means toward our private ends. This misconception of the public sphere severely hinders the desire, concern, or ability for public discourse. Consequently this hampers the effective moral critique of institutions and creates a
void in American society. Beliefs that technology, a dynamic free market system, personal initiatives, hard work, and economic progress are the real solutions often fill the void left by the absence of effective public discourse. In a managed society Americans both allow the experts to oversee the public sphere, and view the public sphere through the lens of utilitarian individualism, as merely a means to their personal ends. The utilitarian individualism of the free market economy as exercised in America has "turned human beings into relentless market maximizers"\textsuperscript{42} defining "work [as] . . . an economic activity pursued by self-reliant individuals in the interests of themselves and their families."\textsuperscript{43} Americans view the public world of employment, government and even education as an avenue for economic success. This economic success allows the individual to attain the truly important things in life that they relegate to the private sphere.

What does the world outside this competitive and economically driven public sphere look like? The private sphere stands in contrast to the manipulative, achievement-orientated practices of the workplace. The individual actualizes another kind of personality in the private sphere, often within a social pattern that shows remarkable continuity with earlier American forms of family and community.\textsuperscript{44} America's pervasive individualism configures the private and public spheres, however, the values of each sphere stand in stark contrast to each other. The values of expressive individualism define the private sphere: personal fulfillment, personal freedom, and a high regard for personal preferences all of which has been forfeited in a managed public sphere. In stark contrast to the "personal anonymity" of the public sphere the components of one's personal uniqueness, one's family, local

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 92.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Bellah, Habits, 45.
community, religious affiliation and associations, have their place in the private sphere. Life for many Americans testifies to the discontinuity and the polarity of these two spheres and as a result the private sphere has become radically discontinuous in the kinds of traits emphasized and the understandings that guide individuals within them. This discontinuity fragments the person and defines these two realms as almost mutually exclusive of each other fostering the belief that the individual’s private and public life are necessarily in conflict.

It is not surprising that the conflicting values of the two realms and the pronounced fragmentation generated by the relationship of public and private are the genesis for the representative character known as the “therapist.” As a representative of the private sphere, the therapist reflects the individual’s need to negotiate and resolve one’s problematic and conflictual relationship with the public sphere. In a managed public sphere, the individual is powerless in the face of institutional life as a “given” and must develop an attitude that allows a successful maneuverability between one’s private and public worlds. The person seeks a means of attaining the security and skills necessary to maneuver successfully in the larger public sphere, not to change or challenge it, but to ensure one’s personal ends.

The operating criterion for action in the private sphere is a deep belief in personal preferences and “what works.” One’s well being takes precedent over moral imperatives. Personal fulfillment and the bolstering of the person’s homogeneous private world overshadow the consideration of the public good and the moral implications for public

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45 The discontinuity of these two spheres is frequently reflected in the common experience of the daily commute. Many leave the suburbs, the re-creation of the small town and community lifestyle, which still resides in the American imagination, and venture into the workplace. The city, where the socioeconomic fallout of the utilitarian free market society is easily seen, is often the destination for the commuter. The urban experience and the commute are the means necessary for the commuter to have the financial ability to be able to provide for one’s family the life that the suburbs offer: detached housing, a sense of a small community, a better tax base allowing for better schools, and best of all, “none of the problems of the city.” In other words, a “private” world.
action. "The goal of living is to achieve some combination of occupation and lifestyle that is economically possible and psychologically tolerable. [something] that works." What is missing is a consideration of higher truths and a sense of the public good. The private sphere is where "people can be who they are," it is the domain of personal identity, the realm where the individual can choose the "roles he [sic] will play, and the commitments he [sic] will make, not on the basis of higher truths, but according to the strategies of self-fulfillment." Americans configure the private sphere around the values of expressive individualism that stresses self-expression and self-fulfillment. The autonomous individual maneuvers in the fragmented world of the public and private spheres based on personal life efficiency. Personal fulfillment is the lens through which the person views personal commitments, life roles and choices. Whatever Americans deem necessary to keep the private world of family, local community, (often understood as like-minded friends in a similar socioeconomic category), religious affiliation and other personal preferences intact and able to provide a haven from the complexities and demands of the managed public sphere is permissible.

The "therapist" as a representative type illustrates an understanding of the relationship between the individual and society. Personal fulfillment and personal satisfaction in expressive individualism are the avenues to the "true self." The individual must relinquish the restraints of societal and organizational expectations to arrive at true personal identity, one's true self. This fosters the perception of the true or authentic self as an "unencumbered self." In this perception of the human person, one must choose those roles, commitments.

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46 Bellah, *Habits*, 47.
associations and communities that promote and foster this authentic self. In this framework, the individual is essentially prior to the group. He or she joins and commits to the group so long as belonging "works," it is "fulfilling" and includes other like-minded people who are a support for the person. The unencumbered and unrestrained "self" of the expressive individualism tradition is revealed par excellence in the private sphere.

The present cultural crisis is a result of the pervasive American individualism's effect on shaping the public and private spheres. "The culture of manager and therapist mitigates against individual energies toward relating the self to its larger context, and urges a strenuous effort to make of our particular segment of a life a small world." The lack of a moral ecology to contextualize individualism in the American ethos hinders an understanding of the moral interrelatedness of the private and public spheres. In other words, the myth of the neutral public sphere fashions a chasm between these two realms limiting moral discourse to the private sphere. On the part of many Americans, the common belief that institutions operating in the public realm, such as the economic system and political process, are unchangeable "givens" creates a malaise. The growing mistrust of big business and large institutions includes a disillusionment with organized religions as well. Bellah and his associates maintain that communities of memory retain America's needed moral and social standards and these communities are potential agents for cultural transformation. If religious communities are one of such communities of memory, how has the contemporary

\[\text{Bellah describes this as a "therapeutic contractualism." The individual "picks up values" from parents, authority figures, and others in religion and schools, and incorporates these values into one's behavior and the expectations one holds for one's self. The turning point, however, comes when abiding by these values does not result in a personal satisfaction equated with "feelings of well-being." The person's point of reference then shifts from what is "right" and "wrong" to the question characteristic of therapeutic paradigm: "Is this going to work for me now?" The result of this shift in thinking is an inadequacy for moral discourse in the public realm as well as the perception of moral views as rooted only in subjective choices. See Habits, 128-29.}\]

\[\text{Ibid., 50.}\]

\[\text{Bellah, Good Society, 50.}\]
configuration of the private and public affected the perception of religion? Can ecclesial communities be effective catalysts for cultural transformation?

Religion's Place in the Individualistic Public and Private Realms

The role of religion in American society is multifarious, often ambiguous, and currently in transition. In both of his major works, *Habits of the Heart* and *The Good Society*, Bellah examines religion not as an isolated phenomenon but as part of the texture of private and public life. His concern is how religion as an institution influences American society. Individualism fosters the propensity in American culture to marginalize and compartmentalize religion to the private sphere. Relegating religion to the private sphere has many consequences for the understanding and the expression of religion in American life. Among these consequences three are noteworthy. Limiting religion to the private sphere impedes effective public discourse, hindering the churches' role in social and cultural transformation. Second, it creates the impression that subsystems or institutions in the public sphere, for example the economy and politics, are exempt from moral critique. Third, when religion is relegated to the private sphere, the realm of personal preferences, it becomes one of many personal preferences.

When religion becomes an attribute of the private realm it fosters the perception of religious discourse as legitimate only within this private sphere. Many Americans perceive religious discourse in the public sphere as intrusive, irrelevant, and at times, because of some constitutional interpretations, illegal. They perceive specific institutions, economic and political life for example, as “out of bounds” for religious discourse. The configuration of the public and private in America today places
religion together with the family in a compartmentalized sphere that provided loving support but could no longer challenge the dominance of utilitarian values in the society at large . . . religion [is] in danger of becoming like the family, a haven in a heartless world, but one that did more to reinforce that world, by caring for its casualties than to challenge its assumptions.51

Religion's role as social critic and agent of transformation is domesticated within the private sphere. At best, religion and the ecclesial communities could be the locus of individual morality but are hindered from providing strong cultural assistance as a communicator of a social morality. In this paradigm, Christian faith and theory influences the individual, who as an individual in society may influence his or her workplace and larger community. The result is an understanding and expression of religion as very individualistic. The individual, not the church or religion as a social entity, should relate faith issues to social concerns. The inability to be able to connect faith with social issues eliminates a social or ecclesial interaction with society and is a major consequence of the privatization of religion.

Religion marginalized to the private sphere where Americans freely pursue personal preferences and personal identity becomes one of many personal preferences. Religion placed in the private realm takes upon itself the therapeutic character of this sphere, fostering religion as an avenue for self-expression and self-actualization, and for some, a haven against the social problems of the day. Many Americans often experience and define local ecclesial communities as "support" communities for personal and spiritual growth resembling other associations that individuals join to advance their own self-defined ends.52 Individualism in America supports the belief that the individual precedes all communities, including the

52 Bellah writes, "There are thousands of local churches in the United States, representing an enormous range of variation in doctrine and worship. Yet most define themselves as communities of personal support." Roman Catholic and Protestant congregations both have a tendency to support the notion of local congregations as "communities of personal support." A national survey of Roman Catholics asked about the future direction for the Roman Catholic church, found a majority asked for "personal and accessible priests and warmer more personal parishes." *Ibid.*, 232.
community of faith. The person comes to true and "authentic" identity unencumbered by communities of family, church, or civil structures. The person, having attained "true authentic identity," joins those existing communities that foster this self-identity. Religion as a "personal preference" is a consequence of an underlying individualism that glorifies the "unencumbered self." Religion is perceived as one of the many supports and avenues for personal fulfillment.

Religion as an attribute of the private sphere undermines its critical social role in American society, creating the belief that certain public institutions, such as economy and politics, are exempt from the moral critique of religions and churches. Relegating religion to the private realm gives credence to the misconception that religion is one of many personal preferences, an avenue to self-fulfillment and self-definition, but lacking in social implications. Individualistic interpretations of religion have also influenced court decisions surrounding the First Amendment of the Constitution. These rulings promote three consequences of the privatization of religion.

**Individual Rights and the First Amendment**

The legal system of the United States attempts to create an arena where Americans can address the public debate of current problems in light of a body of established principles. This system falters in its attempt to be the forum for a "deliberative and transformative politics that our society desperately needs,"[^53] because it relies heavily on "rights language", the extension and protection of individual rights. The promotion and protection of individuals' rights in the legal systems can be a motivation for addressing and correcting social wrongs, such as the individual victimized by racism, economic deprivation, inadequate

[^53]: Bellah, *Good Society*, 130.
health and educational opportunities. Also it can as easily stymie conversation about and commitment to the public good. Although rights language is appealing as the language of absolutes, as the primary language of legal discourse, it is too narrow for the adequate discussion of social questions. To guarantee a worker due process before being fired may protect his or her job, but does not address the wider issues that may precipitate the loss of the job. These issues could range from foreign competition to technological innovation. The individual’s right to due process is respected, but the social complexity of the situation is not adequately considered. Rights language can encompass the correction of particular incidents of injustice but does not easily foster the consideration of the common good or more general terms of justice. Americans understand the inviolable rights guaranteed to them as “the individual’s rights,” they perceive few as “social goods” and, consequently, rights language is very limited. The larger social fabric of American life is left wanting when rights language becomes the exclusive language in public debate. “The most troubling problem with ‘rights’ is that everyone can be said to have them, and when rights conflict, the rights language itself offers no way to evaluate competing claims.” The questions of the common good and the common future and how they will be actualized and realized is not addressed by rights language. American individualism has permeated the legal system, absolutizing the rights of the individual and hindering the individual’s appropriation of his or her responsibility to the social realm. It encourages individualism’s perception of the social realm as the conglomeration of personal preferences and a neutral sphere to achieve his or her private ends:

Our individualistic heritage taught us that there is no such thing as the common good but only the sum of individual goods. But in our complex, interdependent world, the

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54 Ibid., 128.
sum of individual goods, organized only under the tyranny of the market, often produces a common bad that eventually erodes our personal satisfactions as well.\footnote{Ibid., 95.}
The legal system’s reliance on rights language hinders the necessary view of the individual and the larger community in a relationship of interdependence and mutuality. Rather, it reinforces an American individualism that absolutizes the individual at the expense of the larger community with detrimental consequences for the life Americans live together.

Individualistic interpretations of the First Amendment have concretized and often legitimized the marginalization of religion to the private sphere in American life. The First Amendment of the United States Constitution, often called “the separation” amendment. (although the word separation does not appear in the amendment), is described best as the “non-establishment clause.” The non-establishment clause of the First Amendment “acts as a double guarantee of religious liberty, one part barring the making of any law respecting an establishment of religion and the other part barring any law prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”\footnote{“Williamsburg Charter,” in 
\textit{Articles of Faith, Articles of Peace: The Religious Liberty Clauses and the American Public Philosophy}, ed. James Davidson Hunter and Os Guiness (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1990), 127.} To say there is widespread controversy over the interpretation and application of the amendment’s meaning is an understatement. Stephen Carter, the author of \textit{The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion}, reminds us. “there is a considerable scholarly battle, in which it is healthiest to be a spectator.”\footnote{Stephen L. Carter, \textit{The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religion} (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1993), 114.} Individualistic interpretations of the First Amendment have resulted in the privatization of religion and it is necessary to conduct a limited consideration of the First Amendment. The following consideration of the First Amendment will be limited to illustrating how some interpretations of the amendment foster the perception of religion as a personal preference undermining

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religion's social critical role in public discourse; and how this amendment contributes to the misconception that institutions in the public realm are "off limits" to religious discourse or religiously motivated public action.

There is widespread agreement among scholars that the Founders' intention of the First Amendment was to guarantee religious liberty. In other words, rather than protecting the state or the public order from the influence or tyranny of religion, the amendment is a safeguard for religions to remain autonomous and free of governmental sponsorship and control. The motivation for the autonomy of religion was to ensure its critical moral voice in the life of the nation. Yet, most Americans call this amendment the "separation" amendment, revealing a contemporary understanding of the first amendment different from the founders' intention. The founding intent of the amendment was to safeguard religion's influence within the public sphere. What overshadows the founding intent of the amendment appears to be a legal mechanism intent on separating two opposing entities: religion and the public order.

Today, Americans often understand the First Amendment as securing a "wall of separation" between religion and the state, safeguarding the state from the influence of religion and undermining religion's potential as a critical voice in the public order.

The interpretation of the non-establishment clauses as safeguarding a "wall of separation" gained momentum in the 1947 Emerson vs. Board of Education case, in which Justice Hugo Black wrote, "the First Amendment has erected a wall between church and state. That wall must be kept high and impregnable. We could not approve the slightest

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58 Robert Bellah's contention that the biblical language has been eclipsed by the rise and domination of the language of individualism is a reflection of the loss of this founding vision. See Habits, especially chapter nine, pages 219-49. For a brief but concise treatment of the role of religion in the founding vision of the nation, see William Lee Miller, "The Moral Project of the American Founders," in Articles of Faith, Articles of Peace: The Religious LibertyClauses and the American Public Philosophy, ed. James Davison Hunter and Os Guinness (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1990), 17-39.
breach." The use of this metaphor to define the non-establishment clauses falls short of the founders' intention of safeguarding religious liberty and has dire consequences for the role of religion in American society. The metaphor contributes to and justifies the relegating of religion to "behind the wall of the private sphere" separate from the public sphere. Consequently, many Americans perceive religious discourse and religious motivations for public action as intrusive and invasive, or simply irrelevant. Those areas of society that religion is or is not permitted to function are designated by the metaphor of the "wall of separation." The metaphor contributes to creating the conception that the political and economic systems and public discourse and debate are "off limits" to religious discourse. The use of this metaphor to define the first amendments non-establishment clauses is so pervasive it explains the common reference to the First Amendment as "the separation amendment." It has also influenced further court decisions that posit religion as a personal preference and by that undermining the social nature of religion.

The 1971 case of Lemon vs. Kurtzman involved monetary reimbursement to private and religious schools for the cost of textbooks, materials, and in part salaries used to teach nonreligious subjects. The court's decision against this reimbursement, and the non-establishment criteria it established in the process, reflects a very individualistic interpretation of religion. To pass the Establishment Clause muster, the criteria states, first, there must be a secular purpose to the statute in question; secondly, the principal effect must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion; and finally, the statute must not foster an

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59 As quoted in Carter, Culture of Disbelief, 109.
60 While the metaphor of the "wall of separation" has roots in the constitutional tradition, the use of the metaphor in our contemporary context differs significantly from the tradition of James Madison, Robert Williams, and Thomas Jefferson, all of whom employed this metaphor within a specific context. See Carter, Culture of Disbelief, 116-18.
"excessive" entanglement with religion. Stephen Carter criticizes the individualism of this ruling and its subsequent use in lower court decisions. The first criteria's requirement of a "secular purpose" to the statue would be more faithful to the original intent of the first amendment if the court identified the secular purpose as "any political purpose, that is, any goal the state legitimately is able to pursue." The court shifts its focus from what the legislation could do in the public sphere to highlighting the religious sensibilities, the motives, of the legislators or their constituents. The criterion examines the "why" rather than the "what" of the legislation. The courts hold suspect religious motivations for legislation as potential conflicts with the first amendment. To rule that religious motivations, beliefs, and judgments are grounds for a statute's unconstitutionality disregards the legitimate role of religion for millions of Americans, singles out and unfairly rules against religionist positions for public action, and indirectly legitimizes nonreligious over religious motivations for public action. "That values happen to be religious does not deny them acceptability as part of the consensus view needed to support public policy," Carter contends. The criterion's perception of religion as solely a matter of individual choice and its disregard for religion as a social entity reflects a strong individualism. To focus on the motives generating the legislation indirectly establishes that people are free to believe whatever their individual conscience proscribes, but religious motivations for public action or legislation are discounted. Disregarding the actual role legislation may play in the public sphere and focusing on the religious motivations also is an example of the government's stance of neutrality toward religion. Religion is a personal preference and like other preferences Americans and the courts must tolerate it. The government cannot restrict what one decides

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61 Carter, Culture of Disbelief, 111.
62 Ibid., 112.
to believe, but the government cannot promote these beliefs, it must remain neutral when these beliefs enter the public sphere. Americans must tolerate the personal preference of religion as they tolerate other personal preferences. Religion when understood as an individual choice or preference and not a social entity is incapable of shaping public consensus because it is an attribute of the private sphere, the realm of individual preferences. What is lost with individualistic interpretations of the first amendment, however, is the amendment’s original intent to allow the critical moral voice of religion to be present in all facets of American life.

Carter challenges Americans to avoid the ahistoric conclusion that its [the First Amendment’s] principal purpose is to protect the secular from the religious, an approach that, perhaps, inevitably, carries us down the road toward a new establishment, the establishment of religion as a “hobby,” trivial and unimportant for serious people, not to be mentioned in serious discourse.63

Religion’s marginalization to the private sphere has dire consequences for the public life of the United States and just as importantly, serious implications for the understanding and expression of religion in the American context. How has the American culture as the host culture of the Roman Catholic church affected the church’s self-understanding and its mission? Can the Roman Catholic church in the United States contribute to correcting the errors of our times, specifically, the error of the privatization of the faith, and in the process contribute to the public good of the nation? Martin Marty’s ecclesial typology offers the Roman Catholic church in the United States the “public church” as a type, a way of being church, that can respond to both these challenges.

63 Ibid., 115.
The Roman Catholic Church in the American Context

Much of the literature concerning the contemporary American church envisions the Roman Catholic Church in transition or even in crisis. The Catholic sociologist John Coleman sees the crisis as precipitated by the attainment of the goals of social acceptance and upward mobility by the members of the "Immigrant Church." The "Immigrant Church" was preoccupied with assimilation into the larger American culture and nurturing the separate world of Catholicism within an often hostile environment. One of the legacies of the Immigrant Church is the establishment of Roman Catholics into the middle class of American society and their appropriation of the dominant values of the culture. The individualism that shapes American culture and relegates religion to the private sphere hampers the mission of the Roman Catholic church in the United States and presents serious challenges for the life of the American church. The task facing the American church is no longer to seek cultural assimilation but rather to be an active agent of transformation in the American culture. The Roman Catholic church must be able to engage critically a culture that fosters the compartmentalization of religion and promotes the perception of morally neutral subsystems within the larger culture. These and other challenges result from the pervasive individualism of the American ethos and are issues of paramount importance for the church’s mission in the United States. The challenges of the American context call for a specific

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64 His work, An American Strategic Theology (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), strives to construct a critique of an American culture that he sees as an "uncritical" influence on American Catholicism. For Coleman, constructing a political theology for the United States is very important for the integrity of the relationship between culture and church. The American Catholic Church historian Jay Dolan also sees the present as a time of transition and challenge. In his noted work, The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to The Present, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1985), Dolan contends the present is the third of three moments in the United States Catholic Church’s "encounter with modernity." Citing the first moment as the Church under John Carroll in the early years of the United States (1776-1800) and the second as the Americanist controversy of the 1880-1890's, he sees the present, third, moment as the United States Church’s coming of age. The initiatives of American theologians and the consultative process used in the bishops’ pastorals on economics and peace all mark the end of the "Immigrant Church."
response from all ecclesial communities and specifically from the Roman Catholic church.

The end of the “Immigrant Church” has led to the notion of the Catholic Community as a “public church.” In Bryan Hehir’s article “Church-State and Church-World: The Ecclesiological Implications,” Hehir espouses the idea of the public church to describe the ecclesial identity of the American Catholic Church at this present moment. The concept of a public church Hehir rightfully attributes to Martin Marty and his work, *The Public Church: Mainline-Evangelical-Catholic.* From the opening lines of the preface, Marty acknowledges the present as a time of crisis for North American churches affecting the morale and mission of these churches. Marty offers his work to address this situation of the North American churches. Whether the present is described as a “crisis” or “transition,” as the “third moment” of the American Church or as the end of the “Immigrant Church”, it is clear the Roman Catholic community, and all North American churches, face a time of decision and redefinition within the contemporary culture.

*The Public Church*

In a culture where religion has been relegated to the realm of the private and struggles to make a social impact. Marty offers the public church as the most effective ecclesial option for the American context. The public church is sensitive to several unique factors of the American context, specifically the political system, constitutional factors, the pluralism in American society and the pervasive individualism shaping American life and religion’s role in it. The public church critiques the tendency toward privatizing the Christian faith, a bias that transcends the American context, yet is exacerbated in this culture because of certain

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interpretations of the First Amendment and the strong individualism of the American ethos.

The public church is a contextual ecclesiology ultimately concerned with a classic tension in Christianity: the relationship between faith and culture. The tension gives rise to the specific question of how the church and its relationship with the world around it remains faithful to “the truth it knows?” An uncritical relationship between church and world could lead to a loss of the identity of the community of faith. On the other hand, the refusal to be in relationship simply promotes either the irrelevance of the church in the lives of the members or contributes to the compartmentalization of the faith to the realm of “private choice”. Once faith is designated as a private choice it becomes like most other private choices: something to be tolerated. It cannot be challenged nor is it perceived as capable of challenging the social order. Marty offers the public church as a response to the classic Christian tension of church and culture, specifically within the American culture.

Marty, quoting the then Karol Cardinal Woyjtyla in an essay written in 1975, pinpoints as he describes it, “a terse description of the two sides of the public church’s life: The church possesses a special interiority and a specific openness.”67 The special interiority, Marty contends, is each church’s particularity in terms of its language of worship and witness. It “implies the movement of a gathered church as a body through time and in many places.”68 It allows the community to be in communion with God and each other. The specific openness implies the community of faith is visibly mediated through a relationship with the world. This relationship is selective rather than a simplistic capitulation to the society and culture the church exists in; its worldly ties are “mediated, focused and

67 Ibid., 4.
68 Ibid.
To claim only interiority would lead to introversion; to claim the openness without attesting to the "truth the community knows" leads to diminishment and fragmentation. The delicate balance of both allows the church to engage in the society and the culture around it in a thoughtful and selective manner, and to ensure that this engagement is reflective of the uniqueness of the community's interiority: its language, worship, and theology. This balance allows the context in which the church is situated in to be a source of questions and challenges that shapes the understanding of the church's unique interiority.

Marty defines the public church as:

a family of apostolic churches with Jesus Christ at the center, churches which are especially sensitive to the res publica, the public order that surrounds and includes people of faith. [It] ... is a communion of communions, each of which lives its life partly in response to its separate tradition and partly to the calls for a common Christian vocation.70

In his analysis of the United States experience, Marty posits Mainline Protestants, Evangelicals, and Roman Catholics71 as the three constituencies of the public church. The public church is best understood as a "type", or a way of being church that includes specific qualities. No one constituency can be equated as the public church; rather, members and congregations within each of these constituencies who satisfy the criteria of the public church constitute the public church. The public church as a "type", a "way of being" church, summons an ecumenical convergence among Mainline Protestants, Evangelicals and Roman Catholics.

69 Ibid., 4.
70 Ibid., 3.
71 Marty defines Catholics as the broad stream of faithful American Roman Catholics who are not part of the polarized minorities. The Evangelicals are those Protestants who stress the personal experience of conversion, the high authority of the Bible, and the mandate to evangelize others. Mainline Protestants are those whose confessions affirm the historic Christian core faith as it was re-formed in the sixteenth century, and who give more attention to nurture than to conversion. Their theology incorporates a vision of public order alongside that of personal conversion. See ibid., 12-13.
Three Sociological Categories

Marty’s consideration of the public church relies on sociological categories describing how religions are organized. These three modes—totalist, tribalist, and privatist—are inadequate to respond to the crisis of morale and mission facing the churches. These modes of organization have specific implications for how religions and churches envision their role in the larger society, as well as implications for ecumenical relations. Sociological categories do not fully define the reality of religions or churches since they also propose to be bearers of religious truth. Therefore, implicit in these organizational structures exists an assumption or an understanding of how the “special interiority” or truth of the specific religion is understood, transmitted, and appropriated.

As the names suggest, the totalist mode of organizing religion promotes the elimination of the tension between faith and culture and espouses the establishment of one religion as the defining agent for the entire culture. One manifestation of this would be in those Shi’ite Moslem countries where specific moral codes and systems of belief are legislated for the entire country. In this instance the political system is envisioned as an agent of religion to ensure the establishment of the religion in the nation. Since the establishment of one religion is the primary concern, coercion and even belligerence could characterize the means for the attaining this end. Religious uniformity with no room for alternative voices or for collaboration with those of differing beliefs characterizes this model. Resistance to the imposition of the religious beliefs often is met with intolerance and is perceived as an affront to the very truth of the religion. The “special interiority” of the totalist is equated with “pure truth” or, the “only truth” eliminating the need for discourse with those of differing views; diversity and conflict are understood as problematic and are resolved by autocratic decree of
the dominant view. In such a context, it is inconceivable that conflict may be an opportune moment to deepen the appropriation of the meaning of the community's "special interiority", or a challenge to rearticulate its meaning in a new context. The pluralism within the American context and the protection of this pluralism by constitutional and political law makes the totalist approach inadequate for the American context. Since the totalists seek one religion, supported and sanctioned by the state and imposed on the larger society, the distinction between society, state, and religion is blurred, rendering unnecessary the need for public discourse as a transformative agent in society. Clearly, the constitutional issues in the United States and the cultural diversity of its population renders this alternative inconceivable.

While the totalists use the political system as an appendage of religion blurring the distinction of religion, society and the state, the tribalists accept these distinctions but meet the world outside "the tribe" in a posture of defensiveness and suspicion. This suspicion lends little support to the call for mutual ecclesial collaboration. The tribal mode of organization provides a sense of community with a shared symbol system, as well as support to live within the larger fragmented society. The hostility and exclusivity of the tribe, however, render it ineffective for combating the contemporary crisis of the churches. This model holds little esteem for those outside of their own boundaries, and fosters isolationist attitudes with protectionist defenses when meeting the "other." The challenge for the effectiveness of the mission of the churches cannot be addressed if the churches themselves manifest a similar fragmented and hostile collection of communities as is reflected in the contemporary culture they seek to transform. Public discourse and collaboration falter for the sake of defending and protecting the "tribe" and its truth. Unable to promote conversation it
fosters "talking at, but not with others."

The tribal mode of organizing religion generates a dangerous intolerance. This intolerance toward those who do not share the identical "special interiority" prevents a common voice and collaborative mission on the part of the churches. The "particular, which should be one pole of Christian existence, ought to remain in tension with the universalizing impulse. Instead it takes over, and what was held in common disintegrates."\textsuperscript{72} The public church acknowledges that more unites these constituencies than divides them. As a "community of communities" the constituencies of the public church exist in a relationship in which the diversity of gifts is perceived as an enrichment to be shared by all. What is under expressed or latent in one community is often the explicit contribution of another community. For example, the strong emphasis on evangelization of the Evangelical component of the public church should remind the Roman Catholic community of its own call to evangelize.

The ecumenical diversity of the public church adds to the fullness of the Church rather than creating a scenario for competition or negativity. Marty is quick to reject the tribalist principal of organizing religion that "too readily pits the dimensions of church life against each other,"\textsuperscript{73} creating a climate of competing tribal "gods." Likewise, the tribalists who are unwilling to go beyond their own circle limit the divine action in the world. In contrast to the tribalist, the public church, contends "the God who is the Lord of history, all history, ... is witnessed to as being active beyond the circles of those who will come to explicit faith. To say this is not to lapse into cheap universalism."\textsuperscript{74} Truth, the community's "special interiority", is for the totalist something possessed for the sake of imposing upon others; truth

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 90.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
for the tribalist must be defended with a vengeance if necessary. It is important to note the relationship between the faith and culture and the correlating understanding of truth. Both of these modes of organizing religion reflect the polarity of the faith/culture tension. The totalist attempts to eliminate the tension of faith and culture through a collapse of these categories: the tribalist falling victim to abrasive and ineffective tactics, falters as the church attempts to engage in dialogue with the culture, leading to either withdrawal from or irrelevance for the larger society.

The public church is the only appropriate alternative for the crisis facing the churches of America. If the "public" church is the alternative, the crisis can be understood in light of the inadequacy of the privatist mode of organizing religion. The privatist mode not only contradicts the intrinsic communal nature of Christianity but it compartmentalizes the faith, and renders it ineffectual in the social arena. The legacy of the Enlightenment has relegated faith to the realm of the private along side of other "private choices." Religion defined as a private choice becomes like other "private choices," tolerated but above being challenged or questioned. The privatist mode not only renders the social implications of the faith ineffective, it eliminates an ability to critique religions themselves in their relationship with society. This type of toleration is exacerbated in the American context with some interpretations of the First Amendment. Toleration is not necessarily a non-virtue, but is not an adequate virtue because of its tendency to foster a private notion of the faith. In the United States context where toleration for varieties of religious expression has been a key foundational principle of the nation, toleration can simply suggest that belief does not matter and that one must hold lightly to faith if one is to make room for the belief of others. This would be the most disastrous kind of outlook for people
of real faith. One can turn this around and say what the world needs is more faithful commitment, not less.\textsuperscript{75}

Not only is mere toleration detrimental to the relationship of religion and society, it compromises the ecumenical collaboration among the churches within the American context. If toleration triumphs among the diverse Christian communities there can be no dialogue toward the visible communion to which these communities are called.

\textit{Traits of the Public Church}

In opposition to mere toleration among the churches, Marty proposes an ecumenical collaboration that he characterizes as "symbiotic." Dependent upon the Dutch Calvinist Johannes Althusius who centuries ago detailed the concept of a "community of communities" in the \textit{polis}, Marty transposes Althusius' model to the \textit{ecclesia}. Retaining the original Greek word \textit{symbiotes}, Althusius speaks of those components "who pledge themselves to the other, by explicit or tacit agreement, to mutual communication of whatever is useful and necessary for the harmonious exercise of social life; now in this case, Christian life."\textsuperscript{76}

In the place of mere toleration that leads to a diminishment of faith commitment, Marty proposes what Gabriel Marcel called "counter-intolerance."

This takes the form of responsiveness to the convictions of people who believe differently than I, and an empathy for what and why they believe, precisely because I believe so deeply that I have been tempted to intolerance. I guarantee others complete freedom to the extent that I hold to my opinion, says Marcel.\textsuperscript{77}

Counter-intolerance promotes what Marty sees as essential: discourse. Unlike the neutrality of toleration that silences the conversations about faith and its implications, counter-intolerance stimulates an active need to be in dialogue and conversation. It requires at least a

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 134.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 135.
basic knowledge and understanding of the beliefs of the other and, even if disagreement persists, there is respect for the dignity of the faith dimension in human life. This counter-intolerance, however, does not simply rest with "intelligent" or "knowledgeable" toleration. In other words, it is not simply a matter of understanding others' beliefs. It demands through questions and challenges in dialogue and conversation a seeking of a true understanding of the other. Counter-intolerance, unlike mere toleration, does not leave one less committed to one's own faith stance. In fact, it demands that those who speak for the respective faith communities can give an account of their tradition. It requires an awareness of the "special interiority" that is unique to each constituency, and demands this uniqueness to be proclaimed. The manner in which the truth of one's community is made known in this conversational model differs, however, from the totalist or tribalist proclamation of truth. In these two models defensiveness or autocratic decrees characterize the communication of their special interiority. Marty contends that the church espousing the virtue of counter-intolerance believes that, "if I make moves to convince him [sic] of the truth of my own, they can never be through force or deception, lest I seem a servant of a God of prey whose goal is to annex and enslave."78 The public church rejects the belligerence and exclusivity of the tribalist, refuses the solution of totalist state religions, and rejects vehemently the privatists positing faith in the realm of private choice where it becomes neutralized. The public church calls for commitment and discourse in the polis, and finds no solution in the simple responses of capitulation to, nor simplistic withdrawal from, the culture in which the public church finds itself. Rather, the constituents of the public church must

help propose an epochal shift in human sensibilities. In this shift, people would learn to combine religious commitment with civility, spiritual passion with a public sense.

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78 Ibid.
To help produce a culture in which such combinations might emerge would by itself be a full-time calling for those constituents of the public church who have lost morale or a sense of mission.  

The public church acts as an agent of transformation emphasizing the social consequences of each constituency's special interiority. Drawing on the resources of its own theology, the public church contributes to this public conversation from its own system of symbol and language. Not simply "civil religion" but attempting to construct a public theology as a foundation for its contribution to public discourse, the public church, as one of many institutions within the larger society, seeks to transform the culture through an active role in the public arena. While public theology can learn from the goals of civil religion, specifically, combating privatization of religion, opposing secularism and sectarianism, public theology is more effective as a critical tool in public discourse.

Public theology's attempt to critique privatization does not start with the national experience but rather from Christianity's own legacy. Its resource is Christian doctrine, creed and ecclesial tracts. Since pluralism of belief is a foundational value in American experience, and civil religion tends to minimize the particularist tradition of religious beliefs, public theology's strength is the retrieval of the social significance of its own particular tradition's theology, which ultimately becomes important for public discourse. Civil religion and public theology differ in their understanding of the role, value and necessity of the particularist tradition in public discourse.

In the opening chapter of Michael and Kenneth Himes' work, *Fullness of Faith: The Public Significance for Theology*, the authors promote public theology as one expression of the social nature of Christian tradition. "The implications of religious beliefs for social life

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79 Ibid., 8.
are developed through public theology." Religious institutions can contribute to societal
eexistence through their retrieval and communication of the social implications of their special
interiority, their particularist tradition. For example, a religious community’s understanding
of a vision for society based on its particular theories of justice and freedom, its
understanding of the nature of the person or the role of the state can offer much to the life of
society. The authors maintain that the public church has the obligation
to provide the public with alternative visions of what is desirable and possible, to
stimulate deliberation about them, provoke a reexamination of premises and values,
and thus broaden the range of potential responses and deepen society’s understanding
of itself. The challenge for the Roman Catholic church as a “public church” is to formulate for the
church itself and for public discourse, “an articulation of the Roman Catholic tradition’s
world-view or background theory which informs a social ethic and consequent public
choices.” As the Himes’ point out, “it is simplistic politically and fundamentalistic
teologically to ignore the mediating role of social ethics.” Social ethics mediates public
theology into public discourse; public theology is not the language of public discourse.
The public church, unlike the tribalist, the totalists, and to some degree the privatist,
understands God to act within the history of those not of the Christian faith, as well as acting
in the lives and contributions of those without an explicit faith. While the nature of this
action remains in the realm of mystery, the public church allows the context for God’s action
to be all of humanity. The church, when critically engaged with the larger context of the
world and society, exists in a dialogical relationship with its context. The context raises

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80 Michel J. Himes and Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M., Fullness of Faith: The Public Significance of Theology
81 Ibid., 23.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid., 22.
questions and challenges for the church, impacting both the mission of the church and its unique interiority.

It is evident the three modes of organizing religions have not only distinct implications for the relationship between church and society but also have implicit assumptions in regards to the understanding of truth, that is their “special interiority”. For the totalist, truth is a possession of the church or religion and it is to be imposed, even by coercion or legislative action, upon the society at large. In other words, truth is a "possession" which the church must ensure that all others have in "their possession". In this mode, pluralism is contrary to the desired uniformity of belief and praxis expressive of the "one truth". For the tribalist, truth is a possession as well, and often defended with a vengeance against those "outside". While the tribe’s constituents’ commitment level may be admirable, the intolerance that characterizes their external relationships is problematic for diverse situations such as the American context. The tribalist relationship with the culture around them is characterized as defensive at best, or total separation in the extreme; truth for either group is understood as their sole commodity. Those outside their boundaries do not contribute in any substantial way to the tribalists’ nor the totalists’ appropriation of their "special interiority". For the privatist, the characteristic of the relationship of church and society is not necessarily defensiveness or even a physical separation. Rather, the privatist mode simply eliminates any significant social implications for their “special interiority”. While the privatist may share with the totalists and tribalists an understanding of truth as their "sole possession," the noteworthy characteristic of truth for the privatist is its lack of social consequences. In contrast, the public church’s understanding of truth is contrary to the totalist’s understanding of a possession to be imposed upon all; it is broader than the narrow
confines of the tribalists, and is intrinsically social in contrast to the privatists.

The public church is neither equated with the “truth” nor is it the depository of truth as if truth were a static possession. Rather the public church is the locus for the proclamation of the word, calling all to be in the process of appropriating the truth. As the “community of those who are hearers of the word of God, custodians of its seriousness,” the public church admits this word is heard in the midst of a “complex world of difficult choices, and the listening ears belong to people who hear its meaning for them in diverse ways.” The public church, rejecting the notion of a static deposit of truth, allows for “insight” and the “moving toward the truth.” Unlike the uniformity projected by the tribalist and the totalist, the public church readily admits the pluralism existing within the churches. The process of moving toward the truth, the understanding of the meaning of the Christian message in a given time and place, often involves “self-correction.” In Marty’s perspective, “…scholars in their experiments must be given the chance to be wrong, just as they need to learn that they may be guilty of misleading sometimes, when they are called to lead.” This would imply that within the public church the promotion of responsible academic freedom and the encouragement of theological discourse on many issues, including those deemed controversial, would be a high priority. This is so because the process toward appropriating the truth necessitates this self-correcting process. The public church accepts the process of development and transition within the Christian church, readily admitting that the idea there was a time of complete concord or a fully settled period [of the church] contradicts the tensions we know from the history of the church. It is only the uninformed, Marty reminds us

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81 Marty, Public Church, 61.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid., 65.
that "think there was no clash of wills or doctrines within the constituent sectors of the
curch throughout history."87 The public church acknowledges that the process of discerning
the meaning of the Christian message in a specific time and place will spawn diversity,
conflict and ambiguity. It is precisely because of this that discourse is constitutive to the life
of the public church. Both in matters of church polity and structure as well as in the church's
role as an agent of transforming society, not mere toleration but truly counter-intolerance
fostering true understanding is needed.

The public church espouses a critical openness to the culture around it with all of the
challenges of modernity. Consequently, its understanding of truth allows it to reject the
position of those who "froze their understanding, developed closed and constrictive
personalities. or thought they could stay above the battle by trying to be apart from it [the
challenges of modernity]."88 At the same time, a critical openness does not permit a simple
capitulation to the challenges of modernity, however, it prevents situating the public church
within its own closed system where the tribe or totalist models flourish. In its critical
openness the public church allows a response to the challenges of modernity that does not
necessarily infer a relativism of the "truth it knows." The public church acknowledges, in the
development of Christian theology and practice that the church has learned from a variety of
cultures and contexts. Consequently, the public church understands itself as a learning
church: a church that through the ages has grappled with the meaning of the Christian truth in
the face of new contexts and situations. Marty bids all Christians to discover this public
church within their own community of faith and to make its form and understanding and
work explicit. The public church does not await invention but discovery, Marty contends, and

87 Ibid., 63.
88 Ibid., 64.
he calls each community to discover within itself this public church. 89

Membership in the public church demands a great deal from the individual. Not simply acquiescence to church teaching, or the blind loyalty of the tribal member, the public church calls the individual to undertake a process of understanding the special interiority of one’s own ecclesial community as well as others. Unlike the religions organized around the totalist model where all steps on the journey are prescribed and subversive souls keep their distance, or the tribalists who exists within a cocoon where all needs are met and variations prohibited or the privatists who pick and choose among the selection of religions available to them, the public church is the church of the pilgrim. The pilgrim is the one who can make his or her own way, along with a community, through the ambiguity and choices of modern life.

The public church invites its members to face the complexities and the questions that modernity presents, but to reject one of modernity’s negative legacies: the privatization of the faith. The public church calls for the reconnection of the inward journey with the outer course of our lives. It calls all to

...a stewardship of the earth and a search for better social forms. It calls them to move from mere personal experience to become again a thinking community, one that does not evade the issues of emerging science, literature, and social life. 90

The public church is born in the tension of faith and culture, specifically the American culture. As a type of church, a way of being church, it does not sacrifice its special interiority at the price of engagement in the political and public arena. The public church, “if it undertakes considerable self-criticism and self-appraisal, can become an instrument in coalition with others to work for a different concept of the republic.” 91 Presuming an intimate

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89 Ibid., 18.
90 Ibid., 30.
91 Ibid., 144.
connection between society and church, this public church sees as imperative its ability and responsibility to contribute to the public and social arena. Not the sole institution in this process of shaping a public order, it does however, enjoy a special calling to be part of the conversation leading toward shaping public life. It is not a surprise that in a pluralistic context the requirement for a public discourse is foundational to the mission of the public church. In the United States context, the public church as a constituent in the public community of communities, shares traditions, reason, aspects of Enlightenment, civic purpose, and transecting philosophies with many of the constituents and collegia in the larger civic order. It also exemplifies and makes room for internal variety, including its distinctive Christian theology. But as a whole this churchly cluster brings from its grasp of revelation many elements of use in public discourse.\footnote{Ibid., 164.}

**Conclusion**

It is the "special interiority" of Christianity that is the primary source of the public church's contribution to public discourse. Respecting the diversity of interpretation among its members, and acknowledging that much more is held in common than separates them, the public church attempts to speak with united conviction to the society at large. Constantly listening to the word that is proclaimed in its midst, it embarks on the process toward greater appropriation of its own legacy of faith. Rejecting coercion and abrasive methods for the methods of persuasiveness and credible conversations, the public church attempts through counter-intolerance to seek greater understanding of how best to shape the common life of the society in which it lives. This does not imply seeking a "Christian America" or a mandate for Christian values within the American context. What is hoped for is a greater understanding of the issues under public discussion and the ability for the public church to
voice its conviction about these issues.  

The Roman Catholic communion, as other ecclesial constituencies in the public church, is challenged to make "its [the public church's] form and understanding and work... explicit." The Roman Catholic church is to be a witness to the communal character of faith and to claim its own resources for promoting the social dimension of Christian response. This challenge calls each community to claim not only the antecedents within its own history, but to recognize the potential of the public church as necessary for a successful response to the crisis of the churches in North America.

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93 Some have criticized Martin Marty's approach to the discussion of the public church as too sociological. Granted sociological categories of how religions organize themselves are the framework for his discussion of the public church, but at the same time, it would be shortsighted to dismiss this framework simply because of its sociological nature. It takes little effort to transpose the three modes of organizing religions into specific ecclesologies. As part one concludes and this essay continues, welcoming Marty's invitation for each constituency within the public church to "discover not invent the public church" within their own community of faith, these categories shed light on several manifestations of the Roman Catholic communion. The totalist mode could have its parallel in the church of Christendom, while the tribalists could describe the Roman Catholic immigrant church in the United States. Finally, the privatists could be a constant theme throughout the times in the history of the church when preoccupation with the "other world" or personal salvation was stressed at the expense of responsibility to the social order. While these models may not be inherently the most effective ones for an essay on ecclesiology, they do help set the conversation for the Roman Catholic appropriation of the concept of the public church.

94 Marty, Public Church, 22.

95 Ibid., 8.
Chapter Two
Antecedents of the Public Church

Introduction

Martin Marty calls all the churches to discover the antecedents of the public church within their own churches. Chapter two is a response to Marty's challenge to examine the antecedents for the public church within the Roman Catholic church in the United States. An examination of the antecedents of the public church is important for three reasons. First, this examination is a reminder that no religious denomination or ecclesial communion is exempt from the privatizing factors of the American culture, or untouched by internal privatizing dynamics. Second, public theology, as the work of the public church, draws on the resources of each of the ecclesial communities' own system of symbol and language as a contribution to the public discourse. Investigating the antecedents of the public church is necessary to claim the wealth and tradition of each ecclesial community as a resource for public theology. Third, an investigation of the antecedents of the public church not only reveals the prior contribution and manifestation of the public church but also surfaces the elements of resistance towards the public church that warrant examination and necessitate correction.

Chapter two examines four individuals from twentieth century American Catholic history who are antecedents of the public church: John A. Ryan, Virgil Michel, Dorothy Day and John Courtney Murray. All are examples of people who challenged the configuration of the public and private spheres that delineated religion to the private realm. These four are illustrations or manifestations of the public church within the complex, and often times puzzling, era of twentieth century American Catholic history.
Chapter two does not attempt an exhaustive treatment of these four Catholics' contributions to the American church, but rather intends to explore their contribution solely in light of the emergence of the pre-conciliar Roman Catholic church in America as a public church. This chapter is not primarily a biographical study, nor is it intended to be an exhaustive study of the philosophical or theological influences underpinning these four Americans' contributions. The focus and scope of this work both preclude the possibility of treating these four with the depth others have, or the possibility of presenting a thorough study of their ecclesial, political or socio-economic contexts. Rather, these four individuals will be examined through the specific lens of the legacy of the pervasive individualism in the American culture and the characteristics of the public church. First, each will be situated briefly within his or her context and then a succinct consideration of their theological position will be presented. Each person's theological contribution will be examined to the extent it manifests the nascent public church in pre-conciliar Roman Catholicism in the United States.

Martin Marty reminds us that if the public church undertakes a "considerable self-criticism and self-appraisal [it] can become an instrument in coalition with others to work for a different concept of the republic."¹ The following consideration of John A. Ryan, Virgil Michel, Dorothy Day and John Courtney Murray is a limited attempt at such a self-appraisal of the Roman Catholic church in the United States as a public church.

John A. Ryan (1869-1945)

In his autobiography, *Social Doctrine in Action*, Monsignor John A. Ryan reflected on his seminary education, saying:

my deepest and most sustained interest, however, was not in questions of dogma or Scripture or church history, but in those treaties of moral theology which dealt with the morality of economic transactions; namely, those on justice and right and contracts. In this field my collateral reading took in not only the standard works of moral theology but also a fair amount of books and magazines which fell under the head of sociology and economics.\(^3\)

It is not surprising that justice and economic issues captivated the young cleric from St. Paul, Minnesota. Growing up the son of Irish immigrants, one of his earliest recollections included the periodical *The Irish World and American Industrial Liberator*. Ryan contends, "one could not read *The Irish World* week after week without acquiring an interest in and love of economic justice, as well as political justice."\(^4\) The periodical focused on the Irish resistance to their landlords as well as topics dealing with American concerns. With the exception of one other weekly, this periodical was the only one in the Ryan household. Of the several influences in his life Ryan places great importance on his bishop and mentor, John Ireland\(^5\), the Archbishop of St. Paul, Minnesota. In tracing his early social education, Ryan extensively quotes Ireland, the late nineteenth century American bishop. On the occasion of the twenty-

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3. Ibid., 59.
4. Ibid., 8.
5. "In his autobiography Msg. John A. Ryan, the dominate force for social reform in American Catholicism in the first half of the 20th century, lauded the social vision and quest for social justice given by Gibbons, Ireland, and Spalding," writes Charles Curran in *American Catholic Social Ethics: Twentieth-Century Approaches* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 23. These bishops often involved themselves in issues surrounding labor and workers rights. Their motivation was spawned by the large numbers of Catholics in the unions and by the bishops' concerns about losing the working class. Often, and Ireland and Gibbons are examples, they continued to accommodate and turn a blind eye to the systems that created the injustices. In the years leading up to the end of the nineteenth century the Catholic Church often courted big business to sponsor charitable organizations. These organizations responded to the "poor" but rarely analyzed the underlying causes for poverty.
fifth jubilee of Cardinal Gibbon’s Episcopal ordination Ireland gave a speech entitled, “The Church and the Age” which contains an apt description of what would be John A. Ryan’s contribution to the American Catholic church. Ireland states,

we have, of late, been so accustomed to lock up our teachings in seminary and sanctuary that when they appear in active evolution in the broad area of life they are not recognized by Catholics; nay, are even feared and disowned by them.⁶

John A. Ryan was a voice against the status quo in the age of rapid industrialization, growing laissez-faire capitalism, and the rise of the business corporation. As American life became more compartmentalized in the early twentieth century, Ryan was a contrary voice to the growing perception of morally neutral political and economic institutions. “The moral law governs economic transactions, as well as every other sphere of conduct.”⁷ Ryan reminds all Americans. He steadfastly rejects any system of thought that allows economics and political life to claim exception from moral scrutiny. Ryan’s life task was to unlock the teaching and implications of the Christian message from the comfort of the seminary and sanctuary and to allow them into the broad areas of life. How was Ryan able to transcend the spheres of public and private and accentuate the social implications of Christianity in general and Roman Catholicism in particular?

Ryan follows a traditional natural law approach to ethics. specifically in the philosophical tradition of natural law. His use of philosophical categories and language allows Ryan to collaborate more readily with other reformers of his time who may not have shared the same faith. Ryan’s role as chairman of the Social Action Committee of the

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⁶ Ryan, Social Doctrine, 42.
⁷ Ibid., 59.
National Catholic War Council\(^8\) between 1920 and 1945 provided him the opportunity for the national dissemination and hierarchical sanction of much of his thought. In addition, it facilitated Ryan’s role as a social reformer cooperating with both Catholics and non-Catholics in the quest for social reform.

**Theological Foundations**

Charles Curran provides a succinct and useful consideration of John A. Ryan in his work *American Catholic Social Thought*.\(^9\) Curran maintains that Ryan adopted a “traditional Catholic natural law approach to ethics.”\(^10\) In this approach, the ultimate norm of morality is the divine reason or essence mediated through human nature and human reason. The human person, created by God, can never be used as an instrument or a means to any other end, other than God. The person has an inherent dignity and sacredness with a hierarchy of needs and faculties. Within the natural law tradition of the papal encyclicals of Leo XIII, specifically *Rerum novarum* (1891), and Pius XI’s *Quadragesimo anno* (1931), Ryan makes a distinctive contribution by his more inductive approach in his application of Catholic social thought. Ryan does not simply articulate the *a priori* ethical principles of natural law, he analyzes the conditions of the times and applies these ethical principles to contemporary conditions. “Ryan became the first American Catholic ethicist to apply himself to a scientific study of economics in order to create an ethics of the economic order.”\(^11\) Ryan is critical of the social ills resulting from capitalism in the American ethos but he does not reject the

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\(^8\) This committee is the precursor of the current National Catholic Conference of Bishops and the National Catholic Conference.

\(^9\) Curran, *Social Ethics*.

\(^10\) Ibid., 30.

theory of capitalism. His criticism is of the expression of capitalism in the American context, a historical capitalism\textsuperscript{12} devoid of an economic democracy. "By economic democracy... [Ryan] meant the movement toward a more general and more equitable distribution of economic power and goods and opportunities."\textsuperscript{13} Ryan was attuned to the social context as it was, and sought reform that often times could be characterized as pragmatic, often criticized for promoting legislation perceived as a short-term response to economic and social situations.

Curran situates Ryan’s contribution between two extreme operating positions of the understanding of the individual and the larger society. On the one extreme is the perception that all human rights are derived and conferred by society on the individual. This position eliminates the concept of the individual’s inherent dignity and worth. Society is not an end in itself that allows the subordination of the individual to the society. The opposite extreme posits the individual in terms of the French philosophy of natural rights of the late eighteenth century. Curran describes this position, as one in which the individual stands apart from the larger society, exalted as a free person. This position reflects the exaggerated claims that the individual has the right to do anything that does not interfere with the equal liberties of other individuals. It was this latter position which was shaping more and more the America of

\textsuperscript{12} The terminology “historical capitalism” reflects that Ryan does not reject the theory of capitalism but rather the individualism that underpins the expression of the capitalism of his day. Curran cites five elements of historical capitalism that Ryan never accepted: indefinitely high profits and interest, indefinitely low wages, and unlimited wealth and economic power. Ryan found these five characteristics coupled, with three fundamental principles of historical capitalism, to be erroneous. These principles include: the political principle that espouses nonintervention, or a laissez-faire approach to the economic order; the economic principle that maintains that unlimited production automatically provides unlimited markets and constant employment; and finally, the ethical principle. This latter principle espouses an extreme and individualistic concept of natural rights that presupposes the natural goodness of people and the substantial equality of all. His mistrust of socialism as a remedy for social ills and his belief in the right of private property prevented Ryan from rejecting capitalism outright. At the same time, Ryan does not unthinkingly accept the American experience of capitalism; thus, his use of the term “historical capitalism.” Curran, Social Ethics, 62.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 249
Ryan's time.

Ryan's rejection of America's pervasive individualism is reflected clearly in his defense of the American worker. The worker is not a commodity to be utilized for the economic profit of the corporation. The dignity of the individual in his economic theory is manifested in his concern for the dignity of the worker. It is this dignity that is the foundation for the call for a minimum living wage in order for the worker to maintain a true dignity of life. The individual's dignity is not negotiable. It can be annulled by neither the state nor the corporation. This position, Curran maintains, leads Ryan to espouse the fundamental belief that the human rights of the individual are absolute. This does not mean absolute in the sense of without limitations, but in the sense that their validity does not depend upon any other person or institution. The dignity of the human person demands and fosters a basic equality among people necessitating a minimum standard of living. This minimum standard of living will safeguard, foster and enhance one's God given dignity. The natural rights of the individual are the moral means by which a human person is enabled to reach the obligatory end: God.

Ryan's understanding of the role of the state is tied to his concept of the individual. Ryan contends that the state is to safeguard all natural rights, including life, liberty and property, spiritual and moral security and a good name. The state has a definite role to provide the social context which does not impede nor render impossible the individual appropriating his or her true divine end. The state, when lower forms of organization are unable or ineffective, must see to the effective public services of: public works, public education, public charity, public health, safety, morals and religion; and industrial regulation for its people. Ryan's view of state involvement and its moral responsibility occupy a
"middle position between individualistic theories and totalitarian theories of the state."\textsuperscript{14} Individualistic theories rest on an exaggerated individualistic freedom and conceive the role of government as primarily restrictive and coercive. In this perspective the best government is the least government, the "laissez-faire government" which is the most desirable for a laissez-faire economic system. The misconception of the economic and political institutions as morally neutral fostered the position of the "least government as the best government" allowing for no state interference in the quest for profit. Ryan's strategy was to promote legislation that would effectively correct the state's abdication of its duty to provide a social order which promoted the dignity of the person.

From the earliest years as a student at the Catholic University of America Ryan's concern for the dignity of the worker shaped his academic work. In October of 1900, the subject of his doctoral dissertation, "A Living Wage: Its Ethical and Economic Aspects" was approved. The topic Ryan credits to Pope Leo XIII's \textit{Rerum Novarum} in which the pope states,

...there is a dictate of nature more imperious and more ancient than any bargain between man and man, that the remuneration must be enough to support the wage earner in reasonable and frugal comfort. If through necessity or fear of worse evil, the workman accepts harder conditions because an employer or contractor will give him no better, he is the victim of force and injustice.\textsuperscript{15}

The contract between employee and employer was no longer sacred in the sense it was without scrutiny; however, it was sacred in the sense that it is governed by ethical principles. Ryan argued that a just wage was the worker's right derived from his dignity as an individual and thus requiring a wage safeguarding a minimum standard of living. Ryan reminded a growing laissez-faire economic culture that the human person is not a commodity to be used

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{15} Ryan, \textit{Social Doctrine}, 73.
and exploited for economic profit.

**Ecclesial Implications**

Jay Dolan, the American Catholic historian, remarks that the outbreak of the First World War provided the “Catholic hierarchy an opportunity to demonstrate its patriotic Americanism, and the bishops did so with vigor.” An important part of the hierarchy’s response to the crisis of the war was the establishment of the National Catholic War Council in 1917 to coordinate Catholic participation, both domestically and internationally, in the war effort. At the end of the “war to end all wars” the belief that peace could be maintained only by establishing justice was the catalyst for over sixty programs of social reform. John A. Ryan, looking back some thirty years after the close of the First World War, remarks, “the authors of these programs assumed that the war had made the world safe for political democracy and people of the world were now ready to establish a regime of economic democracy and social justice.” The bishops of the United States did not exempt themselves from the call for social reform. Father John O’Grady, secretary of the National Catholic War Council, was commissioned to produce the Council’s plan for social reconstruction.

In 1919, in reaction to one of the more popular programs of social reform promoted by the pro-socialist British Labor Party, John Ryan prepared what was originally to be a

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17 David O’Brien notes the importance of the establishing of the NCWC. After 1900 in the U.S. there was no authoritative national organization or symbolic center of Catholicism. The structure of the U.S. church was, in his words, “a states’ rights church,” dominated by the local bishop who most likely was Roman-educated. The unquestioning response to papal authority and the ultimate authority the bishop had in his diocese solidified an hierarchical ecclesiology. The American church was characterized by a strong parish focus with energies directed at the internal needs of the church. The growing school system and the devotional life of the immigrant population, among other internal issues, tended to mitigate against a national view or national response to issues. The NCWC was important in its ability both to provide a national agenda for the church and to facilitate a national response to current issues. See David O’Brien, *Public Catholicism* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co, 1989), 124-31.

18 Ryan, *Social Doctrine*, 143.
speech to the Cleveland Knights of Columbus. This speech, with some revisions, became a plan of social reform eventually adopted by the bishops. Too lengthy to be delivered, the speech was not intended to be a comprehensive plan but rather a pragmatic attempt to focus on "those reforms that seemed to be desirable and also obtainable within a reasonable time" and to set in place principles that could be utilized as new developments called for further action. On February 12, 1919, "Social Reconstruction: A General Review of the Problems and Survey of Remedies," popularly known as "The Bishops’ Program" was released by the National Catholic Welfare Council. This program of reconstruction was thoroughly progressive and explicitly Catholic... [it] sought to adapt the principles of charity and justice... to the social and industrial conditions and needs of the times. ... [it] was the most forward-looking social document ever to have come from an official agency in the United States.

The contents of this program are obviously important. But it is noteworthy to mention how the National Catholic Welfare Conference was the vehicle to disseminate Ryan’s contribution and also a manifestation of the nascent public church.

The National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC) provided an organized and national structure that promoted the Catholic response to the nation’s social issues. At the same time, the responses of the NCWC were opportunities for Catholics and non-Catholics alike to be exposed to, understand, and hopefully to adopt the Catholic perspective. As chair

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19 Ibid., 144.
20 After the end of World War I, the National Catholic War Council continued under the name of National Catholic Welfare Council (the word "Committee" would later replace "Council," in deference to a request from the Vatican).
22 David O’Brien summarizes the contents of this program as including the continuation of the wartime agencies for employment and adjudication of labor disputes, as well as reaffirming the right of labor to organize and the right to collective bargaining with the implementation of government insurance against unemployment, illness, accident, and old age. Likewise, the program called for the integration of the worker into the organizational structure of the business through profit sharing, stock options, and the establishment of cooperative labor-management councils to promote and safeguard the dignity of the workers and to prevent the worker from being perceived as a "mere commodity" in the world of work. O’Brien, Public Catholicism, 151.
of one of the four committees of the NCWC, Ryan was not only able to unlock the teaching and social implications of the Christian message from the comfort of the seminary and sanctuary but now a national structure was promoting the Catholic position as the means towards social transformation. As early as the first quarter of the nineteenth century in the NCWC’s Bishops’ Program the American Catholic Church manifests qualities of the “public church.” Ryan’s plan for social reconstruction was an attempt to have people. “learn to combine religious commitment with civility, spiritual passion with a public sense. To help produce a culture in which such combination might emerge.”23 The NCWC was a potential catalyst for an important shift in awareness for American Catholics. The NCWC enabled the bishops to extend their vision to the issues that extended beyond the local concerns of their dioceses.24 Jay Dolan notes:

the hierarchy’s move toward organization and action at a national level also enabled the Catholic people to identify with a church that was now more visibly national and thus seemingly more important and powerful. The NCWC..... also sought to educate the people to think in more national, less parochial terms. Such an enlarged vision of church life seemed only natural, given the boosterism and confidence that permeated Catholic life the first half of the twentieth century.25

The Bishop’s Plan reflects Ryan’s critique of the historical experience of capitalism in the United States and responds to the rampant individualism that was characteristic of economic practices. Ryan rejects the perception that the political and economic institutions of American culture were exempt from moral critique or scrutiny and rejects the role of religion and church as limited to parochial and familial structures that minimizes Christianity’s social tradition. Ryan promotes a classical Catholic understanding of the human person and society that is in stark contrast to the prevailing individualism that ruptured the mutual bond between

23 Marty, Public Church, 22.
24 See footnote 17.
25 Dolan, Catholic Experience, 353.
individual and the larger society.

Curran highlights the ecclesial aspects of this social reformer, saying:

Ryan steadfastly tries to foster the social mission of the church and to make Catholics more aware of it. To convince Catholics he cites Leo XIII. The social question is not merely an economic matter but a moral and religious question that cannot be practically solved without the church.\textsuperscript{26}

Curran maintains that Ryan’s understanding of the legitimate motivation and rationale for the church’s engagement in the economic and political spheres is grounded in a specific Catholic belief system. Curran maintains that the social mission justified by Ryan reflects an understanding of the supernatural and natural relationship which grants the primary object of church the mission of saving the individual’s soul and to prepare the membership for supernatural life with God that begins in earthly existence but is completed only in eternity. The immortal world is the end for which the human person has been created, and consequently all temporal goods are utterly insignificant in light of this divine end. In Ryan’s own words.

The church is not merely nor mainly a social reform organization, nor is it her primary mission to reorganize society, or to realize the Kingdom of God upon earth. Her primary sphere is the individual soul, her primary object is to save souls, that is to fit them for the Kingdom of God in heaven. Man’s [sic] true life, the life of the soul, consists in supernatural union with God,... Compared with this immortal life, such temporary good as wealth, liberty, education, or fame, are utterly insignificant.\textsuperscript{27}

Consequently, all temporal entities come under the moral law and it is the church’s task, to teach, “all free human actions, whether in the field of economics or in any other endeavor, come under the moral law, and it is the duty of the church to teach the moral law and help

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 65.
\textsuperscript{27} John A. Ryan, “The Church and the Workingman,” Catholic World 89 (April-September, 1909): 776-82., quoted in Carey, American Thought, 244.
people save their souls by right conduct."28

Ryan appropriates the general principles of the natural law methodology reflected in the papal encyclicals and appropriates the traditional virtues of charity and justice in his critique of the American ethos. Ryan focuses specifically on the injustices of the effects of capitalism and finds a solution, often pragmatic and short term, in the call for legislation to ensure social justice. Ryan espouses the traditional teaching role of the church and at the same time embraces the role of the church as "doer" in the American context. Pragmatic and often criticized for overly depending upon state intervention, he was just as critical of the "inactivity of the American clergy in the matter of social works," although understanding of their situation:

The moral aspects of modern industry are extremely difficult to evaluate correctly: its physical aspects and relations are very complicated.... Add to these circumstances the fact that the American clergy have for the most part been very busy organizing parishes, building churches and schools, and providing material equipment of religion generally; and you have a tolerably sufficient explanation of their failure to study the social problem, and expound the social teaching of the Church.29

Ryan warns the American church that if the clergy do not embrace the demands of both the church's social teaching and the required social action the Catholic population will fall into the unchristian perversion of the day. This latter remark is an obvious reflection of the Catholic Church's only response to socialism, a response of no dialogue and rejection.30

In the spirit of the public church, he does not espouse an uncritical relationship with the host culture. Rather, Ryan uses the resources of the Roman Catholic tradition coupled with the study of the ancillary disciplines of social psychology and economics to discern and critically respond to the conditions of the times. He steadfastly critiques individualism and

28 Curran, Social Ethics, 65.
30 Ibid., 249.
the social problems created by its effect upon American capitalism. In an era where the Roman Catholic church was focused predominantly on parochial and local issues, Ryan challenges the Catholic community to a national consciousness and a critical perspective towards the American ethos. The ecclesiology of the day still fell short of promoting the social mission of the church by its concern on individual salvation, yet Ryan stands within the American Catholic tradition as an important manifestation of the public church.

While acknowledging the importance of Ryan for the American Church, especially his collaboration with non-Catholics in the work of social reform, Curran cites a lack of integration in Ryan's method. Ryan's exclusive use of natural law emphasized the compatibility of the Catholic church with other non-Catholic Americans working towards social reform. "By seeing political and economic life primarily in terms of natural law and distinguished from the supernatural or faith aspect, Ryan could logically stress the compatibility between his Catholic faith on the supernatural level and his daily life as an American on the natural level." What Curran is quick to point out is that this led to a "two-tiered" view of human existence: the bottom tier was the rational and the natural and the top tier was the supernatural and faith level. This failure to integrate these two spheres is evident in the lack of any discussion or integration of the theological categories of grace, redemption, eschatology and their implication for the social, political, and economic aspects of life.

Curran writes:

Theological themes such as the presence of grace, the call to conversion, and the recognition of the power of sin lead to a recognition of the importance of a change of heart on the part of the individual if social justice is to be achieved. Sin or selfishness must be overcome before human beings can live together in justice and peace. Yes,

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31 Curran, Social Ethics, 85.
change of structures is absolutely essential for social justice, but likewise a change of heart is necessary.\textsuperscript{32}

Ryan's failure to integrate theological categories has ecclesial implications. The church is seen as the beacon for correct conduct so that Catholics will be able to do the right thing and save their souls and go to heaven. Ryan leaves the economic and political spheres of human life too isolated from theological categories. While this allows dialogue with non-Catholics and movement towards social reform, it is also a manifestation of the dynamic of accommodation within Catholicism in the face of the American culture. As Curran points out, "there exist more integrated approaches to the question of social justice. Virgil Michel, the founder of the liturgical movement in the United States, takes a much more integral approach to social justice."\textsuperscript{33}

**Virgil Michel, O.S.B. (1890-1938)**

Virgil Michel, like his contemporary John Ryan, criticized the rampant individualism of the American ethos yet their means toward social reconstruction differed. Born in 1890, in St. Paul, Minnesota. Virgil Michel was educated at the preparatory school of St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, and entered the novitiate of the Benedictine abbey community in 1909. Ordained in 1916, Michel taught philosophy and literature at Collegeville until his abbot, Alcuin Deutsch, sent him to Europe in 1924 to study at both Louvain and Rome. According to Joseph Chinnici.

The time was a decisive one. Michel was especially inspired by Dom Lambert Beauduin (1873-1960) and the liturgical revival being promoted by the Benedictines at Maria Laach in Germany, Solesmes in France, and Maredsous in Belgium. During this period he began to integrate Leo XIII's social vision and Pius X's call for a

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 86.

Virgil Michel’s time in Europe, his Benedictine tradition, and his acute awareness of his American context combined to provide the American Catholic church with one of “the few twentieth century American Catholics to identify the problems of contemporary Christianity as identical with the problems of contemporary secular society.”\footnote{R.W. Franklin and Robert L. Spaeth, \textit{Virgil Michel: American Catholic}. (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1988), 32.} Michel identifies the roots of the social problem as the pervasive individualism in the American ethos that, “fosters a ruthless pursuit of self-interest, egoism, and makes out of human life a bitter, cutthroat competition for existence and for improvement of one’s own condition over against all others.”\footnote{Ibid., 11.} Virgil Michel, however, did not limit his critique of individualism to its impact only on economic and political life. Michel was emphatic that “it is an inconsistency to decry individualism in economic and political life but of never even adverting to selfish individualism in the spiritual life, where it pervades, vitiates and distorts man’s [sic] whole outlook.”\footnote{Ibid., 206.} He was quite aware of individualism’s diffusion into religion itself, the very means of true social regeneration. He draws upon the wealth of the Catholic community’s liturgical tradition as the resource for effective social regeneration.

\section*{Theological Foundations}

Like all Catholic social reformers of the twentieth century, Virgil Michel stood in the tradition of the papal encyclicals of the Roman Catholic Church. Michel seeks the middle ground between the exaggerated individualism of his times and the unacceptability of
collectivism reflected in socialist or fascist regimes. The middle ground is the Christian principle, "this double character, the harmonious fusion of the two elements of human nature, the individual and the social that we must not only keep in mind, but that must again become dominant in all life."\(^38\) In an important article, "The Liturgy: The Basis of Social Regeneration," \(^39\) Michel cites Pius X's exhortation to derive this Christian principle from "its primary and indispensable source, which is the active participation in the sacred mysteries and the public and solemn prayers of the Church."\(^40\) Virgil Michel maintains that the proper understanding of, and an active participation of all, in the liturgical life of the Church is the true means of social regeneration. Unlike John A. Ryan whose methodology was steeped in the philosophical tradition of natural law without an emphasis on theological categories, Michel's starting point of social reform in the Christian liturgical tradition provides an integrated articulation of, among other things the supernatural/natural dichotomy.\(^41\) that Ryan's methodology fostered.

Paul Marx, Virgil Michel's official biographer, remarks,

some... thought of the social problem as a purely economic one and of its solution, therefore, as a purely economic solution. They tended to identify the social question with the wage question or blamed the money system, while Dom Virgil went to the roots of the problem and laid bare the underlying causes--godless individualism,

\(^{39}\) Ibid.
\(^{40}\) Ibid., 278.
\(^{41}\) See Chinnici, *Living Stones*, 142-45. Chinnici cites Ryan's acceptance of the classic Roman Catholic position of church and state, which ultimately implies the union of church and state; however, writes Chinnici, in the practical situation of the United States, Ryan argues that the "church and state exist in two different spheres. They were, if not separate, at least independent. This interpretation paralleled on a social and institutional level the separation in his thought between faith and reason, grace and nature, soul and body. Where the two spheres of state and church might overlap, the laws of the supernatural society took precedence. In either case the primary virtue to be cultivated in the life of the individual was obedience to the divinely constituted authorities. This dualistic structure of his thinking indicated that John A. Ryan participated in the fundamental fracturing of the American and Catholic identity."
hidden paganism, a subtle bourgeois spirit, rank materialism, and their supporting ideologies.\textsuperscript{42}

Virgil Michel saw the solution to the social question as a religious solution since it was the very absence of the social implications of religion that had created the contemporary crisis. There could be neither social regeneration nor a just society unless there was a conversion of the individual's heart: social programs and legislation were only a part of the solution.

Virgil Michel dedicated much of his life to the liturgical reform in order to accentuate the social implications of the Christian liturgy. He insisted upon the active participation of all Christians in the liturgy. His efforts to promote, educate, and challenge all to active liturgical participation affirmed the belief that the liturgy was meant to teach all Christians "that spiritual inactivity, in church as in the apostolate, is a veritable abomination before God and a contradiction of the Christian vocation, personally responsible as every Christian is for the welfare of the whole."\textsuperscript{43} The liturgy is the means of individual Christians sharing in the redemptive action of Christ, allowing personal conversion to true charity and justice. At the same time, the liturgy calls all persons to solidarity with the larger social order promoting this same Christian charity and justice. Virgil Michel "was one of few American Christians who could bridge the religious and secular spheres in such a way that he could join the call for community in social action to a call for community in the Church."\textsuperscript{44}

Virgil Michel is often remembered as bringing the liturgical renewal from Europe to the American context.\textsuperscript{45} This is certainly true; however, his unique contribution was his


\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 210.

\textsuperscript{44} Franklin and Spaeth, \textit{Virgil Michel}, 32.

\textsuperscript{45} Chinnici remarks, "Michel returned to the United States, started \textit{Orate Fratres} [subsequently this periodical was renamed \textit{Worship}] during Advent of 1926 and from then until his death in 1938, labored to make Saint John's Abbey, Collegeville, the center of the revival of Catholicism." \textit{Living Stones}, 178.
emphasis on the social implications of the liturgical renewal, often neglected in the European context. Grounded in Pius X’s understanding of the liturgy as the means to regenerate the Christian principle for social regeneration, Virgil Michel realized that if the liturgy was to guide the Catholic laity, they must become aware of its theological underpinnings.\textsuperscript{46} If in fact it was active participation in the liturgy that was called for, both the liturgical renewal and the education of the laity were necessarily mutual. The “lay apostolate and the liturgical spirit went hand in hand; passivity in the liturgy unfortunately went well with passivity in the worldly duties of the Christian and with deplorable results;”\textsuperscript{47} Michel was acutely aware that the spirit of individualism which precipitated the social question likewise had permeated the world of religion. In Michel’s perception the passivity of the Catholic laity in the liturgy diminished the social effectiveness of the Gospel in the American ethos. consequently. Catholics must be educated in the theology of the liturgy that calls for their active participation. The liturgical renewal was both a means for social reform and a means of correcting the privatizing dynamic inherent in liturgical practice. Virgil Michel recognized that the crisis in the “Church and state were in his eyes the result of a widespread individualism which had permeated the world of worship as well as the world of work.”\textsuperscript{48} If the liturgy is in fact the means of social regeneration, what led Virgil Michel to this position and in what way can the liturgy be a means of social regeneration?

Michel retrieves, not invents, the long forgotten early church notion of the liturgy, specifically the Eucharist, as rooted in the theology of the Mystical Body of Christ. The early

\textsuperscript{46} Michel was able to disseminate the wealth of the liturgical renewal in both \textit{Orate Fratres} and The Liturgical Press. Likewise, his concern for education was evident “beginning in 1929 [when] a central part of the mission of Virgil Michel began to be the creation of educational programs designed to form articulate laity thoroughly grounded in the wisdom of the church . . . . His lay education programs, however, were distinguished from all previous American catechises in that they flowed from the liturgy.” Franklin and Spaeth, \textit{Virgil Michel}, 34.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 18.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 32.
Christians found this image of the body of Christ as a primary inspiration for their conduct and life.⁴⁹ Lost, "especially since the growing dominance of an un-Christian individualism,"⁵⁰ Virgil Michel appropriates the Pauline organic image as both a sociological and ecclesiological hermeneutic:

The doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ framed all of Michel’s socio-liturgical thought. ... all worship and work, all human and Christian life in the world, should be thought of in terms of the Christian’s organic union with Christ, and with one another in Christ, the divine Mediator and Exemplar. In the supernatural community of the Mystical Christ, therefore, Father Michel found the pattern and inspiration for all natural and supernatural social living, for the solution of the knotty and ageless problem of relation between the individual and the community, for the lay apostolate and Catholic Action, in short for all Christian activity.⁵¹

As a sociological hermeneutic, the social order, like the mutual relationships of the Body of Christ, is meant to reflect the cooperation and solidarity of individuals working together for the common good. As an ecclesial hermeneutic, the Mystical Body of Christ is best expressed in the liturgy by the active participation of the entire assembly. Michel’s use of the Mystical Body of Christ as the model of the social natural order and the supernatural order as well bridges the void between a false dichotomy between the supernatural and natural spheres that fractures Christian life. “Since grace supposes nature and since the supernatural life of grace is built on the natural life of man on earth, the supernatural organism of the Mystical Body must find its counterpart in the organic life and forms of natural society.”⁵²

The Mystical Body as a sociological hermeneutic allows Michel to see the social order as intended by God to be the community of both individual dignity and social responsibility. The individual parts of the body are united as a whole, for the good of the

⁴⁹ Carey. American Thought, 278.
⁵⁰ Ibid.
⁵¹ Marx, Virgil Michel, 181.
⁵² Ibid.
whole, and so too, the social order must reflect the dignity of the individual while calling for a concern for the well being of the entire community. Virgil Michel did not see the social order as simply an aggregate of individual persons, rather the social order was a reflection of the social nature of the individual, calling for each person to contribute to the larger society in accord with one's needs and in response to the needs of others:

When we ask ourselves what should the right structure of any human society be, or how should the individual be related to any society of men (sic), we can always point to the Mystical Body and say: There is the model we should try to follow in all our human relations: for God constructed it on the basis of what is best in and for our natures.  

Virgil Michel is aware that the harmonious balance of the individual and the larger society, characterized by charity and justice, is not possible without grace and on going conversion:

The middle way can only be achieved with the help of the supernatural, without which either the individual bursts all bounds of restraint, or society crushes out his individuality. ... the liturgy furnishes both the inspiration, the guiding idea, and at the same time the necessary grace for its realization in life.

It is not enough to apply to economic life ethics and moral theology, even if this results in legislative action, but there must be a change in the person, in other words there must be an acknowledgment of God's grace and the sharing of this grace in the liturgy that renews the Christian spirit. If there is not attitudinal change of heart in the individual the social order will fall short of providing the "middle ground" recognizing both individual dignity and social justice and responsibility. "In the liturgy of the Mystical Body the individual and social elements of man's [sic] nature find their harmonious solution... between an unsocial individualism and an anti-individual or anti-personal collectivism."  

Virgil Michel affirms the liturgical life of the Church as the locus of where Christ's

53 Ibid., 182.
54 Ibid., 187, italics mine.
55 Ibid., 186.
redemptive power embraces all human concerns. It is at the liturgy that Christ's life and
Christ's redemptive action in the world becomes our life and our call to action. As the
expression par excellence of the Mystical Body of Christ. the liturgy exemplifies and effects
the solidarity of all under God as a body characterized by charity not selfishness, by justice
not exploitation. Not only for Virgil Michel is the liturgy the model of human society, but the
Eucharist generates a social and corporate mentality and a piety rooted in Christ and enables
and reflects the necessity of human life supernaturalized in Christ. "Christian life then
becomes life lived every moment of the day in and for Christ, who incorporates mankind
[sic] into Himself, active through his living members and supernaturalizing all their life and
activities--social and economic life included."56 The liturgy is the means of the individual
Christian sharing in the redemptive action of Christ, allowing personal conversion to true
charity and justice while at the same time calling the person to solidarity with the larger
social order promoting this same Christian charity and justice.

The insistence upon active participation in the liturgy and the efforts Virgil Michel
used to promote, educate, and challenge this active participation was fundamentally to
reaffirm the belief that the liturgy was meant to teach all Christians. "that spiritual inactivity,
in church as in the apostolate, is a veritable abomination before God and a contradiction of
the Christian vocation, personally responsible as every Christian is for the welfare of the
whole."57 It is at the liturgy that the individual shares in the life of Christ and learns the true
meaning of Christian living. The lessons of selfless love rather than selfishness, the lessons
of mutuality rather than alienation and the lessons of true community as opposed to
exaggerated individualism are learned in the liturgy so as to be practiced in all aspects of

56 Ibid., 208.
57 Ibid., 210.
Christian life. It is these lessons of the true social nature of the individual and the solidarity with others because we are the Body of Christ, that the liturgy inculcates. The fullness of the Christian response to the social question is nothing less than “to renew all things in Christ”, the motto of the liturgical renewal. There are no spheres of human life exempt from the redemptive work of Christ, nor the locus of Christian action. It is this full embrace of Christ’s redemptive act and the manifestation of this in the liturgy that allows all of life to be an act of worship. The Mystical Body of Christ is the ecclesiological hermeneutic of Michel’s liturgical renewal and it is only in and through active and thought filled participation of the laity in the liturgy that social regeneration will evolve.

**Ecclesial Implications**

Joseph Chinnici attributes Virgil Michel’s theological center and his concern for the active participation of the laity to a correct understanding of the eucharist as a sacrifice. Catholics have emphasized the juridical nature of the church, the church as a perfect society, stressing the “external social constitution, as if she were mainly a corporate person with power to exact certain dues from her members and to punish non-payment of them.”

Virgil Michel recovers the true meaning of the early church’s understanding of sacrifice: “the purpose of sacrifice was not simply the destruction of the victim but also the remission of sin, the conservation of grace, and the perfect union between God and people.” The church is the embodiment of the Spirit of Christ and the collective offering of the people at the Eucharist allows the people to be united with the redemptive work of Christ in the world. The

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58 Ibid., 180.
59 Ibid., 181.
active participation of the laity in the liturgy reflects the Church as the Mystical Body and the laity, united with all humanity in the redemptive Spirit of Christ, allows the social order to be fashioned with the justice and love befitting the Mystical Body.

The liturgical renewal was not only a means of social regeneration but also a corrective of a devotionalism and eucharistic practice that contributed to the privatization and compartmentalization of the Catholic community. Joseph Chinnici, in his work, *Living Stones: The History and Structure of Catholic Spiritual Life in the United States*, places the contribution of Michel’s liturgical movement in tandem with the eucharistic practices of the late nineteenth century and early half of the twentieth century. The eucharistic movement, "which evolved from devotional renewals of the second half of the nineteenth century, was the most vital spiritual movement in the first fifty years of the twentieth century American Catholicism." Chinnici contends that the understanding of the Eucharist reflected by the eucharistic movements may be taken as indicative of the structures that dominated Catholic spiritual life in the twentieth century. The whole phenomenon [the eucharistic devotional movements] was a symbol of the church, its self-perception and struggle for identity in American society. The overall significance can be seen by examining the movement’s understanding of the priesthood and the relationship between the spiritual life and social reform.

The eucharistic movement reflects and fosters a church that was generally parochial, clerical and heavily devotional. This clericalism and devotionalism had an impact on the self-understanding of the laity and their role in the liturgical life of the church:

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60 Chinnici, *Living Stones*, 146.
61 Ibid., 148.
62 The eucharistic movements reaffirmed the role and separate nature of the priest. The priest’s proximity to the Blessed Sacrament and his devotional life surrounding the reserved sacrament fostered a correlative relationship between the role and identity of the priest and the reserved sacrament. The image of the *alter Christus* has implications for the role of the laity. The laity’s participation in the devotional life reflected their loyalty to both the institutional church and to the culture of Catholicism that existed within a larger non-Catholic world. See Chinnici, Ibid., 148-52.
There can be no doubt they [the laity] were often pictured as passive recipients of the ecclesia docens, consumers not producers, in the economy of the Eucharist. Exposed as they were to the prevailing Protestant culture and necessarily preoccupied with business interests, the laity’s commitment to monthly holy hour, to periodic visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and to nocturnal adoration represented their allegiance to a parochial community and obedience to its leaders.  

The eucharistic movements in the United States differed from their counterparts in the Europe. Unable to express the political and social meaning of the eucharistic devotion along the lines used by Leo XIII, the American movements and the periodicals associated with them were heavily individualistic. The American eucharistic movements stressed “the personal sanctification of the priest and the encouragement of individual piety among the people. ... concentrating almost exclusively on the relationship between Jesus and the believer.” At best the social implications stressed that frequent communion coupled with eucharistic devotional practices nourished the presence of Christ in the individual’s soul. The reform of the individual could therefore lead to reform of the world, yet the overly individualistic emphasis hindered a true social consciousness.

Chinnici holds that it was inevitable that the liturgical movement directly conflicted with the aim and presuppositions of the eucharistic counterpart. The aim of both movements was to sanctify souls, yet the approaches were very different. The eucharistic movement focused on priests and an increase in their devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. The hope was that this increase in the priests’ devotion would draw all people to this same faith and devotion. The eucharistic movement recaptured the emphasis of the

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63 Ibid., 150.
64 Ibid., 153.
65 For an expanded comparison of these two movements see ibid., 148-53.
Middle Ages on the real presence in the host and its reservation. The practice of reservation was only a church response to allow the eucharist to be available for those unable to attend eucharist, and a practice relatively late in the life of the church. “For centuries there was no attempt to surround the consecrated species outside of Mass with the splendor and trappings which we love to surround them in modern times...” The eucharistic movement unlike the liturgical movement was focused primarily on the private sanctification of the individual, and most often the priest, who through devotion to the Blessed Sacrament could grow in personal holiness and in allegiance to the Church.

The liturgical movement also aimed to sanctify souls but it strived to do this through the active participation of the faithful in the public prayer of the church. A theological basis for the active participation of the laity in the liturgy was the true sacrificial nature of the Eucharist and the Mystical Body of Christ theology both found in the early church. One of the basic goals of Virgil Michel’s liturgical movement was an attempt to “make the Mass the center around which our daily life revolves, and Christ’s spirit of self-immolation for the glory of his Father and the salvation of his brethren the model which shapes its course.”

The liturgical movement, stressing the eucharist as the community’s action and social implications of this experience of the Mystical Body, called for the active participation of the participants as they continued the redemptive spirit of Christ in their daily lives. The daily life of the Christian and the celebration of the eucharist were not two separate spheres of


68 Ibid., 181.
reality but rather both rooted in the reality of the Mystical Body of Christ. 69 "When viewed from Michel’s perspective, the Mass as the central religious and cultural symbol of the community thus stood for an integration of the different dimensions of life that had eluded American Catholics since the turn of the century." 70 This unity challenged the often prevalent compartmentalization between the believer’s daily life and his or her practice and experience of one’s ecclesial life.

In conclusion, Virgil Michel exemplified the public church not only in his contribution towards social regeneration but also in his critique of the privatizing dynamics within his own Church. His contribution had a profound impact on American Catholicism. His integration of the theological categories of sin and grace, the supernatural order and the natural order based on the sociological and ecclesial hermeneutic of the Body of Christ fostered a deeper integration of Catholic life and thought in the American church. Michel reshaped much of the legacy of Catholicism. His emphasis on the priesthood of the faithful challenged the current understanding of the relationship between clergy and laity; in a predominantly clerical and parochial church this challenged the very identity of the church. Unlike the eucharistic movements of the day which reaffirmed an individual devotional life and hindered a true social consciousness, his liturgical movement attempted to correct the aberration of limiting the presence of Christ to the tabernacle. The minds and hearts of the believers share in the active presence of the redemptive Christ in the world. As Chinnici

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69 In a retreat to lay people, Virgil Michel offers the opposing notions of these two movements in a reflection on the "right" and "wrong" notions of the thanksgiving prayer Catholics said after receiving communion. The wrong notions include: "Now Christ is in us. Precious minutes... We are now tabernacles." The right notions include: "True thanksgiving take cue from whole sacrificial action. We in Christ and Christ in us, special sharers in God—permanent, as long as not chased out by us... Received gift to live out Christ. Not for 15 minutes, but for whole day, week." The contrast between these two attitudes is a fitting contrast of these two movements. See ibid., 192-83.

70 Ibid., 185.
emphasizes, "the sacramental correlative of this was an emphasis on baptism and confirmation. the rites whereby individual was permanently reborn in Christ and grafted onto the mystic body."\(^7\) The emphasis on belonging to the mystical body was a departure from the preoccupation with individual salvation and personal moralism at the expense of the social implications of the faith. The concept that the laity participated in the life of Christ in their daily lives fosters a broader understanding of the role of the laity: the role of the faith was not limited to hierarchically sanctioned Catholic Action or limited to Catholic organizations. Michel was quite aware of the privatizing dynamics with his own ecclesial community; Christianity in general, and Roman Catholicism specifically, cannot exempt itself from the modern individualism that so influenced the economic and political spheres. Virgil Michel, writes Chinnici.

severely criticized the *laissez-faire* individualism that had grown in society and church since the sixteenth century. The Benedictine argued that Catholics had been affected in their everyday life in such a way that separated religion and business and isolated their spiritual obligations from their ordinary affairs.\(^7\)

Chinnici summarizes Michel’s contribution as reacting very strongly to a fractured state of Catholic life, providing a stronger integration between the spiritual life and social reform, between individual and community. between objective piety of the liturgy and the more subjective dimensions of personal participation. Finally, his emphasis on baptism and the ecclesiology of the Body of Christ pushed toward the democratization of the priesthood of Christ and creation of an active and free lay Catholic community.\(^7\) Virgil Michel’s legacy of an active and free lay community was embraced by one of the founders of the most influential lay movements of the American Church, Dorothy Day, and the Catholic Worker

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\(^7\) Ibid., 184.
\(^7\) Ibid.
\(^7\) Ibid.
Movement.

Peter Maurin (1877-1949) and Dorothy Day (1897-1980): The Catholic Worker Movement

In 1933 George Schuster, the editor of *Commonweal*, introduced the French immigrant Peter Maurin to Dorothy Day. This introduction set in place the founding of the Catholic Worker Movement which “from the beginning has challenged the cherished beliefs of American citizens, many of whom have been more than willing to accommodate religious faith and social concerns to the economic imperatives of American capitalist society.” The Catholic Worker Movement is exactly what the name implies: a movement. Neither the founders nor those associated with the movement perceive the Catholic Worker as an organization with a systematic formulation of their beliefs. The diversity of belief within the movement and the diversity of views expressed through the movement’s newspaper, *The Catholic Worker*, however, should not be interpreted as a lack of vision or mission on the part of the movement. The movement, although present in several countries outside the United States, is essentially an American phenomenon. “rejecting the tendency of American religiosity to confine religion to private, intimate, or leisured spheres of life. while leaving the serious business of economics, politics, and international relations to secularism.” The impetus behind the movement and its ideas are largely Peter Maurin’s, the task of disseminating these ideas largely the legacy of Dorothy Day.

75 Charles Curran provides an overview of radical Catholicism in chapter four of *Social Ethics*, “The Catholic Worker and Paul Hanly Furfey,” 130-171.
77 For a concise treatment of Peter Maurin's contribution to the Catholic Worker, see Marc Ellis, “The Legacy of Peter Maurin,” *Cross Currents* 34, no. 3 (Fall 1984): 294-308.
Peter Maurin was born in France in 1877 and was involved with the movement *Le Sillon*. *Le Sillon* was one of the first modern Catholic movements to contend that the Catholic church had a central role to play in the social issues stemming from the rise of industrialization. "In terms of program and organization it [*Le Sillon*] was decentralist, one entered and left freely; there were no salaried positions. Above all *Le Sillon* was hostile to the bourgeois spirit and especially to its presence in the Catholic church." Maurin’s great concern was secularism, the separation of the spiritual from the material and the divorce of Christianity from society, business, and politics.

In 1933 when Dorothy Day met Peter Maurin she was a thirty-five year old journalist and Catholic convert. Day was born in Brooklyn in 1897, the daughter of a journalist who moved the family to San Francisco in 1904. The family moved to Chicago two years later in the aftermath of the San Francisco fire and earthquake. Dorothy Day was an avid reader and decided early in her youth to be a writer. Her writing reflected her awareness of the realities of urban living, issues of social justice, and the anti-bourgeois sentiment so reflective of many early twentieth century American radical reformers. Maurin urged Day to start a Catholic newspaper for the unemployed and the first edition was released on May Day of 1933. Mel Piehl in his work, *Breaking Bread: The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America*, writes of this time in Day’s life:

Dorothy Day had spent her youth exploring the seemingly conflicting demands of family, religion, social concern, and vocation. Now at age thirty-five, she believed she had found her life’s work in the public attempt to bring together Catholic faith and social concern in a paper for the poor. ... She now entered a unique branch of Catholicism, one quite unlike anything that had ever existed in the Church’s history....

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78 Segers, "Equality," 205.
Dorothy Day’s personal search was over. The arena of her struggle was now no longer herself, but her Church and her society.\textsuperscript{79}

The Catholic Worker Movement, in the spirit of Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day, continues to make a lasting contribution, not only to the Roman Catholic church in the United States, but to the role of religion in American life. What ideas shaped and motivated these two reformers and left such a legacy for the American Catholic community?

\textit{Theological Foundations}

Peter Maurin identifies the ills of society and suggests the solution that will transform his contemporary social order into a true and just society. Peter Maurin “rejected [capitalism] because of what he saw as the extreme individualism underlying bourgeois society and because it encouraged the expression of selfish, acquisitive and competitive instincts in human beings.”\textsuperscript{80} It was not simply capitalism as an economic system that Maurin rejects, but the modern social order’s disregard for the human person, especially the spiritual dimension of the person. Grounded in Christian theology and personalist philosophy, Maurin’s position holds as primary the absolute value of the human person as \textit{imago dei}. This unconditional and unqualified acceptance of each and every human person characterizes the Catholic Worker Movement. The social order is to protect and nurture each person’s journey toward the mystery of God, thus promoting the possibility of salvation. The social order does not exist for itself but to mirror and express the spiritual dimension of the human person. “The changing of a social order that hindered the spiritual development of the person became a necessity; at the same time, the worth of the person rendered violence unacceptable even in

\textsuperscript{80} Segers, “Equality,” 207.
the movement toward reform." In order to change the social order the founders and followers of the movement espoused a radical imitation of the evangelical life and a predilection for voluntary poverty. Choosing to be poor was an act of solidarity with the marginalized, weak, and the poor.

In siding with the poor, therefore, the Catholic Worker insisted that they were not performing acts of charity or social service, but engaging in a “personalist revolution” by giving proper treatment to people who were, in the eyes of God, fully the equals of those who served them.  

The movement’s houses of hospitality provided not only food and clothing but the experience of community which nurtured the human spirit. These houses and the communal farm communities were models of what the society should be. The weekly roundtable discussions, a vital component of the Catholic Worker Movement, provided the education and consciousness raising needed for disseminating the Christian principles necessary to shape the new social order. Economics, politics and other social institutions were often erroneously perceived as “givens” in American life. The roundtable discussions accentuate the effects of these supposed “neutral” institutions on the lives of Americans, and challenge those participating in these discussions to reflect on how their behavior, often perceived as simply private, actually affect the larger society. The weekly discussions challenge the individuals to be aware of the consequences of the economic and political order on the lives of the American people and the international community. At a time when American culture was more and more compartmentalized the “movement’s singular approach to the problem of relating religion, culture, and politics” was a critical challenge to the American culture in general, and a specific critique of the tendency to relegate religion to the private sphere.

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81 Ellis, “The Legacy of Peter Maurin,” 297.
82 Piehl, Breaking Bread, 103.
83 Ibid., 134.
The movement espoused a gentle personalism, "a Catholic radicalism based on the literal interpretation of the Beatitudes and of the Christian realities of sin, the fall and the need for redemption, reconciliation and community." In the spirit of the liturgical movement of Virgil Michel, the movement incorporated a radical Catholicism with a strong liturgical life. Michel's hermeneutic of the Mystical Body of Christ, both its ecclesiological and sociological dimensions, was reflected in the Catholic Worker Movement's understanding of all humanity as the body of Christ. Each person welcomed into the houses of hospitality was embraced as the person of Christ. "Underlying all of Maurin's ideas was a strong emphasis on the importance and value of the human being, personal action, and personal responsibility." This "gentle personalism" was the legacy of Peter Maurin and the motivation for Dorothy Day and the movement.

The conviction of each and every person as imago dei led the Catholic Worker Movement to call for political and social change and also spawned the movement's pacifism. While the image of the movement may call to mind bread lines and hospitality houses, to relegate Day's pacifism to a secondary position would be an error. In October of 1933, six months after the first appearance of the first issue of The Catholic Worker, the Catholic Worker sent delegates to the United States Congress Against War as representatives of Catholic pacifism. Day consistently espoused pacifism in the face of misunderstanding, ridicule and accusations of disloyalty from church and state.

Day, aware of the destruction of churches and the persecution of religious and priests

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during the Spanish Civil War, did not compromise her pacifist stance:

It is folly-- it seems madness-- to say as we do, "we are opposed to the use of force as a means of settling personal, national, or international disputes." As a newspaper trying to affect public opinion, we take this stand. We feel that if the press and the public throughout the world do not speak in terms of the counsels of perfection, who else will?\(^{87}\)

Day’s commitment to pacifism is present from the beginning of the movement and is manifest most dramatically through her criticism of American policy surrounding the Second World War. As the United States gradually moved from its position of neutrality in the years before World War II and began to prepare, mobilize and finally formally declare war, Day was often a “voice crying out in the wilderness” against American policies. Her pacifist position drew criticism from those outside of the movement, from those within, and from the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. In 1938, Day and others appeared before the U.S. Congress to testify against conscription “on the basis of individual freedom of conscience and vocation. Day was personally chastised by the New York Chancery for her call for non-registration.”\(^{88}\)

The movement was not directly under the auspices of the church’s hierarchy yet Day remained faithful to the church and its tradition. Day’s pacifist position was grounded in the tradition of the church and the radical gospel call for love of neighbor. The Catholic Worker was the channel for much of the movement’s pacifist thought during the war years. Consistently through the pre-war and war years the paper reaffirmed that “no matter how many priests had blessed tanks and battleships, the true mind of the church was peace.”\(^{89}\)

Papal statements, articles accentuating the pacifism of the Church Fathers, and the consistent

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87 Musto, Catholic Peacemakers, 709.
88 Ibid., 711.
89 Miller, Harsh and Dreadful Love, 164.
message of the Catholic Worker, is a call to all people to be faithful to the gospel, and to reaffirm that “there is a better way- the way of the Saints- the way of love,”⁹⁰ that is to be followed over the way of war.

**Ecclesial Implications**

Dorothy Day’s pacifism is one manifestation of the public church reflected by the Catholic Worker Movement. Perhaps there is no better way to illustrate this nascent public church than by highlighting Day’s response to two events during the war years. These two events, the first, the bombing of Pearl Harbor and America’s formal entrance into the war, and second, the use of the atomic bomb by the United States, elicited a response from Day and the Catholic Worker movement that was clearly counter-cultural. Grounded in the Catholic tradition and the evangelical spirit, Day’s response to these two events reflect her consistent call for “a better way” than the way mainstream America promoted.

There are several events in modern United States history that hold a grip on the American imagination. For Americans of a certain age the bombing of Pearl Harbor is one such event. Not only was it the catalyst for the formal entrance of the United States in the Second World War, but it spawned a popular battle cry: “Remember Pearl Harbor”. This incident fueled much of the justification for the American entrance into the war and would later serve in the American imagination as a way to justify the use of the Atomic bomb. One year after the December 1941 bombing, *The Catholic Worker* carried an article, “Forget Pearl Harbor Or. A South Pacific Charter”.⁹¹ written by Louis Lee Lock. The title of the article reflects the Christian challenge to forgive and to love one’s enemies. The author of

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this article offers an eight step program which includes a call for the American government
to apologize to Japan for America’s earlier mistreatment of the Japanese. This program
ranges from asking the American government to request Japanese forgiveness for teaching
the Japanese militarism and the imposition of unjust trade barriers, to the call for
Americans to: “forget Pearl Harbor! Christians forgive and forget.”92 The call to forgive and
forget stands in stark contrast to the American nation’s mobilization for, and declaration of
war. It offers a better way than the war time confinement of Japanese American citizens and
the confiscation of their material possessions.

America’s use of atomic weapons in August of 1945 was met with strong criticism by
Day. In the September 1945 edition of the Catholic Worker, Day’s article, “We Go On
Record.”93 responds to the bombing and the reports of a “jubilant” Mr. Truman. Her response
is to remind the readers of the human solidarity rooted in the Body of Christ; a solidarity
even with those our government labels as enemies and even with those who manufactured the
potential for atomic warfare. Rejecting the perception that the atomic era has ushered in
potential for progress. Day states, “this new great force will be used for good, the scientists
assured us. And then they wipe out a city of 318,000. This was good? The President was
jubilant.”94 Day reminds the readers that there is no justification for killing because we are all
members of the body of Christ. “We are held in God’s hands. all of us. and President Truman
too, and these scientists who have created death, ... our lives are in his [sic] hands.” But with
no uncertain terms she refuses any justification for the bombing and the build up of
armaments, “... Our lord has already pronounced judgment on the atomic bomb. When James

92 Ibid.
93 Dorothy Day, “We Go On Record,” Catholic Worker 12, no. 7 (September 1945): 1.
94 Ibid.
and John wished to call down fire from heaven on their enemies, Jesus said, You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of man came not to destroy souls but to save. He also said, what you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me.93 Day calls the American people to their true dignity as children of God and reminds the American people of the solidarity of the whole human family as the Body of Christ. What we have done to the least, we have done to the Lord, often a reality forgotten in the experience of war.

Day continually reaffirmed her commitment to the Roman Catholic church yet was a voice speaking of “a better way” than the official position of the hierarchy. “Even though the conscientious objector was ignored by the institutional church, by 1939 he had become central to the efforts of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement.”96 In the letter of the U.S. Catholic Conference, “The Crisis of Christianity” issued on November 14, 1941, the hierarchy calls for the need to obey and respect civil authority based on Leo XIII’s justification of the two divinely initiated civil and ecclesiastical powers. The bishops call on the Catholic population to support the defense of the nation justifying their position on the just-war theory. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, “Catholics, like most Americans, became fervent supporters of the war, both out of patriotic duty and from a sense of the justness of the struggle.”97 Day, however, continued to stress pacifism. Day met with opposition, a manifestation that the challenge of the public church to political and government policy will not necessarily be the popular position. Insisting on the basic pacifist position of the movement as Americans prepared for war in 1940, Day’s position practically split the Catholic Worker movement. “Dissidents who believed in the primacy of the social mission of

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93 Ibid.
96 Musto, Catholic Peacemakers, 718.
97 Ibid., 715.
the movement or the just-war tradition began abandoning the Worker. By 1945 twenty of the thirty-two Catholic Worker Houses had closed down and the Catholic Worker lost over 100,000 in circulation. 98

The movement’s lay organization and non-hierarchical affiliation provided the Roman Catholic church in America with a broader self-identity than one limited to the hierarchy. The movement countered “American religious individualism by engaging in Christian action in the public world;” 99 Day’s uncompromising pacifism in the face of much opposition reflects her desire to “break the cycle of violence which enriches the wealthy and destroys the innocent and the poor.” 100 The Catholic Worker Movement stands as a visible manifestation of the public church that at times is a lone voice in the wilderness, the wilderness of little public recognition for what is right.

John Courtney Murray, S.J. (1904-1967)

John Courtney Murray’s creative genius has “made him the most outstanding Catholic theologian in the United States in this century.” 101 Although his legacy extends well beyond his role in the intercredal debates of the 1940s, these debates are important in discovering the antecedents of the public church within American Catholicism. 102 Murray’s response to the question of intercredal cooperation challenges an existing self-understanding of the Roman Catholic Church that hindered the expression of the church as a “public church.” What follows is a limited examination of the ecclesial aspects of the intercredal

98 Ibid., 711.
100 Ellis, “The Legacy of Peter Maurin,” 300.
101 Curran, Social Ethics, 232.
102 These debates also have implications for the church-state relationship, an issue that would captivate Murray’s time and efforts in the decade following these debates. His work would eventually be appropriated in the Vatican II document Dignitatis humanae.
debates and their implications for the public church. It is neither an attempt to analyze the chronological development of the debates, nor to provide an exhaustive account of each participant's position. Rather, it grapples with the basic conclusions of the divergent positions and seeks to uncover their ecclesial implications.

There are elements of agreement between the opposing sides in the intercredal debates. All agree on the need for social reform in light of the papal incentives to respond to the crisis of humanity as a result of the Second World War. Murray and his contemporaries agree with the traditional Christian principle held by Leo XIII, that "the reform of society is not purely a secular matter but is religious as well." The recognition of the need for a spiritual remedy to the crisis and the papal calls for cooperation among "people of good will" raises the question at the heart of the debate. The question: the possibility and nature of Catholic participation in creating a new world order without risking indifferentism or compromising the unity of the church. Several prominent American theologians grappled with this question in a series of articles beginning in the early 1940's. John Courtney Murray, writing in *Theological Studies*, supports a form of intercooperation that Paul Hanly Furfey, Joseph Fenton and Francis J. Connell, writing in *American Ecclesiastical Review*, judge as compromising the unity of the church and the self-

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103 John Courtney Murray, "The Pattern for Peace and The Papal Peace Program," in *Bridging the Sacred and the Secular*, ed. J. Leon Hooper, S.J. (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1994), 7-27. Murray cites three papal texts which highlight the gravity of the contemporary situation and the need for people of good will to cooperate in rebuilding the world of peace. "...it is fitting that in the formulation of the peace there should be assured the cooperation, with sincerity of will and energy, with the purpose of a generous participation, not only of this or that party, not only of this or that people, but all people, yes, the common good, which requires the collaboration of all Christendom in the religious and moral aspects of the new edifice which is to be constructed."


105 Indifferentism is the term used to designate a common Christian ground that would seek a "list of common beliefs." The Catholic community saw this as a denial of its uniqueness and the divine nature of the Roman Catholic church.
understanding of the Roman Catholic church as "the one and only true church of Jesus Christ." Murray’s adversaries argue that Murray’s position sets the church on a course that cannot but lead to indifferentism and jeopardize true social reform. Murray’s opponents contend if the social crisis is essentially a spiritual one, as Leo XIII maintained, consequently, the remedy is spiritual. If the Catholic church is the one true church it espouses the only true solution to the crisis at hand, co-operation with non-Catholics would both diffuse the potential of the Catholic solution, which is the true solution to the crisis, and risk indifferentism. Murray contends that the dangers of not cooperating in the process of social reform outweigh the dangers of selective and thought filled intercooperation among the churches for the common good. The constituents of these two sides formulate their positions in light of similar papal pronouncements but a utilize a different theological method. All of these men are aware of their contemporary context but each side incorporates the challenge of the current context to different degrees resulting in different conclusions. These debates are important as a locus of contrasting ecclesiologies or self-understandings of the Roman Catholic church and as a resource to consider their impact on the appropriation of the Roman Catholic church as a public church in the United States.

**Theological Foundations**

Murray’s task in these debates is clear: how can cooperation among Catholics and non-Catholics not fall into indifferentism, yet provide concrete and tangible social transformation and improvement? He writes that the answer will depend upon the nature of the unity so constituted, and in turn will depend on the purposes of the co-operation. ...We are concerned with a particular
type of co-operation with non-Catholics recently urged by the Holy See. It is a unique type...

Neither Murray nor the Holy See is promoting a doctrinal or ecclesiastical unity reflected in interconfessional worship. The nature of this new unity is not simply the acceptable union of Catholics and non-Catholics participating in political parties or civic groups that foster civic unity but do not impinge on the unity of the church. The uniqueness of the times calls for a unique type of unity, one Murray calls “religio-civic” or “religio-social” unity:

It partakes of the nature of a civic unity because it is formed for the pursuit of the common good in the socio-economic order. But it transcends a mere civic unity because its bond is religious-faith in God and love of His [sic] law. Moreover, though its purposes remain within the temporal order, it concerns itself with the spiritual dynamic of the entire order, as well as with techniques for its management in particular spheres. Consequently, it partakes also of the nature of a religious unity.”

This new type of unity is “to effect a spiritual renewal of the social life of humanity, and to direct a structural reform of the social order, national and international.” For Murray the task at hand involves both the spiritual and the temporal. What he fosters is a means of respecting both, yet allowing for social transformation as a part of the Church’s mission.

He identifies three main components for the task of cooperation in light of the unique historical situation. First of all it is a spiritual crisis. The unity of all those who believe in God, in God’s love and in God as the source of the ordering of life are called to a common task. Secondly, the spiritual crisis is evident in the temporal order requiring the transformation of human institutions as part of the work of cooperation. Finally, the spiritual and temporal aspects of the current situation are not easily distinguished. What is

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107 Ibid., 259.
108 Ibid., 258.
109 For a brief treatment of Murray’s insistence on the institutional transformation needed and the juridical role in this transformation, see John Courtney Murray, “The Juridical Organization of the International Community,” in Hooper, Bridging the Sacred and the Secular, 28-41.
clear is that more than mere civic unity is needed since the impetus for this common ground is divine love and law. At the same time this cooperation must transform the temporal order. Murray posits the term “religio-social” or “religio-civic” in order to respect both the spiritual and temporal order, and to recognize the uniqueness of the Church and the needs of the world.

Murray sees the initial step towards cooperation as, "... not a winning of recognition for the spiritual authority of the Church, but simply a universal reinforcement of the primal law of human nature, the moral law of justice between men [sic] sanctioned by the sovereignty of God." Murray posits the common ground of cooperation not in creed but in the "law of human nature." The urgency of the world situation indicated clearly the efforts of the individual will not be enough to bring about the necessary change; organized cooperation is necessary. He foresaw the solution to the debate surrounding intercredal cooperation as a larger issue:

I am inclined to think that the purpose and significance of Christian co-operation will not be grasped, nor the danger of indifferentism obviated, unless the movement is seen by the people against a larger doctrinal background, and in light of a genuine appreciation of the realities of the present world crisis.

Murray knew that what was required was a larger doctrinal framework than the narrowness of the “intercredal common ground” of Christianity that would only entangle his enterprise in the charges of indifferentism. Murray’s own theological background and the resurgence of Thomistic thought during his era becomes the resource for this doctrinal

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thinking. Murray posits that "the Catholic solution [to intercredal cooperation] rests ultimately on a hard intellectualist position- the distinction between the natural and the supernatural order, and the enduring value of the order of nature within the order of grace." Murray takes his theological context as seriously as his social context. A renaissance in Thomism both in Europe and North America was underway. Murray appropriates Jacques Maritain and others and shifts the foundation of the common ground for cooperation from the narrowness of a common ground of beliefs to the more embracing common ground of believers: the supernatural order and the natural order are respected by their distinct ends, but they unite in the human person.

Murray was heavily influenced by Jacques Maritain’s Ransoming the Time, specifically chapter five, “Who Is My Neighbor?”. Maritain shares a similar quest with Murray. Maritain’s objective is to “determine whether the diversity of religious creeds, an evident historical fact, is an insurmountable obstacle to human co-operation.” In Thomistic categories Maritain distinguishes between the temporal and the supernatural order by their respective ends. In the spiritual order, “cooperation between believers of diverse religious denominations can be accomplished only by and in friendship and charity and in ... the freedom of love.” This love is rooted in our divine gift of faith and it requires an

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112 Murray’s doctrinal dissertation at the Gregorium in Rome was entitled, “Matthias Scheeben’s Doctrine on Supernatural Divine Faith.” A Thomistic topic, this becomes a foundation for his project of seeking a larger doctrinal arena for the discussion of intercredal cooperation.
113 Murray, “Intercredal Co-operation,” 274.
114 This “renaissance” of Thomism was a European and North American phenomenon. Often called the “Catholic Renaissance” especially in literature associated with the Roman Catholic Church in the United States, a succinct consideration of this phenomenon can be found in chapter six, “The Beginnings of the Catholic Renaissance,” and chapter seven, “The Catholic Revival Reaches Full Flood,” in Philip Gleason, Contending with Modernity, Catholic Higher Education in the Twentieth Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 125-66.
116 Ibid., 124.
expression of our faith in love of others. At the temporal level, "the effort toward union should express itself in common activities; [it] should be signed by a more or less close cooperation for concrete and definite purposes, whether it be a question of the common good of the political community to which we all respectively belong, or of the common good of the temporal civilization as a whole."\textsuperscript{117}

A "common ground" exists not in belief but in the believers themselves: in the very nature of the human person. "We are all bound together by a more primitive and fundamental unity than any unity of thought and doctrine."\textsuperscript{118} Our common human nature is our common ground. The human person is able to appropriate the divine truth and God's universal gift of truth within the individual's nature and not solely within the confines of the church. This reality calls all persons of good will who believe in God, to respond in faithfulness to the divine truth. The principle of analogy,\textsuperscript{119} Maritain maintains, allows a shared understanding of a social order grounded on principles and values, which are known to the human person by one's reason regardless of creed. Common principles based on the human ability to reason posit human dignity, freedom, respect as the enfleshment of the love of God. As Murray states, "every affirmation of nature-- in the concrete, of the religio-ethical basis of society--so long as it is simply an affirmation. is entirely Catholic... nor can it cease to be Catholic

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\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 127.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 132.
\textsuperscript{119} Maritain explains the principle of analogy at length in chapter five of Ransoming the Time, 131–40. He maintains religious pluralism is the reality of the contemporary world, and to seek common ground through agreement on a common list of identical doctrine is not possible. Common principles are necessary, however, for common action for the good of society. Maritain contends the common rational nature of humanity is the foundation of our principles of action, however diverse these may be in other respects. To pursue the same goals in the temporal order there must be a certain community of principles and doctrine. It is not necessary, although desirable, "to have a pure and simple identity of doctrine. It is sufficient that the various principles and doctrines between themselves should have some unity and community of similarity or proportion or in the technical sense of the word, of analogy, with regard to the practical end proposed." Based on the shared rational nature of the human person, Maritain would see cooperation with those who believe in the existence of God, the sanctity of truth and the value and necessity of good will as able to share common motivation to strive for the common good in the temporal order.
simply because it is made in common with those who are non-Catholics." These values are the common ground for intercredal cooperation. No longer attempting a unity of beliefs, with its problematic of indifferentism, Maritain posits a unity of believers, which allows Murray to support a new expression of intercredal cooperation, one that differs from the cartel model and is composed of non-Catholics and Catholics:

This organized cooperation will be headed by lay people and will not involve Catholic groups directly under the jurisdiction and pastoral authority of the bishop. The individual members as Catholics are under the hierarchy, and the expedience of such cooperation in general is left to the judgment of the bishops, but the movements themselves and the organizations are interconfessional.

This appeal to natural law for a common ground provides a means to avoid charges of indifferentism. This framework allows Murray to see the individual as the locus of the spiritual and temporal orders, each maintaining its respective ends. The church's ends are not compromised since the church has the task of informing the conscience of the believer in the task of transforming the temporal order. Allowing "Truth" to be found in the human person and not only within the confines of church provides a possibility for a broader and more effective ecclesiology.

Paul Hanly Furfey and Joseph Fenton's ecclesiological presuppositions differ from

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120 Murray, "Intercredal Co-operation," 274.
121 Furfey and Murray differ on modes of intercooperation organization based on their respective ecclesioligies. Murray and Furfey both cite Singulari quadam (Pius X September 24, 1912) written in response to the German Trade Union Controversy of the late nineteenth century. In Cologne the union was made up of both Catholics and non-Catholics who united to ensure effective social change. In Berlin the unions were separated by denomination and worked on specific issues on a temporary basis. This latter form of organization, the "cartel" model, Furfey favored and argued was the only type with legitimate papal sanction. Murray reads the papal document with more historical mindedness and with a predilection toward the Catholic responsibility to contribute to the dialogue for the common good. He espouses the mixed organization. Furfey's hermeneutic of the Roman Catholic Church as the "one and only true Church of Jesus Christ," limits the options for intercredal cooperation. For additional information on Murray's theological method and historical mindedness see Curran, Social Ethics, 185-87; and the chapter "In the Americanist Tradition," in Donald E. Pelotte, John Courtney Murray: Theologian in Conflict, 141-85. The latter includes a discussion of the contrast between Murray's and Fenton's theological methods in light of the Americanist controversy, specifically Longinque oceani (January 6, 1985) and Testem benevolentiae (January 22, 1899) and the implications of this for the intercredal debates.
122 Curran, Social Ethics, 188.
those of Murray:

Furfey's ecclesiology reflects the triumphalistic and self-confident understanding of his day. The Catholic Church is the one true church of Jesus Christ. For Furfey, grace and the supernatural are for all practical purposes, identified with the Catholic church. Heretics (Christians who do not profess the Catholic faith) and infidels can be saved only on the basis of the fact that their ignorance of the true faith is invincible. The Kingdom of God is identified with the Catholic Church but not quite coterminous with it.  

Furfey and Fenton's interpretation of the Church's teaching on intercredal cooperation gives preference to ecclesiological presuppositions which allow the danger of indifferentism to supersede the question of the common good of society and its transformation. Their ecclesiological starting point is the Church as the bearer of Truth, and any intercredal cooperation becomes suspect of granting rights to error and compromising the "unity" of the Church. Fenton and Furfey see the divinely instituted nature of the church and its uniqueness compromised by intercredal cooperation. Even cooperation on "civic" levels could provide an atmosphere that would place Catholics in the position of "compromising" their faith.

Furfey and Fenton are mindful of the challenges of their contemporary context but their insistence on the Catholic church as the one true church of Jesus Christ is their primary hermeneutic for considering papal statements. Unlike Murray whose primary hermeneutic is "Catholic concern for the common good must bulk large in any discussion of intercredal cooperation," his opponents seem intent on "winning the spiritual authority of the church" at the expense of effective intercredal cooperation.

Fenton and Furfey espouse a specific ecclesiology, and a classicist view of papal pronouncements. From these statements one can deduce a norm of uniform behavior for any given context regardless of its historical particularities. In Furfey's article, "Why Does Rome

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123 Ibid., 137.
Discourage Intercredalism?" his ecclesiological presuppositions are evident. Furfey presents in this article the Holy See’s preference for the practical implementation of intercredal organizations. This graded series of attitudes towards intercredal cooperation admit the danger of socio-religious intercredalism in varying measure.\footnote{125} In his schema the norm or priority is awarded a situation that reflects an ecclesial self-understanding as “the bearer of Truth”, and those outside of it in error. Furfey’s understanding of Rome’s response to efforts of social transformation is, “purely Catholic organizations for social reconstruction are praised unreservedly... . Society can be formed only on a religious basis. Only the Catholic Church has the true faith. Only a Catholic organization is in a position to apply the complete remedy.”\footnote{127} Although his scale moves from this optimal situation through instances of some cooperation for social change. the ideal of purely Catholic organizations for social reconstruction is Furfey’s operating hermeneutic. Granted, Furfey’s interpretation of past church teaching and practice admits to cooperation, but the cooperation is always limited, specific in its object, never promoted and merely tolerated. As he concludes, “no the popes do not discourage the collaboration of Catholics and non-Catholics in general; but they definitely do discourage some specific forms of such collaboration. What is the underlying principle.... cooperation with heretics.”\footnote{128} For Furfey, “cooperation should mean that non-Catholics and others should cooperate with us and not the other way around.”\footnote{129}

**Ecclesial Implications**

Furfey’s ecclesiological presupposition and primary hermeneutic is the Roman

\footnote{126} Ibid., 370-71.  
\footnote{127} Ibid., 371.  
\footnote{128} Ibid.  
\footnote{129} Curran, Social Ethics, 190.
Catholic church as the one and only true church of Jesus Christ. He offers some sympathy for Murray's position but concludes that Murray is in error as he offers "inter-confessional organization precisely to work for the reform of civilization (which is) primarily a religious task." Furfey's ecclesiology prevents the Catholic church from actively engaging in and promoting intercredal cooperation for social transformation. He sees the realm of the religious limited to "true" religion, limited to the ecclesiastical boundaries of Roman Catholicism and occupying a guarded position in "worldly affairs". Social transformation does not enter into prominence in the ecclesiology of Furfey or his colleagues. Rather safeguarding the Truth, in the possession of the Roman Catholic church, has priority.

In conclusion, Murray's contribution can be seen as an ecclesiological one. With the spiritual and temporal ordering, the church has a mission in the work of social transformation. The church can indirectly shape and fashion a social transformation through its responsibility of educating and forming the conscience of its members. In turn, the church membership is a leaven within the larger society working to promote the shared values which are evident to human reason and shared by all society. The church has a responsibility for social transformation and involvement in the public domain.

Murray's concern is ultimately with the role of the church in a world of religious pluralism. In other words, how does the Church respond to the larger culture and how does the church organize itself in light of a larger diverse milieu without compromising its own uniqueness? The context presents the challenge of social reconstruction and Murray's contribution marks a different path from the existing ecclesiology of the Roman Catholic church. In the categories of Martin Marty's public church, Murray challenges the "tribal"

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130 Furfey, "Why Does Rome Discourage Intercredenalism?" 374.
mode that Fenton and Furfey's ecclesiology reflects. Murray values dialogue and interaction with those of other denominations, while Fenton and Furfey's ecclesiology is more akin to "the bastion of truth" amidst the world of error outside the church. The intercredal debates were the precursor for Murray to grapple with the existing official Roman Catholic interpretation of America's freedom of religious expression as "granting rights to error." In the religiously pluralistic United States context, the totalist mode of ecclesial organization is unthinkable. Murray's concern for social reconstruction and the social implications of Catholicism, his call to the church to interact with other denominations and the larger world, without compromising the uniqueness of the Catholic community, and his insistence on dialogue for the common good are traits of Marty's public church. In the intercredal debates Murray is bringing to the forefront the need for the Roman Catholic church to question and rearticulate its very self-understanding in the face of the challenges of its contemporary context. The context is one of religious pluralism and international relationships. It is a context that cannot be ignored or legitimized by a "private faith." The context calls not merely for the Roman Catholic church to express the social implications of the Christian faith, it calls for a new self understanding of the Roman Catholic church that fosters and legitimates the public church that Murray's contribution illustrates so well. This legitimization and shift of ecclesial self-understandings would come in Vatican II.

**Conclusion**

The present chapter's consideration of John A. Ryan, Virgil Michel, Dorothy Day and John Courtney Murray is vital because it accentuates a significant element instrumental in fostering a self-understanding of the Roman Catholic church as a public church. The work of the public church is not only to engage critically and critique the culture's tendency to
marginalize the faith, but its work includes the task of self-correction. The work of the public church must include the critique of the ecclesial community’s own tendencies to minimize the social implications of the faith. Each of these individuals drew upon the resources of the Roman Catholic community in response to the privatizing tendencies of the American culture. The pervasive individualism and its effects on the larger culture were often the root causes of the social ills these four people addressed. At the same time, these four individuals lived and ministered within an existing ecclesiology, a self-understanding of the church, which they often challenged directly or indirectly. These individuals were antecedents of the public church and manifestations of its work because they critically engaged the American culture with the resources of the Roman Catholic tradition. It cannot be overlooked, however, that they are manifestations of the public church and its work because they also challenged and illuminated the privatizing tendencies within the Roman Catholic church.

John A. Ryan was a critical voice in a time of rapid industrialization reminding all Americans that the economic and political spheres are not exempt from moral scrutiny. At the same time, Ryan mentions that the demands of the “brick and mortar” immigrant church often relegates the broader social mission of the church to its margins as the American clergy was preoccupied with parochial demands. The liturgical renewal promoted by Virgil Michel was not only a means of social regeneration for the ills of American society but also a corrective of the devotionalism and eucharistic practice that contributed to the privatization and compartmentalization of the Roman Catholic church in the United States. The Catholic Worker Movement, whose magna carta were the Sermon on the Mount and the social encyclicals, was an expression of “radical Catholicism.” It is radical, not simply because of its whole hearted appropriation of the evangelical life, but also because the movement was
not content with espousing an attitude of accommodation to the American culture. The accommodation of American culture seemed to pervade much of the action of the episcopal hierarchy in the United States. The movement countered American religious individualism by engaging in social works of mercy and criticizing government policy often justified in the language of civil religion. When Dorothy Day and others steadfastly promoted the rights of conscientious objectors in the advent of World War II, the movement was criticized by both those outside the movement and the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church. The initial surge of devotees soon plummeted as the movement reiterated its radical pacifism. Unlike Catholic Action, the movement’s non-hierarchical affiliation provided a broader understanding of “the church” than simply limiting or equating “church” to the hierarchy. John Courtney Murray’s efforts towards ecumenical cooperation in the face of the devastation of the Second World War was largely hampered by the then existing ecclesiology of the Roman Catholic Church. Committed to social transformation and promotion of the common good, Murray was grappling with the church’s constant fear that even limited cooperation would lead to a compromise of the church’s religious identity.

These four individuals are examples of the public church not simply because they critically engage the American culture’s tendency to relegate religion to the private sphere. Just as importantly they manifest the public church’s task of identifying and confronting the tendencies and dynamics within the ecclesial community itself that also minimizes the social consequences of the Christian faith. Chapter one explored the factors within the American culture that foster the privatization of the faith and calls for the Roman Catholic church in the United States to be a public church. The following chapter will provide a limited consideration of the pre-conciliar church in order to illuminate more fully the dominant
ecclesiology in the context of John A. Ryan, Virgil Michel, Dorothy Day, and John Courtney Murray. The consideration of the pre-conciliar church will not only enhance an appreciation of these four individuals but will provide a point of reference to understand why the Second Vatican Council has been called the "most significant religious event in the twentieth century."  

Chapter Three
Foundations of the Public Church from Vatican II

Introduction

The previous chapter examined several important antecedents and manifestations of the public church in the pre-conciliar Roman Catholic church in the United States. Chapter two was a response to Martin Marty's challenge to discover not invent the public church within each ecclesial community. Marty's challenge, however, is not merely to discover the public church but to "make its form and understanding and work explicit." Whereas the previous chapter focused explicitly on the manifestations of the public church, this present chapter strives towards a deeper understanding of the Roman Catholic church as a public church. Chapter three considers the Second Vatican Council's theological foundations for the public church. The following consideration of the Second Vatican Council is selective and limited, focusing on two specific conciliar documents that contribute to an implicit ecclesiology of the public church. The term "public church" does not appear in the conciliar texts; consequently, what is needed is a lens, a method and means of examining the tacit characteristics of the public church in the selected conciliar documents. The lens used to examine and analyze the particular conciliar documents is necessarily selective and focuses specifically on the general characteristics of the public church.¹ This chapter demonstrates that the Second Vatican Council provides the theological foundations and legitimization for the Roman Catholic church as a public church.

¹ Selective use of council documents and limiting the consideration of the public church to its general traits is required both by the voluminous nature of the conciliar documents and the conciliar commentaries, and the wealth of qualities, characteristics, and implications of the public church.
Martin Marty’s sociological categories of totalist, tribalist, and privatist provide a beneficial framework for the structure of this chapter. The Second Vatican Council ushered in a new mode of ecclesial presence, one that is decidedly different from previous ways of relating to the world. Medieval Christendom reflects the totalist mode of ecclesial life that blurs the distinction among religion, society and the state. The highly centralized, juridical and monolithic pre-conciliar church of the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century in the United States is an apt reflection of the tribalist mode of organization. The tendency in the Modern Era to relegate religion to the private sphere with little social consequence illustrates well the privatist mode. The consideration of Vatican II is conducted within the larger framework of Martin Marty’s categories because these categories set the context for understanding the public church as the optimal ecclesial option for the United States.

The following chapter is divided into two main parts. Part one paints a portrait of the pre-conciliar Roman Catholic church’s self-understanding on the eve of the Second Vatican Council. The focus of this section is on how the church was shaped by the movement towards centralization in the late nineteenth century. This movement contributed to promoting, sustaining, and reinforcing the church as a sub-culture somewhat parallel to the larger culture. Part one is not an exhaustive treatment of Roman Catholic church in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, or an extensive treatment of the church in the United States. Part one allows the accomplishments of the Second Vatican Council to be more fully appreciated when seen in contrast to the pre-conciliar church.

Part two is a selective examination of Gaudium et spes and Dignitatis humanae to see the contribution of these documents to the self-understanding of the Roman Catholic church
as a public church. The redefinition of the church-state relationship in *Dignitatis humanae*, the result of the distinction among the church, the state and the larger society, establishes the fundamental freedom of the church to fulfill its ministry without compromising either the church’s autonomy or that of the civil community. *Gaudium et spes*’ “provides a theological rationale for the entire social ministry of the church” situating the social ministry at the center of the church’s life and work. Following the consideration of the conciliar documents is a limited examination of the implementation of the Second Vatican Council in the American context. A brief consideration of the American bishops’ pastoral letters, *The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response* and *Economic Justice For All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the United States Economy*, illustrates the appropriation of conciliar themes in the United States context. These episcopal documents reflect a dramatically new way of exercising Catholic episcopal leadership in the American context. The focus is not on the contents of these letters but rather how they illustrate the post-conciliar relationship between faith and culture. The episcopal letters are manifestations of the Roman Catholic church critically engaged with the American culture.

**Setting the Stage: From Totalist to Tribalist**

The critique of the pervasive individualism of the American culture is a primary task of the public church. If the Second Vatican Council is to provide a theological foundation for the public church, the council must confront and respond to individualism. The Second Vatican Council’s encounter with individualism, however, must be seen within the broader

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context of the Roman Catholic church’s response to Liberalism. Joseph Komonchak contends that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Roman Catholic church constructed a “new sociological form in which to give expression to its ancient Christianity.” This sociological form was a distinct response to the loss of the Roman Catholic church’s previous social and cultural role. The central spheres of public life, such as economics and politics, gradually became unfettered from the influence of religion, and from Catholicism in particular.

The church consistently resisted and rejected the notion that religion was a matter of indifference to the character and coherence of society. This, in a large part, was what it understood by Liberalism: the relegation of religion to a private matter on the assumption that such areas as the economy, politics, social conflict, education and the family could quite adequately be handled without appeals to religious norms and legitimizations.

The Roman Catholic church found itself in conflict with these claims of Liberalism and the church’s response initiated a change in the church-world relationship.

Komonchak cites the genesis of Liberalism in the “individualistic repudiation of the authority of tradition and community.” He associates Protestant private judgment, Enlightenment intellectual autonomy, capitalist possessive individualism, popular sovereignty in politics, in addition to socialism and communism’s banishment of religion from society as contributing factors to the modern liberal tradition. The legacy of the

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5 Two articles by Joseph Komonchak shape this discussion. My intention is not to provide an exhaustive consideration of the liberal movement nor of the church’s response to Liberalism. I focus specifically on Komonchak’s assessment of the pre-Vatican II creation of a Catholic sub-culture. I rely specifically on “The Ecclesial and Cultural Roles of Theology,” Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings (1985): 40, 15-32, and “Vatican II and The Encounter between Catholicism and Liberalism,” in R. Bruce Douglass and David Hollenbach, eds., Catholicism and Liberalism, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 77-99. A more expansive treatment of the encounter between the Roman Catholic Church and Liberalism can be found in this second work.

4 Komonchak, “Roles of Theology,” 16.

5 Ibid., 17.

6 Ibid.
freedoms of press, education, speech, association, and religion grounded Liberalism in an exaltation of the individual and defined freedom as the exemption from external constraint. In response to the modern era the church organized itself and defined itself around the rejection of the liberal principles of modern culture and society. This rejection was not “a classic withdrawal” from the world, or a sectarian relationship vis-à-vis the world. The church maintained its rejection of Liberalism with the traditional church conviction that, “religion makes integral claims on people, affects all areas of their lives, and so cannot be relegated to the margins of social and political life.” The church’s strategy in its response to Liberalism and to the advances in the social sciences, however, requires consideration.

The church’s social and cultural role had weakened considerably in light of the rise of Liberalism, lessening the ability of the church to influence and shape its cultural ethos. The church’s response to its shifting role, in Komonchak’s analysis, was the formation of a Catholic sub-culture, “constituted by its anti-modern interpretation of Christianity and by central features of its internal organization.” The diminishment of the church’s authority and influence necessitated both a means of safeguarding and sustaining its influence with its own membership as well as strategies for resisting the errors of the day. In order to sustain Catholic identity among the church’s own constituency, a proliferation of Catholic organizations designed to protect the rights of Catholics, resist the spread of Liberalism and provide opportunities for association and solidarity were implemented. In the face of a world largely characterized by the errors of Liberalism, “these popular forms of association were...

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7 Komonchak, “Vatican II,” 76.
8 Komonchak, “Roles of Theology,” 17.
9 Komonchak contrasts the Catholicism of the Middle Ages with the Church’s formation of a subculture in the modern era. He notes that “to describe it as a subculture is already to note the changed circumstances of a Church which, it recalled in often romantic evocations of the Middle Ages, had once enjoyed a cultural monopoly.” Ibid., 17.
10 Ibid., 19.
designed to supply for the absence of the political support the church had once been able to count on."

It was the movement towards the centralization of authority in Rome, however, that provided the church with a universal and united front to confront the errors of the modern world and strengthen the Catholic sub-culture.

The church undertook a massive effort to centralize its authority. This would provide the church with an international center of authority against movements that were international in their intentions and effects. The gradual discrediting of national and cultural expressions of Catholicism and the increased liturgical, theological, and canonical norms in strict adherence with Rome solidified the uniformity and centralization of Roman Catholicism in the face of Liberalism.\textsuperscript{12}

The church’s move towards centralization was a strategy to present a united and universal resistance to the liberal modern era, an era that not only undermined and diminished the previous social and cultural authority of the Roman Catholic church but called into question the “very truth it knows”. The complexity of the movement towards centralization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century requires a selective approach. What follows is a limited consideration of Leo XIII’s \textit{Aeterni patris} (1879) and the Vatican’s response to the Modernist Crisis, to the extent they contributed to the creation of a universal Catholic sub-culture. Also, several factors within the experience of the Roman Catholic church in the United States that defined and sustained the sub-culture in the American context are considered. The Americanist controversy, the immigrant church, and the Catholic Renaissance will be considered in light of their contribution to the creation of this sub-culture.

\textsuperscript{11} Komonchak, "Vatican II," 77.
\textsuperscript{12} Komonchak, "Roles of Theology," 18.
Assembling the Tribe

The death of Pius IX and the election of his successor Leo XIII in 1878 was a catalyst for a growing atmosphere of openness in what had been a previously restrictive and defensive pontificate. Leo XIII’s pontificate was “one long and somewhat successful effort to place the church on a new footing in regard to modern secular culture.” Leo XIII attempted to renegotiate the strained relationships between the Vatican and the growing number of secularized state governments. He encouraged the opening of the Vatican archives and instituted a biblical commission to foster and oversee biblical and historical research being conducted in France, Belgium and Germany in order to update the church intellectually.

In 1879, Leo XIII issued the encyclical Aeterni patris urging a restoration of Thomism as the intellectual tradition for Catholic philosophy and theology. Writing to the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops and Bishops of the Catholic world, Leo exhorts them “in all earnestness to restore the golden wisdom of St. Thomas, and to spread it far and wide for the defense and beauty of the Catholic faith, for the good of society, and for the advantages of all the sciences.” This encyclical did not initiate the first restoration of Thomas’ thought in the nineteenth century. As early as the 1840s, there was “a revival of neo-scholastic philosophy and theology... [that] lasted for over a century up to the 1960s and Vatican II.” Leo XIII’s selection of Thomas Aquinas’ thought as normative for the church was an attempt to adopt a unifying theological method in order to crystallize the identity of the Catholic

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community in the face of the theological and philosophical challenges of the modern era. The selection of Aquinas’ thought as the only criterion for Catholic theology, however, often negated the pluralism of the medieval age and entrusted the whole task of Catholic theology to one school of theological thought.

Thomas O’Meara contends that the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century appropriation of Aquinas’ thought was flawed. As early as the year 1890, Aquinas’ original contribution had been disconnected from the rich and dynamic context that gave rise to his genius. A lack of awareness of Aquinas’ historical context and of the development within his writings stunted the wealth and potential of the appropriation of Aquinas’ contribution. Aquinas’ thought was extracted from the original context of the late medieval university and transmitted into an abridged manual format in a seminary context. This was detrimental to the appropriation of Thomistic thought because it overshadowed Aquinas’ critical and dynamic theological method. Aquinas had provided a critical synthesis of multiple contemporary sources, including Aristotelian philosophy, in a critical dialogue with the Christian tradition. His original critical methodology gave way to clerics teaching future clerics in a manual-based pedagogy. By the end of the nineteenth century the theological context was often confined and restricted to a seminary context utilizing manuals with little exposure to the actual works of Aquinas. This seminary context was often in a rural or isolated setting further contributing to the image of the Roman Catholic church as a church “which appeared isolated or asleep.”

17 Ibid., 172.
18 Gerald McCoil elaborates on the effects of the deficiency of this historical awareness, citing several consequences for the theological enterprise. See Gerald McCoil, Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century: The Quest for A Unitive Method (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), 242-44.
19 O’Meara, Thomas Aquinas: Theologian, 172.
became the system by which new sources and new questions were judged as either compatible or incompatible with true Catholic teaching:

Because it insisted that scholasticism alone could do justice to the authentic doctrine on revelation and grace, ... neo-Thomism reinforced by papal documents did not just apply specific philosophical words to central Christian beliefs but to some extent altered the theological content. Neo-scholasticism identified truth and life with immutability and rationality; it opposed being to history and ignored concreteness in human life and in the economy of salvation.20

While neo-scholasticism served to prevent a reduction of Catholic thought to the ideologies of the modern era, it also played a unifying role in the universal Catholic sub-culture by depicting a united opposition to the perceived errors of the day. Gradually, the neo-Thomist unified system was what supported the magisterium and the Roman schools. After 1870 the neo-Thomist revival became in Thomas O’Meara’s words, “a reaction to all that was modern and contemporary.”21

Theology’s role became more apologetic as it focused primarily on supporting ecclesial polity and identity. The flawed appropriation of Thomas not only shifted the role of theology but also, it had an impact on theology itself. “An outdated physics and a shallow metaphysics forced theology to be static, verbal, and timeless, and to be an exercise beginning with definitions and ending in conclusions.”22 The rise of the historical methodologies of other disciplines were soon to clash with the timeless and ahistoric perspective that colored the church’s understanding of dogma, church structures and tradition. The open atmosphere of biblical research and historical approaches to theology in the early years of Leo XIII’s papacy proved to be short-lived. The expectation of scholars to

20 Ibid., 171. The alteration of the theological content is commented upon by Gerald McCool. McCool maintains that themes from baroque scholasticism had a significant influence on the theology of the late nineteenth century. McCool offers a more extensive commentary than is possible here in Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century. See especially pages 221-23.
21 Ibid., 169.
22 O’Meara, Thomas Aquinas: Theologian, 172.
incorporate their advances in biblical and historical studies into Catholic theology was met with strong ecclesial resistance.

The ecclesial resistance to the innovative methodology of a group of theologians, philosophers and others in the social sciences spawned the "Modernist crisis." The Modernist crisis was a significant challenge to the church as it struggled with theories of development and historical awareness in the social sciences. Modernism can be defined as "the general term for the manifold crisis in the doctrine and discipline of the Church at the end of the nineteenth and twentieth century." In its extreme form it was the occasion of the condemnation pronounced by Pius X in 1907, in the decree Lamentabili and the encyclical Pascendi dominici gregis. Modernism, even in its strict theological usage, is difficult to define and is best understood as a "movement" rather than a set of definite doctrines. It was a diverse movement both geographically and thematically, yet in its diversity it coalesced around one core component. The Modernists were trying to come to terms with nineteenth century developments in historical-critical methodologies and modern experience as a whole, and to provide a service for Roman Catholic theology. The Modernists incorporated into their theological method the positive sciences as a means of determining the meaning of sacred texts, appraising the role of dogma and examining continuity and change within the history of the Christian church. The Modernists’ emphasis on historical awareness,

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24 Roger Haight remarks, "beneath the shifting social and political movements of the 19th century, science and historical research gradually opened up new vistas for human understanding." This growing historical consciousness conflicted with the ahistorical self-understanding of the church and of theology. Two characteristics help explain the crisis religiously: First, the church’s theology was completely devoid of historical consciousness, of being "in time." The ideological structure of the church’s self-understanding simply did not take historical change and movement into account. Second, historical consciousness clashed with an absolute institutional authority. Historical consciousness threatened to relativize ideas and institutions. An appeal to human experience as a medium for truth also challenged the absolute institutional authority. See Roger Haight, S.J., "The Crisis of Modernism," Compass: A Jesuit Journal (March 1990): 23.
heightened by the popular theories of development and evolution, seemed to impact theology in such a way as to relativize church dogma, question church polity and undermine authority. The Vatican reacted strongly and restricted the use of modern scientific methods in determining the authorship of the Scriptural texts and the use of historical, cultural and textual biblical criticism.

What had been intended as a contribution to the Roman Catholic church’s response to a liberal Protestant critique had itself become a challenge to the ecclesial identity of the Roman Catholic church. Underlying the clash between the Modernists and the representative Roman School was an ahistorical model of truth and of human knowledge.

This clash between the non-historical epistemology, metaphysics, and theology of the Roman School and the historical consciousness and historical-critical methods of the 19th & 20th centuries perdured right up to and including the Second Vatican Council. This inability to account for change “prevented the Roman theologians and the Roman congregations from solving, or even appreciating, the genuine questions with which historical science and modern philosophy confronted the Church at the time of the modernist crisis.”

In 1907 Pius X condemned Modernism in both the decree Lamentabili, a decree containing the errors purportedly held by the Modernists, and in the encyclical Pascendi dominici gregis. In Pascendi dominici gregis, Pius X devotes considerable attention, forty-four paragraphs out of the encyclical’s total of fifty-seven, to the grave situation the

25 The Roman School’s leading theologian Cardinal Louis Billot (1846-1931) wrote a treatise, De Immutabilitate Traditionis contra modernam haeresim evolutionismi (1904), directed against Alfred Loisy (1857-1940). Billot’s condemnation of Modernism can be found here. Billot was very interested in defending the immutability of tradition, which he identified with the magisterium, because it was very closely connected to infallibility. See Sanks, Salt, Leaven and Light, 113.
26 Ibid., 113.
Modernist crisis created for the Catholic church. The remaining thirteen paragraphs consider the remedies and the necessary practical applications for an adequate ecclesial response to the crisis. The gravity of the situation is mirrored in encyclical’s language:

We therefore, Venerable Brothers, have determined to adopt at once the most efficacious measures in Our power, and We beg and conjure you to see to it that in this most grave matter nobody will ever be able to say that you have been in the slightest degree wanting in vigilance. zeal or firmness. And what We ask of you and expect of you, We ask and expect also of other pastors of souls, of all educators and professors of clerics, and in a very special way the superiors of religious institutions.\(^\text{28}\)

The practical applications of the Vatican’s response to Modernism included episcopal vigilance over publication of books, articles, and newspapers, and restrictions on both the clergy and others for participation in public gatherings and congresses. In addition, in order to prevent the spread of error, the encyclical directed the establishment of “Councils of Vigilance”, diocesan watch committees, entrusted with the “duty of overlooking assiduously and diligently social institutions as well as writings on social questions so that they may harbour no trace of Modernism, but obey the prescriptions of the Roman Pontiffs.”\(^\text{29}\) In addition, the papal condemnation was enforced through the “Oath Against Modernism” (*Sacrorum antistitum*, 1910) requiring internal assent on the part of all clergy and teachers of theology and philosophy to *Lamentabili* and *Pascendi*.\(^\text{30}\) The response of the Vatican to the Modernist crisis fueled the centralization of the Roman Catholic church by implementing clear expectations for theological education. “The only signs of theological life that were to be found within the Church after the defeat of modernism, then, were those within neo-

\(^{28}\) *Pascendi dominici gregis*, 44.

\(^{29}\) Ibid., 55.

\(^{30}\) The “Oath Against Modernism” was established by Pius X in *Sacrorum antistitum* in 1910. It was rescinded by Paul IV in 1967.
scholasticism itself." A unified theological system and a system of centralized accountability to the Vatican promoted and sustained the Catholic sub-culture.

The encyclical’s condemnation of Modernism created an atmosphere of suspicion and fear among scholars and hindered the development of the theological enterprise. As a result of Pius X’s response to the Modernist crisis a vigilance against perceived doctrinal deviations fostered “integralism”, the “tendency among some Catholics who feared that the employment of new scientific methods might endanger the faith and who reacted by casting suspicions of heterodoxy on those who differed with their outlook even in matters that did not involve the faith.” In the aftermath of Pius X’s condemnation of Modernism, the “integralism that had appeared on occasion as a tendency gained a permanent organization.” The diocesan committees of vigilance, the use of censors and other attempts to safeguard the Catholic faith created a “tribal” mode of ecclesial understanding and expression. Integralists “attempted to safeguard Catholics by enclosing them in a ghetto inaccessible to the outside world, where few would make all decisions and the mass of the faithful would do no more than comply.”

The implementation of the Vatican’s response to Modernism “caused unnecessarily bitter polemics among Catholics, injured the reputation of orthodox Catholic scholars, and hampered the progress of Catholic scholarship.” Those who supported Catholic liberalism, social Catholicism and ecumenism were often the targets of the integralist movement.

What was really ominous, however, was not only that neo-scholasticism was confirmed in theory as the theology of the Church, but also that merely to suggest an

33 Ibid.
34 Ibid...
35 Ibid.
alternative theology or to question neo-scholasticism became subject to ecclesiastical sanctions.\textsuperscript{36}

The withdrawal of theology from the social sciences eventually solidified the primary role of theology as "supporting" the Catholic sub-culture. As theology retreated from being in conversation with the social sciences, it focused less on issues "outside" the ecclesial sub-culture, and was more intent on its defense.

In the aftermath of the Modernist crisis integralism solidified and bolstered the Catholic sub-culture for decades. It was the ecclesiology of the Roman School that dominated the theological textbooks reproduced with minimal modifications during the first half of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{37} Although the Vatican's response to the Modernist crisis and the retrieval of Thomism fostered and solidified the Catholic sub-culture, the church did not simply "withdraw" from the world in a sectarian manner. Rather, "Leo XIII was determined to defend the right and the duty of the church to enter and engage the public order of society."\textsuperscript{38} The papal encyclical \textit{Rerum Novarum} (1891) both reflects a church committed to its right to engage the world and the issues at hand, and a distinct mode of expression that reflects the subculture created by the Vatican's response to the rise of Liberalism.

In \textit{Rerum Novarum}, Leo XIII "initiated modern Catholic discussion of human rights

\textsuperscript{36} Mark Schoof. \textit{A Survey of Catholic Theology}. 68.
\textsuperscript{37} Pius XII's 1943 encyclical, \textit{Mystici Corporis}, renewed an interest in the concept of the Church as the "Mystical Body of Christ." The encyclical recognizes the true church of Jesus Christ with the holy, catholic, apostolic Roman Church and calls this the mystical body of Jesus Christ. Stressing the visibility of the church, it also recognizes the presence of the charismatic gifts in the community, yet the emphasis of this encyclical carries through the centralization and juridical understanding of the Roman Catholic church emphasized in the latter part of the nineteenth century. "There can, then, be no real opposition or conflict between the invisible mission of the Holy Spirit and the juridical commission of ruler and teacher received from Christ. Like body and soul in us, they complement and perfect one another, and have their source in our one Redeemer" (quoted in Sanks, \textit{Salt, Leaven and Light}, 115). While not denying the organic, living, developing, and changing elements of the body image, the encyclical reinforces the juridical and somewhat static ecclesiology of the post Modernist church.

in the economic order.” The legacy of this encyclical for the Roman Catholic church is the subject of much important study and analysis. The present consideration of Rerum Novarum, however, is limited to the encyclical as a manifestation of the Catholic subculture at the end of the nineteenth century. An appreciation of Rerum Novarum as an expression of the Catholic subculture requires consideration of three points. First is the style and language of the encyclical. An ecclesial document’s style and language often reflects the operating ecclesiology underpinning the document. Second, the role the church claims for itself in the solution to the problems it is addressing is indicative of an understanding of the church-world relationship. Finally, how is the church-world relationship in Rerum Novarum indicative of the Catholic subculture? These three points shape the following consideration of Rerum Novarum as a manifestation of the Catholic subculture at the end of the nineteenth century.

The pattern of address in Rerum Novarum, “To Our Venerable Brethren, All Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops and Bishops of the Catholic World, In Grace and Communion with the Apostolic See,” describes, if not defines, the “Catholic world.” It is a world composed within a system identified by positions and roles of authority, and described as a “world” of its own. This style of address reflects a specific image of the church found in the encyclical. almost as a world separate from the larger world: “there is nothing more useful than to look at the world as it really is—and at the same time look elsewhere for a remedy to its troubles.” (RN 14) The encyclical’s language reiterates its role as a teaching church, “the church uses its efforts not only to enlighten the mind, but to direct by its precepts the life and conduct of men [sic].” (RN 13) At the same time, the encyclical portrays

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40 See Gordon Zahn, “Social Movements and Catholic Social Thought,” in Coleman, ed., One Hundred Years of Catholic Social Thought, 45.
the Roman Catholic church as the only teacher and the vital resource for the solution to the problems at hand. The language and style of the encyclical reveal the Roman Catholic church’s operating ecclesiology. It is the church that is the bearer of “the truth” possessing the solution to the errors of the day. It characterizes the church as “standing apart” from other institutions yet holding the solution to the social ills. Leo XIII’s claim of the church’s right and duty to engage in the public order is concomitant with the understanding that the solutions to the problems of the social order are to be found only in the Catholic church.

The second point for consideration is how the church’s understanding of its role in the solution of the social ills is an expression or manifestation of its understanding of the church-world relationship. In *Rerum Novarum* the church did not confine its role to merely identifying the problems at hand: “the church. [is] not content with pointing out the remedy. [it] also applies it.” (RN 22) The church claims a prominent role in combating the errors of the day: “if society is to be cured now. in no other way can it be cured but by a return to the Christian life and the Christian institutions.” (RN 22) In defining the church’s role in the solution to the social issues, there is an implicit understanding of the church-world relationship.

J. Bryan Hehir contends that the principle of the church as a *societas perfecta* illuminates an operating church-world relationship at the time of *Rerum Novarum*. Hehir reiterates that “perfect” does not mean morally impeccable, but rather the church “possessed all the power and capabilities needed for it to achieve its specific objectives as a religious community.” Hehir contends the formula *societas perfecta* allowed the church to distinguished itself from the civil power and the state. This allowed and acknowledged the

42 Ibid., 56.
independence of the state and granted a sphere of competence for the civil and temporal authorities. The principal goal of the formula of the church as a *societas perfecta* Hehir asserts, was to "support the independence—hence the right and competence—of the church, then secondarily to seek an arena of collaborative activity for the church and civil authority, both of which were obligated to serve the person." In *Rerum Novarum* the church’s acknowledgement of the state is evident. "By the State we here understand, not the particular form of government which prevails in this or that nation, but the State as rightly understood; that is to say, any government conformable in its institutions to right reason and natural law..." (RN 25) Also, the encyclical recognizes the States’ role in the implementation of the solution to the social ills: "the rulers of the State should be to make sure that the laws and institutions, the general character and administration of the commonwealth, shall be such as to produce of themselves public well-being and private prosperity." (RN 26) In *Rerum Novarum* the church distinguished itself from the state and acknowledges the independence and competence of authorities in the civil and temporal spheres. However, Hehir’s understanding of the church as a *societas perfecta* as primarily establishing "the independence—hence the right and competence—of the church" is important for an understanding of the church-world relationship. Hehir connects the church as a "perfect society" with the church-world relationship by his use of the metaphor of "line-drawing."

Hehir contends that,

Leo XIII was pushed and pulled into a posture of "line-drawing" with the civil society of his time. He sought to establish constructive relationships with temporal powers (*concordia* was his often-stated goal), but the objective margin for positive action was very limited. Leo XIII’s line-drawing metaphor began with a conception of the "church and world"; it defined this relationship cautiously and defensively, conscious

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43 Ibid., 57.
44 Ibid.
Hehir's assertion that the operating ecclesiology of *Rerum Novarum* was that of the church as a *societas perfecta* posits a distinct church-world relationship that is reflective of the Catholic sub-culture.

*Rerum Novarum* represents the Roman Catholic church's desire to engage in the public order but the church-world relationship underpinning the encyclical tends to promote an understanding of the church as a Catholic sub-culture. *Rerum Novarum* portrays the church's understanding of itself as the "bearer of truth" amidst the larger world of "error." At times this position was expressed either in a triumphalism or a defensiveness that stymied cooperation in the social order and envisioned the role of political and social institutions as implementing the Catholic solution. The encyclical's image of the church as bearing the solution for the social ills, yet somehow "standing apart" reflects an understanding of the church as a parallel world, a sub-culture amidst the larger world. While not a "withdrawal" from the world, the church expresses a separation from, or a resistance to, what is perceived as a threat to the church's truth. The movements towards centralization in light of the challenges of the Modernist crisis, coupled with the church's contention that it truly has the "right and competence to speak and act in the public order" resulted in the church's "public-face" that is best described, in the words of Joseph Komonchak, as a Catholic sub-culture.

*The American Catholic Sub-Culture*

The Roman Catholic church in the United States was not only affected by the universal movements towards centralization but also by several factors unique to the

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45 Ibid.
American experience.\textsuperscript{46} Three situations in particular – the Americanist controversy, the immigrant church, and the “Catholic Renaissance” in the United States – all dramatically reinforced the Catholic sub-culture in the United States.\textsuperscript{47}

The Americanist controversy is described as, “the first genuine attempt to come to grips with the whole gamut of important American values: democracy, pluralism, co-operation between religions, state neutrality toward the churches, and the problem of religion and culture.”\textsuperscript{48} Pope Leo XIII’s response to the Americanist Movement reflects the operating ecclesiology at the close of the nineteenth century. In \textit{Longinque oceani}. Leo XIII recognizes the vibrant American Church and acknowledges the contribution of the American system to the church’s growth.

For the Church amongst you, unoppressed by the Constitution and government of your nation fettered by no hostile legislation, protected against violence by the common laws and the impartiality of the tribunals, is free to live and act without hindrance.\textsuperscript{49}

At the same time, his letter contains a dual warning. First of all, Leo XIII reiterates the classical church desire for government sponsorship of the Catholic community. “but she [the Church] would bring forth more abundant fruits if in addition to liberty, she enjoys favor of

\textsuperscript{46} The unique American context must not be minimized. John Tracy Ellis’s succinct reminder is noteworthy. “But as Catholics we may not, perhaps be as aware as we should be that the Church likewise inaugurated something altogether new to its own experience when at the same time it erected here the first diocese in 1789 and chose a native-born American to govern it as the first bishop. Never before in its nearly 1800 years of history had the Church of Rome been confronted with the task of establishing itself in a democratic republic over 3,000 miles away, the overwhelming majority of whose nearly 4,000,000 inhabitants were committed to the Protestant faith, and whose government was based on a constitution and bill of rights that, while providing for a separation of Church and State, at the same time gave complete freedom of worship and liberty of action to the roughly 30,000 adherents of Rome’s ancient Catholic faith.” John Tracy Ellis, “Perspectives in American Catholicism,” in \textit{Benedictine Studies}, vol. 5 (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1963), 54.

\textsuperscript{47} Each of these three topics is the subject of much scholarly attention. These themes are mentioned here and briefly described only to illustrate the unique factors that supported the Catholic sub-culture in the United States. There is no intent to present a detailed account of these topics.

\textsuperscript{48} Donald E. Pelotte, \textit{John Courtney Murray: Theologian in Conflict} (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), 146.

\textsuperscript{49} John J. Wynne, \textit{The Great Encyclicals Letters of Pope Leo XIII, Longinque Oceani} Paragraph 5.: 323.
the laws and patronage of the public authority." This reflects the church's self-understanding as the "bearer of the Truth," and this is the basis for the church's position that Catholicism is to be sanctioned officially by the government while similar rights to those in error would be denied.

Second, Leo XIII cautions against setting the American experience as normative for the universal Church.

it would be very erroneous to draw the conclusion that in America is to be sought the most desirable status of the Church, or that it would be universally lawful or expedient for State and Church to be, as in America, dismembered and divorced.

In addition to the Constitutional issues of the American context, Leo XIII also addresses the role of Catholics in the larger society. Reflecting the suspicion and danger of indifferentism, Leo XIII is less than nuanced: "now with regard to entering societies, extreme care should be taken not to be ensnared by error." Pope Leo leaves little doubt about Catholic cooperation with non-Catholics in various organizations: "Catholics ought to prefer to associate with Catholics, a course which will be very conducive to the safeguarding of their faith." This fear of indifferentism reflects a church required to safeguard its divinely given truth from those in error. The church attempted to separate itself from the world, from culture, and from other churches by creating a parallel world in the Catholic subculture. It seems the only options at the church's disposal were to seek either unilateral

50 Ibid., Paragraph 6.:324.
51 Ibid., Paragraph 6. : 323.
52 Indifferentism is the belief that all philosophical opinions, all religions, all ethical doctrines concerning life are equally true and valuable. It is the precursor to syncretism. New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1975 e., s.v. "Indifferentism."
54 Ibid., 332.
55 In the debate concerning intercultural co-operation among John Courtney Murray and others, those in opposition to Murray justified their position in these papal interventions of the "Americanist" era. Murray's contribution to the nascent public church in the pre-conciliar era stand out against the background of the operating ecclesiology of the later nineteenth century.
sanction or quasi-separation from the less than truth-filled world.

Leo XIII's affirmation of the growth of the Church within the American experience is tempered with warnings of any attempt to universalize the model of America's church-state relationship. It is just this threat of universalizing the American experience that leads to Testem benevolentiae. In 1897 in Europe, a careless French translation of Walter Elliot's Life of Father Hecker, containing an overly enthusiastic treatment of Americanism in its preface,56 propelled the "internationalization" of the Americanist movement.

The introduction to the English edition had been written by Archbishop John Ireland who by now had become very popular in France. ...Abbe Felix Klein's translation into French included an enthusiastic preface in which he praised Hecker as the priest of the future, and extolled the American way of life.57 Pope Leo XIII's fears of the American experience becoming "normative" are realized.

Attempting to calm conservative European bishops already upset over Catholic participation in Chicago's World Parliament of Religions (1897), Leo XIII prohibited Catholic participation in the Paris Congress of Religion, to be held in 1900, and issued another letter to the American bishops. In the letter, Testem benevolentiae, addressed to Bishop Gibbons58 and issued on January 22, 1899, Leo again questions the Americanist movement. Pope Leo takes a decidedly different tone from the previous Longinqua oceani. He states, "the object of this letter is not to repeat the praise so often accorded, but rather to point out certain things which are to be avoided and corrected."59 Condemning the adaptation

56 Isaac Hecker was the founder of the Paulist Fathers, an American congregation of priests. A former Redemptorist, Hecker and his community gained international renown for his community's rejection of traditional religious vows and its commitment to an American apostolate.

57 Pelotte, John Courtney Murray, 149.

58 Jay Dolan states in The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 315: "...the threat of theological modernism, the temporal power of the Papacy, the French controversy between republicans and monarchists, and the Spanish-American War—came together to influence European debate over Americanism."

59 Wynne, Testem Benevolentiae, 441.
of the Church to the modern age, he also warned against the idea that the church in America could be “different from the rest of the world.” Other issues under scrutiny were: rejection of external guidance in spiritual direction, natural virtues placed over supernatural virtues, a rejection of religious vows as contrary to human freedom, and the desire to make the Catholic faith more appealing to new converts or those who have lapsed. Although the “Americanist bishops” countered that these beliefs were not present within America, and were only the result of mistaken foreign perceptions of the Americanist movement, this letter seemed to put an end to the movement.

The American church retreated from a rather open embrace of American culture to adopt the decidedly “Roman” quality characteristic of the pre-conciliar church. The aftermath of the controversy created ambiguity and inner conflict for Catholics in the United States, especially in regards to the question of church and culture. On the one hand, there was a need for the American church to express and convince Rome of its loyalty. On the other hand, at various times and for various reasons, Catholics had been victims of American anti-Catholicism. This dynamic leads to the conflict for Catholics to be “good loyal Catholics” in the eyes of Rome and, the necessity of expressing loyalty to the nation. In the advent of the waves of Catholic immigrants, Catholics were often in a position of convincing the larger non-Catholic population that being a Catholic was not mutually exclusive to being a “good American” and, being an American did not exclude being a faithful Catholic.

The immigrant church refers to the era in which “American Catholics for the most part lived in a ghetto now known to historians as the immigrant church.”60 The immigrant church fostered a Catholicism that was distinct from the larger American society.

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This style of Catholic religious praxis, characterized by “integralism” in theology and “devotionalism” in spirituality, accentuated the differences separating American Catholics from their fellow citizens: unquestioning loyalty to Rome, a veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints that at least bordered on the superstitious, clerical authoritarianism, and a consciousness of sin that made all these other differences seem not just plausible but indispensable.

It was through the protection of this immigrant church that the waves of Catholic immigrants were welcomed, supported, and in the post-World War II years, eventually assimilated into the mainstream of American society. Although quite successful in facilitating the assimilation of Roman Catholics into American culture, the immigrant church “represented a defensive or... militant way of life that was, ...tight, intellectually narrow, and wrapped in an invisible and largely impermeable membrane that resisted social osmosis with the rest of the country.” The experience of the immigrant church, shaped the identity of American Catholics along the lines of ethnicity, time, and place.

American Catholic people possess a multitude of identities, derived not only from their varying ethnic and religious backgrounds but also from the particular circumstances of their settlements in the United States. Differences [exist] between an ethnic parish in Philadelphia and its counterpart in San Francisco, regional specificity is a distinctive feature of immigrant Catholic communities. ... Time is as important a determinant as place. Whether settlement in the United States came during a period of impassioned nativism and anti-Catholicism, or during an economic depression, certainly had an impact upon the development of a particular group’s sense of belonging.

The immigrant church was dynamic, multicultural and richly diverse. In the midst of its vitality, however, it fostered a Catholic separatism that contributed to the Catholic subculture in the United States. The perception of the Catholic immigrant as “foreign” and loyal

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61 Ibid. It is the pervasive devotionalism of the immigrant church that supported and fostered the Eucharistic movements that often undermined the liturgical renewal attempted by Virgil Michel.
62 Ibid., 65.
63 Jay Dolan cites the historian Philip Taylor, who described the United States as a “distant magnet” that between 1820 and 1920 attracted 33.6 million immigrants to its shores. See The American Catholic Experience, 128.
64 Dolores Liptak, R.S.M. Immigrants and Their Church (New York: Macmillian, 1989), xiv.
to a foreign head of state continued to fuel anti-Catholic bigotry. The church became a refuge from the hostile larger society as it continued to offer a familiarity of language, culture and the faith, all of which was unavailable in the larger context. Its ethnic and geographical diversity sparked the "growth of separate ethnic enclaves within the Catholic community which added the reality that this 'Catholic ghetto' was composed of many ethnic ghettos."65

Not only was the Roman Catholic church as an immigrant church a sub-culture within the larger American culture, but within the church itself, smaller sub-cultures existed which accentuated the insular nature of the immigrant church.

The Catholic Renaissance or the Catholic Revival was a post-World War I phenomenon in the United States that indirectly contributed to separatist tendencies in the relationship between the Roman Catholic church and American culture. Among some American Catholic intellectuals, including the nationally prominent Msgr. John A. Ryan, this movement was characterized by a strong emphasis on what was perceived as the obvious:

linkage with Americanism, especially in the context of World War I. ... the claim that the roots of democracy and constitutionalism were to be found in medieval Scholasticism. This argument, which became a distinguishing feature of Catholic Americanism in the 1920s, can be looked upon as the earliest clear-cut manifestation of the Catholic Renaissance in the United States.66

Attempts to explore the compatibility of Catholic and American principles had been attempted before in the Americanist Movement of the 1890s, but what is striking about the post World War I era is the "emphasis on the virtual identity of Scholastic and American political principles."67 This virtual identification of scholasticism with American political principles led some to draw striking parallels between the post-World War I American era

65 Ibid., xv.
67 Ibid.
and the age of Medieval Scholasticism. The result of this was the belief that as “an idea, a type of culture, Catholicism had shaped the whole of Western civilization so deeply that every institution and ideal of true Americanism had its embryo and antetype...in Catholic theory and practice.” The contribution of the social sciences in the 1930s designating culture as “the way of life of a people,” Christopher Dawson’s scholarship concerning religion as a dynamic element in every great world culture, and the popularity of the Mystical Body of Christ theology, all contributed to the idea that a resurgence of the Catholic culture was the best remedy for the ills of secularized American society. Philip Gleason observes.

The intellectual key was Scholasticism rethought and restated in modern terms; the institutional key was the Catholic university from which might flow influences capable of changing the direction of our culture so that some day it may be said that truly we have achieved a Christian American civilization.

This intellectual movement was supported by professional organizations and associations, periodicals and books, all of which allowed “neo-scholasticism, the central element of the revival, to continue to gather strength among Catholics in the 1930s, while at the same time attracting more attention from the broader American intellectual community.” Catholic Action, originally a European movement, spread to the United States in the early 1930s and along with the phenomenal growth of sodalities and various Catholic service organizations offered the pragmatic basis for a “systematic effort to overcome

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68 Philip Gleason’s insight is noteworthy. “Against this background, it is understandable that American Catholics sometimes linked the point about harmony of their religious and political commitments to broader claims about historical continuity between the Middle Ages and the present day.” Gleason cites Carlton J.H. Hayes, a respected Columbia University historian and convert to Catholicism and an active layman in the 1920s who implored his fellow Catholics to meet their obligations, “they must grasp the significant truth that America is the daughter of the Catholic Church. Not only was this continent discovered and opened to the whole world by Catholics, but our country could not possibly be what it is now had it not been for Catholic Christianity.” In the origins of this Catholic Renaissance the association with the Medieval era sowed the seeds of a nascent triumphalism. See ibid, 125-28.
69 Ibid., 128.
70 Ibid., 149.
71 Ibid., 163.
secularism and create a truly Catholic culture in its place." By 1940, on the eve of the Second World War, the Catholic revival had taken on a decidedly counter-cultural outlook. Although counter-cultural in its intent, the revival actually fostered a sub-culture with the goal of becoming the one dominant culture despite the pluralism of the American context. The Catholic institutions of higher learning became a locus of the revival, shaping curriculum around the “Thomistic Synthesis” and bringing “everything together in a harmonious unity.” The morale of Catholic educators was “high, indeed their outlook could be called triumphal, for they believed that a mighty Catholic intellectual and cultural revival was under way and that it was being carried forward on the tide of history.” The blend of Thomistic philosophy and theology, as an all-inclusive system, was the Catholic revival’s solution for the ills of society. The title of the National Catholic Alumni Federation’s symposium in 1939. “Man and Modern Secularism– The Conflict of the Two Cultures Considered Especially in Relation to Education” illustrates the relationship between the Roman Catholic church and the larger American culture at the end of the 1930s: two cultures in conflict, the secular and the Catholic.

The Roman Catholic community, from the end of the nineteenth century until the eve of the Second Vatican Council, created a parallel world with centralized structures and a defined monolithic system of belief that would identify itself as a clear and identifiable

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73 Of special note is a review of Philip Gleason’s Contending with Modernity by David O’Brien. O’Brien recognizes Gleason’s position that creating a Catholic culture was the positive alternative to surrender to modernity. O’Brien, however, moves beyond “counterculture” and posits the term “sub-culture.” See, David O’Brien, review of Contending with Modernity: Catholic Higher Education in The Twentieth Century, by Philip Gleason, U.S. Catholic Historian 13, no. 4 (Fall 1995): 153.
74 Gleason, Contending with Modernity, 165.
76 Gleason, Contending with Modernity, 164.
community of faith for its own membership and to those outside. On the eve of the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic church’s self-understanding was that of a societas perfecta, a society as “autonomous, sovereign and free as is the modern State.” The church understood and expressed itself as the community of truth within a larger hostile world permeated by the errors of Liberalism. The church perceived the world as a threat not only to the role of the church in society but to the very truth it knows. The church, however, did not “withdraw” from the world as much as create a sub-culture that existed as a parallel world, “a perfect society” which related to the larger world with defensiveness and suspicion. The church adopted a way of organizing itself and a means of transmitting the “truth it knows” that mirrors the tribalist mode Martin Marty describes. As Joseph Komonchak contends.

throughout the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, the church constructed itself as a counter-society legitimated by the counter-culture of its basic faith. Central dogmas and devotions were articulated in such a way as to stress their anti-modern, anti-liberal meanings and implications. This counter-ideology was embodied in the structures of an alternative society.

Similar to the tribal mode Martin Marty describes, the Catholic-sub-culture meets the outside world in a posture of suspicion and defensiveness. The tribalist mode requires a united front, a unity of thought and practice instilling in the membership a strong sense of an identifiable community. The Catholic sub-culture’s neo-scholastic interpretations and appropriations of the faith led to a common philosophy and theological discourse presenting a united front in its attempts to respond to the liberalist ideology of the modern era. At the same time, however, it eventually restricted the parameters of Catholic theology. “Theology became a discipline primarily designed to serve the self-realization of the Catholic sub-culture: it was, that is, almost exclusively ecclesial in nature and subject to the constant and immediate

77 Komonchak, “Roles of Theology,” 18.
78 Komonchak, “Vatican II,” 77.
oversight of the magisterium.” On the eve of the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic church had numerous parallels with the tribal mode of organizing religion and ecclesial communions.

The shift in the church’s relationship with the modern world ushered in at the Second Vatican Council can be more fully appreciated in light of the Catholic sub-culture. The construction of this “new sociological entity of the Catholic sub-culture” as Joseph Komonchak maintains, was an expression of the church’s strategy to contend with the modern world in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This Catholic sub-culture sets the stage to grasp the significance of the tremendous shift of the church and world relationship at the Second Vatican Council.

The Second Vatican Council: Discovering the Public Church

Martin Marty offers the public church as the best ecclesial response to the factors that privatize the faith and hinder its social implications. In the American context it is the pervasive individualism that shapes the configuration of the private and public spheres and relegates religion to the private sphere. The public church is ultimately concerned with a classic tension in Christianity: the relationship between faith and culture. This tension gives rise to the question of how the church and its relationship with the world around it remain faithful to “the truth it knows.” An uncritical relationship between the church and the world could lead to a loss of the unique identity of the community of faith. On the other hand, the refusal to be in relationship promotes either the irrelevance of the church in the lives of its

79 Komonchak, “Roles of Theology,” 20. Komonchak cites several contributing factors to the role theology plays in the Catholic subculture. The uncritical and eclectic theology of the eighteenth century, coupled with the loss of church-sponsored universities to the modern state, led to the establishment of Roman colleges and universities with standard implementation of Trent’s guidelines for training priests. Theology was largely limited to these institutions where clerics taught other soon-to-be clerics.
members or contributes to the compartmentalization of the faith as a "private choice." In the church's desire and attempt to be a relevant ecclesial community it must retain its unique religious identity while consistently articulating and promoting the social implications of the faith. In the American culture the church's mission is carried out in a context that minimizes these social implications. It is not enough that the council documents give evidence of the church's ability to be in relationship with the world; to provide a legitimization of the Roman Catholic church as a public church, the documents must illustrate a critical engagement with the world.

The public church has the obligation, to provide the public with alternative visions of what is desirable and possible, to stimulate deliberation about them, provoke a reexamination of premises and values, and thus broaden the range of potential responses and deepen society's understanding of itself.80

If the public church is to provide alternatives to those factors that privatize the faith and diminish its social implications, the conciliar documents must offer an alternative anthropology to American individualism. This dominant individualism contributes to a fractured relationship between the individual and the larger society generating several commonly held misconceptions. First is an erroneous understanding of the human person as prior to, or in conflict with, the larger social order. Either misunderstanding contributes to the belief that the political and socio-economic orders are "givens", morally neutral and beyond possible transformation. Second, designating the political and economic orders as a part of a morally neutral public sphere limits religion, faith and ecclesial communions to the confines of the private sphere.

The conciliar documents must support an understanding of a church in dialogue,

critically engaged with the host culture and committed to the social implications of its own tradition. The church's retrieval of the social significance of its own theological tradition is important for public discourse. The task of the public church is the "articulation of the Roman Catholic tradition's worldview or background theory which informs a social ethic and consequent public choices." The public church is called to participate as a constituent in the public community of communities to help propose an epochal shift in human sensibilities. In this shift, people would learn to combine religious commitment with civility, spiritual passion with a public sense. To help produce a culture in which such combinations might emerge.

The public church acts as an agent of transformation in the public sphere, and "if it undertakes considerable self-criticism and self-appraisal, [the public church] can become an instrument in coalition with others to work for a different concept of the republic." The conciliar documents must explicate the role of the church that promotes civility not belligerence, that persuades rather than coerces, for the sake of fostering dialogue in a pluralistic society.

The conciliar documents selected will be examined in light of several essential characteristics of the public church. The essential characteristics are: a critical anthropology; a critical and dialogical mode of ecclesial presence in the world; a strong emphasis on the social consequences of the community's theology and the church's transformative mission and role in society. The use of these general characteristics as a framework for the documents allows for the coherent organization of a large amount of conciliar material without losing the overall focus of the chapter.

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81 Ibid., 23.
83 Ibid., 144.
Dismantling the Tribe

The Second Vatican Council has been described as "the most significant religious event of the twentieth century, and certainly the most significant event of the century for the Catholic church." Whether one attempts to explain the contribution of the Second Vatican Council as "the end of neo-scholasticism" as Walter Kasper posits, or "the end of the Catholic church's sub-culture," as Joseph Komonchak contends, its effect on Catholicism is perduing. In the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et spes, and in the Declaration on Religious Liberty, Dignitatis humanae, the church both relinquishes the nostalgic claim of retrieving the church of Medieval Christendom and breaks down the ecclesial sub-culture. The pluralism of the modern age and the secularization of modern political structures necessitate a dismantling of the Catholic sub-culture and mark the end of the totalist and tribalist modes as effective options of ecclesial life for the modern era. The Second Vatican Council establishes the foundations for the shift from these ineffective modes of ecclesial self-expression and self-understanding to a new understanding of the church's presence in the world and its subsequent relationship with culture.

Critical Engagement In the World

Walter Kapser maintains Gaudium et spes is an attempt of the church to enter into dialogue with the world in a way other than the past efforts of the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. The church's new effort at dialogue with the world necessitates

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86 Komonchak, "Vatican II," 78.
In Gaudium et spes, the church desires to speak with a relevant voice to a universal audience. The document addresses the whole human community seeking to describe how the church understands “its presence and function in the world of today.” (GS, 2) Unlike the sub-culture of the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, the church does not attempt to construct a parallel world “along side” of the larger world in order to sustain its identity or define its mission. Rather, the church acknowledges its place in the world and it defines and retains its unique role and function within and not apart from the world community. The term “world” in Gaudium et spes is rich in significance and meaning. “The term world designates primarily not the totality of God’s creative work, not those earthly values and those tasks, but the human family with its whole environment.” The church understands the world as enslaved by sin yet as created and sustained by God. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus it is redeemed and liberated as it anticipates in hope its eschatological fulfillment.

The church’s solidarity with the world is not a theoretical or abstract concept. It embraces the “anthropological, cosmological, and historical dimensions of the world” and most importantly, proposes the Christian interpretation of this total reality. The

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87 This chapter’s consideration of Gaudium et spes’ critical anthropology is shaped largely by Walter Kasper’s article, “The Theological Anthropology of Gaudium et spes,” in Gaudium et spes: Thirty Years Later (Vatican City: Laity Today, 1996), 44.

88 All references to conciliar documents are from Austin Flannery, O.P., ed., Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations: The Basic Sixteen Documents. A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1996). Conciliar references in any secondary sources are in the exact style of the original author with the use of [sic] to acknowledge the lack of inclusive language.

89 “The expression ‘in’ was retained from the first version onwards. It makes clear that it has never been a question of the Church standing opposite to and facing the world, but of presence in it. ... The Council never in fact used the words which are so often repeated today—the world is present in the Church, the Church is present in the world—but right from the start it was never a matter of two opposed realities.” Charles Moeller, “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: Preface and Introductory Statement,” in Herbert Vorgrimler, ed., Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, vol. 5 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 81.


91 Ibid., 110.
anthropological dimension is reflected in the church’s desire to be in solidarity with all of humanity; the cosmological aspect is its desire to see the totality and unity of all things; and the historical dimension is the church in “the theater of human history.”92 The Council’s analysis of the contemporary condition is not a naive optimism, or an attitude of disdain. The council recognizes the efforts and progress of the human community, both the advances of technology and the sciences, and the cultural contributions of the human family. At the same time, it reminds the human community that these advances have also had detrimental effects. These advancements have often generated war and conflict, alienation, the lack of community, isolation, and a growing disparity between the quality of life of the various segments of society. The centrality of the human person and human experience are at heart of the church’s diagnosis of the contemporary world.

In this diagnosis of modern man [sic]. one of the most remarkable aspects is that, the more wonderful his [sic] achievements in the field of nature and of work. the less clearly does he [sic] see himself [sic]. his [sic] vocation and the meaning of his [sic] life. That is his [sic] greatest problem. That. according to the council. is the point from which the dialogue should begin.93

The church acknowledges that contemporary human experience is marked by anxiety and questions about the true meaning of life. The church’s engagement with the modern world is not simply a capitulation to the values of the contemporary world. “The church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in light of the gospel, if it is to carry out its task.”(GS, 4) The Church proclaims its specific understanding of the world and defines its mission in the world in light of this understanding.

92 NIRAPPel notes that the word, “theater” holds special meaning: “It plays the role of the theatrum mundi of the Middle Ages. It shows immediately the aspect of comedy, of caricature, deception and delusion which the scenes of the world provide. Together with it, it shows also that the world must always be seen in relation to man [sic] which is implied in the expression ‘theater,’ ‘actor,’ ‘marked with man’s [sic] industry, his [sic] triumphs and disasters.’” Ibid., 111.
Because the church desires to speak not only about the world, but also with the world, what is necessary, is a language of dialogue that could foster universal understanding without blurring the Christian message. Christian identity must not be sacrificed by attempts to be relevant, however, relevance cannot be minimized rendering the Christian message abstract, theoretical and hollow.

What was needed was a theological argumentation based on salvation history but that would not refrain from describing the current situation: a language that would express what was specifically Catholic, but that non-Catholics and non-Christians could still accept as their own; an approach that would take into account the changed self-understanding of humankind, but would not be confined to a mere description of the deficit side. What had to be found was the Archimedean point that would make it possible to reconcile as far as possible both the divergent aspirations and the themes proposed for study. ⁹⁴

The Council members acknowledge the pivotal role of the human person in the modern era; *Gaudium et spes* places its emphasis “not on the world of things but on the world of men [sic] or the human family.” ⁹⁵ The members of the Council identify the contemporary anthropological crisis of meaning:

For the Council, the anthropological turning-point and the problems it raised were not only the appropriate starting-point for a dialogue with the modern world; they proved to be, at the same time and even more, the crucial point for the Council’s own approach. ⁹⁶

In the final text of *Gaudium et spes*, the anthropological crisis is the document’s starting-point. ⁹⁷ This groundbreaking anthropological approach is explicated in the opening article of

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⁹⁴ Ibid., 47.
⁹⁵ Ibid.
⁹⁶ Ibid., 50.
⁹⁷ Charles Moeller elaborates on the ecclesial implications of this introductory article. “Emphasis is placed on the followers of Christ in order to stress their intrinsic connection with the world and the fact they are a community of men [sic] united in Christ and led by the Holy Spirit, on pilgrimage to the kingdom of the Father.” Moeller draws parallels between *GS* and *Lumen Gentium’s* Trinitarian and eschatological themes. Moeller makes reference to the reference of *Lumen Gentium* Chapter II regarding the messianic people sent to the world, a community of faithful who have received a message of salvation in order to announce it. “All of this shows the close link of this community with mankind [sic] and its history. The very words indicate that historical aspect of man [sic] which contemporary thought denies by the category of temporality or
the document,

...the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. (GS, 1)

This anthropological starting point fosters a common ground for dialogue among the members of the church and with Christians of other confessions, and non-Christians. As Kasper notes,

an anthropological starting point provides a two-fold objective: for those outside, this approach put before people's eyes their supernatural vocation, [the true dignity and meaning of the human person], and for those within the Catholic church it encouraged believers in an active commitment for the transformation of the world to promote and sustain the human dignity of all.

In Gaudium et spes, "anthropology is the Archimedean point for... the basis of a dialogue for the world of today." Gaudium et spes' anthropology is the bridge, the avenue as it were, for the church's solidarity with the modern world. In Gaudium et spes, "the Council was eager to communicate a vision of humanity and of the place of the church within human history and society." The council met the anthropological crisis with an anthropological response.

The Council recognizes the dire need to re-examine and correct the pervasive misunderstandings of the human person that have shaped the modern era. These skewed understandings of the human person are contributing factors in the origin of the individualism permeating the American context relegating religion to the periphery of 

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'historicity'. And that also includes another aspect, even though the text does not actually express it or even allude to it in the slightest, that of the 'history of salvation.'" Moeller notes the anthropological starting point has ecclesial implications. The church is the universal sacrament of salvation charged with a redemptive role in the present world as all things await their eschatological fulfillment. Charles Moeller, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: Preface and Introductory Statement," in Vorgrimler, ed., Commentary on the documents of Vatican II. 87.


99 Ibid., 49.

modern life. The anthropological thrust of this document provides the foundations for a new strategy for the church’s presence in the world, “one which emphasized neither withdrawal, triumphalism, nor assimilation, but critical conversation (listening and speaking) along with principled cooperation with other social institutions and communities of people.”

Gaudium et spes is situated within the contemporary human experience marked by the “anthropological turning-point with which the problem of Man [sic] was detached from the context of theology and metaphysics of modernity.” In Gaudium et spes, the church presents an understanding of the human person that reaffirms the church’s age old stand that religion has an impact on all aspects of the life of the human person. The Pastoral Constitution was addressed to a world attempting to “justify morality independently of beliefs about human nature.” Yet, the question remains: how can anthropology be a critical starting point for the church’s dialogue? At the same time, how can it allow the church to approach the world in a spirit of critical dialogue, all the while retaining the uniqueness of the church’s Christian identity?

A Critical Anthropology

Walter Kasper maintains that it is the development of the relationship between anthropology and Christology in the text of Gaudium et spes that allows a common ground

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102 Kasper maintains that anthropology has been made an autonomous scientific discipline in the modern era. Citing German scholastic works of the 16th and 17th centuries, the influence of Descartes’s “thinking substance” and the gradual use of the nature sciences to analyze the human person, Kasper paints the contemporary context of Gaudium et spes as a crisis of anthropology. There is not simply an increasing autonomy on the part of the human subject, but also a growing insecurity of the human person in relation to what is specifically human. See, Kasper, “Theological Anthropology,” 45. What is important to note is that a crisis of a an anthropological nature requires an anthropological response on the part of the church.
103 Langan “Political Hopes and Political Tasks,” 103.
for dialogue without the loss of the church’s unique identity.\textsuperscript{104} The starting point may be anthropology, but Christology, “Jesus Christ as the origin and goal of authentic human existence”\textsuperscript{105} is the criterion and the constant perspective for an understanding of the council’s anthropological affirmations. In a world searching for meaning and fulfillment, the church offers to the world a vision of the human person and explicates the ecclesial role in the world today. The document responds to the fundamental question: “what is humanity? What is the meaning of suffering, evil, death, which have not been eliminated by all this progress? ... What can people contribute to society? What can they expect from it?” (GS, 10) The church sees the ambiguities of the modern world as the larger manifestation of the ambiguity concerning the understanding of the human person. “The dichotomy affecting the modern world is in fact, a symptom of the deeper dichotomy that is rooted in humanity itself.” (GS, 10) To a world grappling with the meaning of the human person the church proclaims not a theory, not one among many ideas about the human person, but in fact it proclaims the true nature of the human person as \textit{imago dei}.

Enlightened by divine revelation she can offer a solution... by which the true state humanity may be described, its weakness explained, in such a way that at the same time its dignity and vocation may be perceived in their true light. For sacred Scripture teaches that men and women were created “in the image of God.” (GS, 12)

In his commentary on the initial chapter of \textit{Gaudium et spes}, Joseph Ratzinger asserts that the Council minimizes the language of a neo-scholastic static philosophical doctrine of

\textsuperscript{104} Kasper traces the history of \textit{Gaudium et spes}, highlighting the tensions present in the church’s attempt to speak to “all humanity” in a language that both is relevant to the larger human community and at the same time faithful to the uniqueness of the Christian tradition. It is beyond the limits of this present discussion to elaborate on the developments leading to the final text of \textit{Gaudium et spes}. The final text of \textit{Gaudium et spes} and the conclusions Kasper reaches concerning its Christological and anthropological themes are the bases for the present considerations.

\textsuperscript{105} Kasper, “Theological Anthropology,” 51.
the human person in favor of the biblical theme of the image of God. The biblical emphasis lends itself to correcting a pervasive dualistic misconception of the human person and presents a dynamic account of the human person in a salvific relationship with the God of history. Fully appreciated only in light of the New Testament's Christological image of the “New Adam,” imago dei “is concerned less with the origin than with the future of man [sic].” Imago dei is not a static human quality rather it has an eschatological perspective. The Council eschews the static concept of the traditional neo-scholastic manuals and draws on resources from patristic writers to illustrate the constitutive attributes of the human person.

With Augustine (De Trinitate, XIV, 8, 11) the image of God is interpreted as capacity for God, qualification to know and love God. That is what for Augustine gives the idea of man [sic] as the image of God its dynamic aspect: man [sic] is the image of God to the extent in which he [sic] directs himself [sic] to God; man [sic] disfigures his [sic] likeness to God by turning away from God.

As imago dei each person is endowed with God-given attributes that are constitutive of human nature. These attributes are not given or revoked at the discretion of any state or civil entity but are inviolable.

The human person as imago dei is a proclamation of Jesus Christ and his saving mission. Three fundamental mysteries of Christology-- the incarnation, the cross, and the resurrection-- are united in the imago dei in light of the New Testament “New Adam.”

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107 “He who is ‘the image of the invisible God’ (Col. 1:15), is himself the perfect man who restored in the children of Adam that likeness to God which has been disfigured ever since the first sin. Human nature by the very fact it was assumed, not absorbed, in him, has been raised in us also to a dignity beyond compare. For, by his incarnation, he, the son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man [sic]. He worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will and with a human heart he loved. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like to us in all things except sin.” Gaudium et spes, 22.
109 Ibid.
"Behind Gaudium et spes there is, therefore, a theological conception based on the unity in salvation history of the order of creation and the order of redemption."\[110\]

The idea of the *assumptio hominis* is... touched upon in its full ontological depth. The human nature of all men [sic] is one; Christ's taking to himself the one human nature is an event which affects every human being; consequently, human nature in every human being is henceforth Christologically characterized. This idea then is extended to the real plane of actual concrete human existence. Human action, thought, willing and loving have become the instrument of the Logos; what is first present on the plane of being, also gives new significance to the plane of action, to the actual accomplishment of human personal life.\[111\]

The Christological foundations of Gaudium et spes' anthropology are not extrinsic to the true nature of the human person. “The human person has the promise of eternity with God; the promise of a new human community in Christ and finally the promise of Christ's community with us in death.”\[112\] In developing the relationship between anthropology and Christology the council affirms that “human dignity rests above all on the fact that humanity is called to communion with God.” (GS. 19) and this communion does not eliminate or minimize the communion we are called to with one another.

There are implications for the human person as *imago dei* and the structure and contents of Gaudium et spes embellish these.\[113\]

The four chapters of Part I of Gaudium et spes address four interrelated concerns: chapter one the dignity of the person; chapter two, the person as communitarian; chapter three, the human person’s right to freedom and self-expression; and chapter four, the Church and the world in dialogue.\[114\]

\[110\] Kasper, “Theological Anthropology,” 50.
\[112\] Ibid., 140.
\[113\] The Council's desire to address the present reality of the contemporary world required a broader description of the church-world relationship than merely a theological treatise. This inherent tension between a theological and pragmatic approach initially was addressed by the bipartite structure of Gaudium et spes. Part One of Gaudium et spes is intentionally theological in its emphasis reflecting a theological anthropology and Christian principles intended to provide a basis for the consideration of the issues of the church's special concern treated in Part Two. Kasper, “Theological Anthropology,” 47.
The first four chapters of *Gaudium et spes* reflects the Christological anthropology in incarnational themes which explicates both the meaning of the incarnation for the history of the world and for the center of human history: the human person as *imago dei.* (GS, 12)

Having established the human person as *imago dei* in chapter one, the second chapter focuses on the social implications of the Christian doctrine of the human person.

Place was also found here for a more serious treatment of sin and its effects on human social life and, in conjunction with it, the significance of Christ’s cross for the healing of society. A wish had also been expressed for the social character of human life to be based on the biblical account of creation. A cautious linking up of human social life with the community of the three persons in the Trinity was also inserted... Finally, the connection with the structure of society with the well-being of human persons themselves is more clearly brought out.  

*Gaudium et spes* establishes the intrinsic and mutual connection between the individual and the social order in the Christian understanding of the human person. Ideologies which attempt to minimize or even deny the connection between the understanding of the human person and the larger social order, including American individualism, are challenged both directly in the content and by the structure of *Gaudium et spes.* It is only in community that the person can fully realize his or her own personhood. “God did not create people to live as individuals but to come together in the formation of social unity.” (GS, 32) It is Jesus himself who shows humanity this because “the communitarian character [of the human person] is perfected and fulfilled in the work of Jesus Christ, for the Word made flesh willed to share in human fellowship.” (GS, 32) The person is by nature relational, created for communion with others and with God.

Human community and solidarity are held to be manifestations of the person’s divinely created social nature. Therefore, it is a human right for “persons to express

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themselves freely in social existence so as to become more truly human. Authentic freedom is at the heart of human personhood. Freedom is, however, a freedom for community, a freedom to participate in the social fabric of human life. (GS, 17) The council’s articulation of freedom challenges the pervasive understanding of freedom as “non-interference” so prevalent in contemporary American culture. The council articulates the conditions that promote true community, those that allow and foster a consciousness of true human dignity, provide opportunities for persons to be of service to the larger community and situations where a true mutual relationship between the individual and the community are fostered.

The fact that human beings are social by nature indicates that the betterment of the person and the improvement of society depend on each other. Insofar as humanity by its very nature stands completely in need of society, it is and ought to be the beginning, the subject and the object of every social organization. Life in society is not something accessory to humanity: through their dealings with others, through mutual service, and through fraternal and sororal dialogue, men and women develop all their talents and become able to rise to their destiny. (GS, 25)

The Council establishes that it is only in community that the human person can strive for his or her own true destiny and true dignity as created in God’s image. Although as imago dei the human person is intrinsically social,

man’s [sic] likeness to God does not found a community solely because all individuals are created in God’s image, but because mankind [sic], multitude in unity, is an image, even if an imperfect one, of the one God in three persons. The fact that the human person, although or because he [sic] is a self-contained creature loved by

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116 Gaudium et spes, 17, acknowledges the value that people place on freedom. It is quick to point out, however, that “they often cherish it improperly, as if it gave them leave to do anything they like, even when it is evil. But that which is truly freedom is an exceptional sign of the image of God in man [sic]. For God willed that man [sic] should ‘be left in the hand of his own counsel so that he might of his own accord seek his creator and freely attain his [sic] full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him. Man’s dignity therefore requires him [sic] to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within and not by blind impulses in himself or be mere external constraint.” The article’s understanding of freedom as the freedom to participate in that which truly enhances one’s God given freedom is in stark contrast to the individualistic understanding of freedom as “freedom from any constraint. “Also, freedom “to seek our creator” as an intrinsic element of our human dignity is foundational to the conciliar document Dignitatis humanae.
God for his [sic] own sake, can only truly find himself [sic] by meeting and giving himself to others, has its deepest ground in the fact that his [sic] Creator himself [sic] subsists in three persons who are constituted by their mutual relationships. The image of the community of divine persons subsisting in mutual love, equality and self-giving, is the ideal the imperfect human community must strive to reflect. "There is a certain similarity between the union existing among the divine persons and the union of God's children in truth and love." (GS, 24) The Trinitarian image challenges the human community to enflesh the equality, love, freedom and solidarity of the Trinitarian community.

The council maintains its competence to comment upon the economic and political spheres precisely because of the church's fundamental concern for the promotion and safeguarding of human dignity. "The social order and its development must constantly yield to the good of the person, since the order of things must be subordinate to the order of persons and not the other way around." (GS, 26) Cognizant that the human person is often perceived as a mere commodity or as secondary to profit, the council admits the need for conversion, "the renewal of attitudes and far-reaching social change," (GS, 26) and admits the dependence upon the work of the Spirit "who with wondrous providence, directs the course of time and renews the face of the earth." (GS, 26) The equality of all people, despite differences, is grounded in the common origin and destiny of all human persons that "demands we strive for fairer and more human conditions. Excessive economic and social disparity between individuals and peoples of the one human race is a source of scandal and mitigates against social justice. equity, human dignity, as well as social and international peace." (GS, 29)

The church's promotion of human dignity calls the human community to seek the

common good, "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or individuals, to reach their own fulfillment more fully and more easily." (GS, 26) This call for human activity is integrally connected to the understanding of humanity's destiny because "they can fully discover their true selves only in sincere self-giving." (GS, 24) *Gaudium et spes* calls each person to the sacred duty of contributing to the common good that often involves "fostering and helping public and private organizations devoted to bettering the conditions of life." (GS, 30)

*Church and World in Critical Dialogue*

The theological principles articulated in the first three chapters of Part One of *Gaudium et spes* establish the ecclesial implications of the human person as *imago dei*.

All we have said up to now about the dignity of the human person, the community of men and women, and the deep significance of human activity, provides a basis for discussing the relationship between the Church and the world and the dialogue between them. (GS, 40) \(^{118}\)

*Gaudium et spes* creates a bridge between the moral vision of the human person and the self-understanding and self-expression of the church. The church is "the sign and safeguard of the transcendental dimensions of the human person." (GS, 76) As Rembert Weakland observes,

...perhaps one of the greatest contributions of Vatican II to the dialogue of the church with the world was its emphasis on the value of the human person. Here it was seen

\(^{118}\) Commenting on the placement of this article after the principles established in the three chapters prior to it, Yves Congar notes, "What the Council has said about the dignity of the human person, the life of men [sic] in society and their significance of their earthly activity, represents the immediate reasons for the relation between the Church and world and provides the basis of their mutual dialogue. Because the Church has something to say on these three themes of a comprehensive doctrine of man [sic] it has a function in relation to the world. It is there fore possible throughout the Pastoral Constitution to consider the Church, not in itself (as in *Lumen Gentium*) but in its life and action in the world." Yves Congar, "The Role of the Church in the Modern World," in Voeglin. ed., *Commentary on Vatican II*, 203.
that what the church can contribute to the world is indeed an insistence on the intrinsic worth of each person regardless of gender, race or personal achievements.\textsuperscript{119}

The commitment to the dignity of the human person is now at the center of its ecclesial identity. The social ministry of the church, rather than compromising the religious nature of the church, actually is necessary for the church to fulfill its own mission. Whether it aids the world or whether it benefits from it, the Church has but one sole purpose—that the kingdom of God may come and the salvation of the human race may be accomplished. Every benefit the people of God can confer on humanity during its earthly pilgrimage is rooted in the Church's being “the universal sacrament of salvation”\textsuperscript{120} at once manifesting and actualizing the mystery of God's love for humanity. (GS, 45)

As an instrument of the Kingdom of God, the church is not relegated to the margins of society or world, but rather the church “travels the same journey as all of humanity and shares the same earthly lot with the world” (GS, 40). It is called to be concerned with all that concerns the human family, “it is to be a leaven and, as it were, the soul of the human society in its renewal by Christ and transformation into the family of God.” (GS, 40)

Part Two of \textit{Gaudium et spes} reflects the church’s concern for all aspects of the human family. “Having set forth the dignity of the human person and his and her individual and social role in the universe, the Council now draws people’s attention, in light of the Gospel and of human experience, to some more urgent problems deeply affecting the human race.” (GS, 46) The church draws attention to several areas of concern including economic and social life, the political community and culture. The church's commitment to the dignity of the human person allows all areas of human concern to warrant the church’s attention and


\textsuperscript{120} In article 45 of \textit{Gaudium et spes}, “the universal sacrament of salvation” is a reference to the Dogmatic Constitution on The Church, \textit{Lumen Gentium}, ch. 7, n. 48.
energy. What the council acknowledges in its recognition of the areas of special urgency is that "there are historical conditions which promote and protect human dignity and there are conditions which violate human dignity." The misconception that the economy and political orders belong to a morally neutral public sphere is challenged by the Council's commitment to human dignity. *Gaudium et spes* has provided the ecclesiological link between the social mission of the church and its very inner nature: the church has placed the human person at the center of its earthly mission and the church is to be the universal sacrament of God's love for all people.

The Christological anthropology of *Gaudium et spes* is the foundation for the church's proclamation of human dignity and becomes the consistent criterion for the church's evaluation of the economic and political orders. The church affirms the progress and potential of the economic and political spheres, yet challenges existing structures to conform to the values that foster the realization of one's true human dignity: solidarity, equality, freedom to participate, and a mutual interdependence between the individual and the larger society.

In the sphere of economics and social life, too, the dignity and entire vocation of the human person as well as the welfare of society as a whole have to be respected and fostered; for people are the source, the focus and the aim of all economic and social life. (GS, 63)

The council encourages economic progress and production but it is not an uncritical or an unconditional support. The council indicates the "economic mentality" pervading modern life is in large part responsible for the disproportionate wealth that allows "luxury and misery to exist side by side." (GS, 63) The council calls it a sacred obligation on the part of individuals and groups to rectify this scandal: "to fulfill the requirements of justice and equity, every

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effort must be made to put an end as soon as possible to the immense economic inequalities which exist in the world and increase from day to day.” (GS, 66) All economic activity is to be conducted “in accordance with techniques and methods belonging to the moral order so that God’s decision for humanity may be fulfilled.” (GS, 64) The economic sphere is to be at the service “of humanity in its totality, taking into account people’s material needs and requirements of their intellectual, moral, spiritual, and religious life” (GS, 64) The increase of goods produced, profit, or prestige are not the ultimate purpose of economic activity and development but rather the well being of the human person and of the entire human community.

The economic order is not the domain of a “group of individuals. a political community alone. nor of a few strong nations.” (GS. 65) nor should its development be left to the “almost mechanical evolution of economic activity.” (GS. 65) The economic sphere is not the arena of unfettered selfish energies in the pursuit of private gain. Rather, because “God destined earth and all it contains for all people and nations so that all created things would be shared fairly by all humanity,” (GS, 69) The economic sphere is to support a national and global context where the universal distribution of earthly goods are shared in order to promote the common good. Neither the church, nor the disciple, is allowed to circumvent the sacred obligation towards the social and economic orders, because, “all who in obedience to Christ seek first the kingdom of God will derive from it a stronger and purer motivation for helping all their brothers and sisters and for accomplishing the task of justice under the inspiration of charity.” (GS, 72)

The council’s understanding of the nature and purpose of the political community is based on its commitment to safeguard the true nature and dignity of the human person. The
council highlights the “rights and duties of the individual in the exercise of civil liberty and in the achievement of the common good.” (GS, 73) The council recognizes that of all the transformations ushered in by the modern era, “the keener awareness of human dignity has given rise in various parts of the world to an eagerness to establish a politico-juridical order in which the rights of the human person in public life will be better protected.” (GS, 73) The council holds to the belief that political structures and institutions must safeguard and guarantee the rights of the person. It is only in a context committed to human rights that citizens, both individually and collectively, have the freedom to participate in public life. Situations which exclude participation in public life, based on ethnic, religious, or other factors are contrary to human rights and fall far short of establishing the political sphere as a true catalyst for authentic human community.

There is no better way to establish political life on a truly human basis than by encouraging an inward sense of justice, of good will, and of service to the common good, and by consolidating people’s basic convictions as to the true nature of the political community and the aim, proper exercise, and the limits of public authority. (GS, 73)

The political community is necessary not simply to keep order, or to protect the rights of private interests, but rather to foster and assist in creating the possibility for a truly human life for the constituents of the civil community.

The dignity of the human person calls each and every person in their own capacity to participate in the processes of civil government in order to promote the common good. The very recognition of one’s own human dignity calls each person to work for a context that heightens this same awareness for all persons. True freedom is not a freedom “from” the larger community but rather true freedom is in tandem with responsibility and duty. Freedom implies the responsibility to participate in the larger community to actualize one’s true human dignity and safeguard this same possibility for others.
The political community exists for the common good: this is its full justification and meaning and the source of its specific and basic right to exist. The common good embraces the sum total of all those conditions of social life which enable individuals, families, and organizations to achieve complete and efficacious fulfillment. (GS, 74)

Authority in the political community “guides and directs differing points of view toward the common good.” (GS, 74) It best fulfills this role by acting “above all as a moral force based on freedom and a sense of responsibility.” (GS, 74) The aim of all political structures and forms of authority, despite their evident diversity, should “always be the formation of human persons who are cultured, peace-loving, and well disposed towards all, to the benefit the whole human race.” (GS, 74) Human dignity is the lens by which the church defines the nature, the purpose and the role of authority in the political community.

The council saw it as necessary for the church to define its understanding of its presence vis-à-vis the political community.

The political community and the Church are autonomous and independent of each other in their own fields. They are at the service of the personal and social vocation of the same individuals, though under different titles. This service will be more efficient and beneficial to all if both institutions develop better cooperation according to the circumstances of place and time. For humanity’s horizons are not confined to the temporal order; living in human history they retain the fullness of their eternal calling. (GS, 76)

The church explicitly recognizes the autonomy of the church and political spheres, yet both church and the political community share the commitment to the personal vocation of the human person. It is not an autonomy characterized by the church and the political community as two parallel worlds. Rather, the council respects the distinction of the unique roles of the church and the political community in the promotion of the personal vocation of each person, and calls for their mutual cooperation in the service of the human community.¹²²

¹²² The church’s understanding of the person is implied in this distinction. The human person cannot be divided somehow into two spheres. There is not a public sphere or even the temporal order which is devoid of moral
Eliminating the Totalist Option

In Gaudium et spes, the church shifts dramatically from its pre-conciliar position on its relationship with the state. The church “never places its hopes in any privileges accorded to it by civil authority; indeed it will give up the exercise of certain legitimate rights whenever it becomes clear that their use will compromise the sincerity of its witness, or whenever new circumstances call for a revised approach.” (GS, 76) What exactly is the ecclesial witness the council speaks of? Not bound to any political system or identified with any political community, the church claims its freedom to “preach the faith, to proclaim its teaching about society, to carry out its task among people without hindrance, and to pass moral judgment even in matters relating to politics, whenever the fundamental human rights or the salvation of souls requires it.” (GS, 76) In the church’s free exercise of its mission it “respects and encourages the political freedom and responsibility of the citizen,” (GS, 76) and thereby exhibits its own legitimate participation in the civil arena. At the same time, it ventures forth in the political arena using only the means which are “in accord with the Gospel and the welfare of humanity” (GS, 76) respecting the diversity of times and circumstances. The Declaration on Religious Liberty, Dignitatis humanae, is the foundational document reflecting the church’s respect for, and acceptance of, the variety and diversity of political communities in the global community. The shift from the pre-conciliar to the post-conciliar understanding of the church-state relationship is an essential contribution of Dignitatis humanae.

J. Bryan Hehir offers a clear and concise treatment of the major facets of the shift in implications somehow separate from the demands of human dignity. Human history is the locus and the arena for the promotion of human dignity, and the church claims its competence to be involved in the political order in the manner that reflects the ecclesial mission as “sign and safeguard of the transcendental dimension of the human person.” Gaudium et spes, 76.
the church's understanding of its relationship with the political community. Comparing the post-conciliar understanding of the church-state relationship with the pre-conciliar understanding, he states,

In the period between the Reformation and Vatican II, the church affirmed the moral desirability of a “Catholic state” in cases where the majority of the population was Catholic. In the nineteenth century, the First Vatican Council (1870) modified this teaching by distinguishing between “The Thesis” or normative case of a Catholic state and “The Hypothesis”-the exceptional case which is tolerated because seeking to achieve a “Catholic state” would cause more harm than good.123

In the pre-conciliar era, the Roman church only tolerated arrangements not reflecting “The Thesis” arrangement. Therefore, the Vatican considered the non-establishment clause of the United States Constitution and the religious pluralism of the American context as less than ideal.

Hehir cites three principles from Dignitatis humanae that have allowed the redefinition of the church-state relationship. First is the acceptance of religious pluralism as the context for the church’s ministry. “What the Vatican council has to say about the individual’s right to religious freedom is based on the dignity of the person.” (DH 9) In article four of Dignitatis humanae the council asserts the freedom of individuals and religious communities to be immune from coercion in religious matters. The council states that all people must be allowed to teach and bear witness to their religious beliefs without opposition by legislation or civil actions. Even in those situations where special recognition may be granted to “one religious community... the right of all citizens and religious communities to religious freedom must be recognized and respected as well.” (DH 6) Religious pluralism is not merely tolerated by the church it is the manifestation of the human person’s religious freedom and the context of the church’s ministry.

123 Hehir, “From Church-State to Religion and Politics,” 54.
The second principle in *Dignitatis humanae* is the church's recognition of the legitimate authority of the state to protect religious freedom and to promote the "common good of society." (DH 6) The common good is "the common responsibility of individual citizens, social groups, civil authorities, the church, and other religious communities." (DH 6) The document's understanding of the state "is not the Catholic state of the post-reformation era but the constitutional state whose powers are limited by law." Finally, although the state provides a limited and much needed role in society, society is a larger entity than the state. Throughout *Dignitatis humanae* is the recognition of the social nature of the human person and his or her fulfillment in the relational life in a given society.

The distinction among church, state, and society is foundational to the church's public role. In *Dignitatis humanae*, the church abandons any possibility of a theocracy, or a totalistic mode of organizing religion. The church's acknowledgment of the secularity of the state allows the freedom necessary to fulfill its own mission within the larger society. It does not seek a direct alliance with the state or a politicization of its mission and beliefs. Rather, the freedom to function and fulfill its mission is the only objective the church seeks for itself from the state in the post-conciliar age. The question that calls for further elaboration is not, "does the church have the right to function in the public realm?" but rather, "how does the church function in the public arena especially in the diversity of modern cultures and political systems?"

The church's respect of the diversity of circumstances and times is a reflection of the

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125 In the United States, the church's public role is compatible with the constitutional non-establishment amendment. The church is free to function without, however, expecting the favoritism of governmental establishment; at the same time, the legitimate function of the church cannot be curtailed by expressions of discrimination.
conciliar position regarding the relationship between church and culture. As one of its areas of special urgency, the Council considers culture in the widest sense of the word it is “all those things which go to the refining and developing of humanity’s diverse mental and physical endowments.” (GS, 53) In the mind of the council, culture encompasses the entire “humanizing activity of man [sic] in this world.”  

The church recognizes, affirms and embraces the cultural pluralism of the contemporary world. This diversity is not the result of a hierarchical framework designating certain cultures as “civilized” and others as “uncivilized.” Rather, the council posits the human person as the craftsman and architect of human culture, therefore, cultural diversity is a reflection of the fact that

although man [sic] is fundamentally identical in nature, his [sic] action is conditioned by innumerable external factors which deeply affect him [sic] even in the emotional and intellectual spheres. He [sic] is conditioned in particular by history and geography: it is not a matter of indifference for man [sic] or a group to live at this or that moment of history or at this or that place on earth. That means that time and space determine the rhythm of human civilizations and give them different features and forms.

As in all areas of special urgency, the council’s insistence on safeguarding the human dignity of each person plays a significant role in its discussion of culture. To the extent that a culture upholds and safeguards the true dignity of the human person true cultural development is present fostering a true humanizing context.

Culture must be subordinated to the integral development of the human person, to the good of the community and of the whole of humanity. Therefore one must aim at encouraging the human spirit to develop its faculties of wonder, of understanding of contemplation, of forming personal judgments, and cultivating a religious, moral and social sense. (GS, 59)

To the extent that a culture’s myriad of beliefs, institutions, customs, and polity neglects the

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127 Roberto Tucci states that the desire to “face the problem of how Christianity can be embodied in non-Western cultures prompted the favorable attitude towards cultural pluralism and an openness to the advances of cultural anthropology and ethnology.” Ibid., 257
128 Ibid., 256.
human dignity of the person and the human community,\textsuperscript{129} the church is called to critique and work for the culture’s transformation in light of the gospel. “Human culture must evolve... in such a way that it will develop the whole human person harmoniously and integrally, and will help everyone to fulfill the tasks to which they are called.” (GS, 56)

\textit{Gaudium et spes} envisions a church in a critical yet mutual relationship with the host culture; this relationship is but one facet of the critical engagement of the “church in the modern world.”\textsuperscript{130} Not tied to any one culture, the church “enters into communion with a culture [and] the church is thereby enriched along with the culture.”\textsuperscript{131} In Article 58, the council recognizes that the church has never been a disembodied or an acultural community and posits the relationship between culture and church within the larger themes of revelation, incarnation, and evangelization.

There are many links between the message of salvation and culture. In his [sic] self-revelation to his [sic] people culminating in the fullness of manifestation in his [sic] incarnate Son, God spoke according to the culture proper to each age. Similarly the church has existed through the centuries in varying circumstances and has utilized the resources of different cultures to spread and explain the message of Christ in its preaching, to examine and understand it more deeply, and to express it more perfectly in the liturgy and in the life of the multiform community of the faithful. (GS, 58)

Central to the mission of the church is the evangelization of the host culture announcing the gospel so that the “good news continually renews the life and culture of fallen humanity; it combats and removes the error and evil which flow from the ever-present attraction of sin.”

\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Gaudium et spes}, 56, specifically mentions obstacles of true cultural development. Among those obstacles mentioned are: industrialization and technology that overshadow the true human need for wonder and contemplation; lack of the ability of all to share in the benefits of culture; the rightful claims of autonomy, which culture makes for itself, yet caution is needed so as not to fall into a humanism which is purely earthbound and even hostile to religion.

\textsuperscript{130} It is important to note, as Aylward Shorter emphasizes, that “There is artificiality in speaking as if the church was culturally disembodied. The church in alien cultural form enters into communion with an unevangelized culture; the Church both in its alien form and in its new cultural form is enriched.” Aylward Shorter, \textit{Towards a Theology of Inculturation} (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1992), 202.

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
At the same time, because it is a mutual relationship between the culture and the church, culture provides resources for evangelization, "[the church] takes the spiritual qualities and endowments of every age and nation, and with supernatural riches it causes them to blossom, as it were, from within; it fortifies, completes and restores them to Christ."

No more evident is this mutual relationship between culture and Christianity than in the theological enterprise. In the Catholic sub-culture, theology's role was primarily internal: bolstering and defending the Catholic sub-culture. With the ecclesial and cultural shifts in Vatican II,

theologians are being asked, within the methods and limits of theological science, to develop more efficient ways of communicating doctrine to the people of today. For the deposit and the truths of faith are one thing, the manner of expressing them—provided their sense and meaning are retained—is quite another. (GS. 62)

The task of theology is to express and articulate the meaning and understanding of the faith for the contemporary world. The council calls for the incorporation of the social sciences, including sociology, psychology, literature and art, as part of theological method in theology's quest of "faith seeking understanding" in the contemporary world. Culture becomes a wellspring of questions, challenges and a resource for theology, as well as the locus for the church's mission of evangelization.

The principle that theological research must not lose contact with its own age... added another essential principle... namely that it seeks a deeper knowledge of revealed truth. In this way the two poles of theological development are pointed out, for by its very nature it involves a constant tension between inquiry in faith into the content of

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132 Joseph Komonchak notes, "Apart from some approaches to apologetics and new additions to the list of adversarii, the theological manuals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries show little trace of the ideological, political, cultural combat in which the Church believed itself to be engaged. In Lonergan's phrase, theologians had long since retreated into their dogmatic corner, and not even the appeals of Leo XIII, a Pius IX, or a Pius XII to engage the modern ideologies and developments moved most theologians to expand their curriculum beyond what and earlier tradition handed down.... Far more than the Church itself, the theologians resided in their own dogmatic ghetto." Komonchak, "Roles of Theology," 21.
revelation and a constant renewal of its questions and language, if it is really to fulfill its function in the church, i.e. service of the Word in the community of the People of God which feels its close solidarity with the human race and its history, and which has the permanent duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the gospel. 133

In the post-conciliar era, theology is in a critical relationship with culture articulating the meaning of Christianity in a specific time and place. Theology is at the service of the church and of the world "giving an account of its hope" and espousing a transformative role in the world. Post-conciliar theology,

involves a critical correlation between a text and a situation, between the claims of a tradition and the challenges of modernity, between the criteria of faith and the criteria of critical reason. It unites into a single interpretative moment the two goals which had formerly been kept separate: the self-constitution of the Church and the Church's engagement with society. 134

The Church's role is to encourage, remind, and to challenge all that "culture must aim at the integral perfection of the human person, and the good of the community and of the whole society." 135 Theology, critically engaged with culture, must also bear this transformative task.

The American Bishops' Pastorals

The term "public church" often appears in tandem with two episcopal pastoral letters of the United States bishops: The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response 136 and Economic Justice For All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the United States Economy. 137 Among the many issues facing the American hierarchy in recent years, the economy and peace warranted serious attention. As ecclesial documents

134 Ibid., 27.
135 Ibid., 269.
they illustrate a relationship with the American culture that embody characteristics that define the form and work of the public church.\textsuperscript{138} The United States bishops’ involvement and participation in the American political process is not a recent development. The comparison between the pre-conciliar and post-conciliar roles of episcopal participation in the American context is important for the discussion of the Roman Catholic church in the United States as a public church. The bishops’ pre-conciliar activity can be characterized in a three-fold manner. First, “the immigrant church looked to its bishops for leadership, protection, and help in assimilating into a hostile American culture.”\textsuperscript{139} Episcopal leadership was an advocate for the interests of this sub-culture; “the bishops were involved in politics insofar as they led, spoke for, or represented identifiable constituencies.”\textsuperscript{140} Second, despite efforts both at centralization of episcopal involvement and a national agenda, the bishops’ political action was overwhelmingly local in the traditional era.\textsuperscript{141} In part, this was because the American political scene was also local. The issues that appealed to the Catholic agenda, such as education and public morality, were often the domain of state and local politics. Third, the immigrant Catholic desired assimilation into mainstream American culture but was often met with the ever-present anti-Catholic bigotry and a suspicion regarding one’s true national

\textsuperscript{138} The consideration of the pastoral letters is limited. These documents are treated as ecclesial documents, reflecting the general characteristics of the public church as established in Martin Marty’s typology and validated and identified in the conciliar documents \textit{Gaudium et spes} and \textit{Dignitatis humanae}. The intent is more illustrative of the church and culture relationship, which the public church manifests, rather than of an exhaustive analysis of content, process, or even reception.


\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{141} Monsignor John A. Ryan, as an antecedent of the public church, was a man ahead of his times. Although he consistently pushed for the national agenda and national work of the American episcopacy, the political situation and the ecclesial structure favored local and relatively autonomous episcopal participation in the political arena.
loyalty. More often than not, the episcopal hierarchy asserted the patriotism of the American church by offering enthusiastic support of United States foreign policy and American war efforts.⁴²

Several factors significantly redefined this function and role of the bishops in the United States. “The assimilation of Catholics into the American socio-economic mainstream and the expansion of the federal government’s role in the lives of American citizens brought the traditional era of the bishops’ political activities to a close in the 1960’s.”⁴³ The conciliar stress on episcopal collegiality and national episcopal conferences soon overshadowed the traditional paradigm of the autonomous local bishop as the defender of Catholics in a besieged sub-culture. These factors precipitated a dramatic shift in the episcopal engagement with American culture. First,

the church can no longer shape ecclesiastical policy in response to outside challenges. Catholics would be forced to define their role in American society on the basis of something other than survival, the goal that a sense of being a besieged, threatened minority had always dictated.⁴⁴

Once mainstreamed, American Catholics were more difficult to differentiate from the general population and therefore, episcopal assertions of patriotism were no longer needed. The end of the immigrant church occurred simultaneously as American Catholics were assimilated into the American mainstream culture. This was a catalyst for the dissipation of the Catholic sub-culture and redefined both the role of the United States bishops and the relationship of the Roman Catholic church and the larger American culture. The historical proximity of the end of the immigrant church and the Second Vatican Council’s theological and ecclesial

⁴² Timothy Byrnes devotes the first chapter of Catholic Bishops in American Politics to an extensive consideration of the “traditional” role of the American bishops in the political sphere. He follows with an equally comprehensive consideration of the “modern role” of the bishops in his second chapter.

⁴³ Byrnes, Catholic Bishops, 35.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 36.
dismantling of the universal and centralized sub-culture of the Roman Catholic church propelled the episcopal hierarchy into a new mode of critical engagement with American culture. The bishops continued to advance Catholic interests but adopted a “much broader, but less authoritative, scope of political activity that allowed them to reshape and expand their participation in the American political process.” In the pastoral letters, the United States episcopacy reflects this new activity in its “attempt to shape a public church.”

Pivotal to the work of the public church is a critique of the individualism of the American culture. The pervasive American individualism creates the perception of a morally neutral public sphere fostering the misconception of the economic and political systems as “givens” and beyond moral analysis. In the pastoral Economic Justice For All, the bishops challenge this perception of the public sphere, and maintain. “every economic decision and institution must be judged in light of whether it protects or undermines the dignity of the human person.” The church “is at once the sign and the safeguard of the transcendental dimension of the human person,” (GS, 76) and the ecclesial role of promoting human dignity is a primary hermeneutic for the analysis of the American economic system. The economic order is the fruit of human agency, and “how we organize our society-- in economics and politics, in law and policy-- directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community.” The human person “is not only sacred but also social. Human dignity can be realized and protected only in community.”

David Hollenbach highlights the economic pastoral’s embrace of Gaudium et spes”

145 Ibid., 37.
147 Economic Justice For All, 13.
148 Ibid., 14.
149 Ibid.
critical anthropology in his consideration of rights language in *Economic Justice For All.*

The definition of human rights contained in the pastoral letter is key. ... Human rights are called "the minimum conditions for life in community." Here human rights have a social or relational meaning from the very start. ... The bishops spell out what this means this way: *Basic justice demands the establishment of minimum levels of participation in the life of the human community for all persons.* The ultimate injustice is for a person or group to be treated actively or abandoned passively as if they were nonmembers of the human race."\(^{150}\)

The pastoral is in continuity with the Second Vatican Council's anthropology positing that the human person is social by nature and has the right and the duty to participate in the larger society. The individual is not over against, nor prior to, the larger society. Participation, not exemption, is the true human freedom: a freedom to participate that allows the person to fulfill his or her own human dignity and destiny. Human rights reflect true human dignity therefore rights have a social and relational meaning. Hollenbach reiterates both *Gaudium et spes* and the economic pastoral's challenge to American individualism, stating, "an individualistic conception of human rights is inadequate."\(^{151}\)

The bishops' traditional need to accommodate to the American culture as an ecclesial besieged sub-culture now gives way to their ability to challenge the United States in the very area once the locus of Catholic patriotism: war and peace.\(^{152}\) In *The Challenge of Peace,* the bishops are writing as bishops of the only nation to have used nuclear weapons in warfare, and as residents of one of the major players in the building up and stockpiling of the nuclear arsenal. In the pastoral *The Challenge of Peace* they state:

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\(^{151}\) Ibid.

\(^{152}\) Dorothy Day's pacifism in the World War II era as an antecedent of the public church is all the more evident in light of the tendency of the Catholic community to defend and express its patriotism in accommodating the war efforts of the United States.
As American citizens of the nation which was first to produce atomic weapons, which has been the only one to use them and which today is one of the handful of nations capable of decisively influencing the course of the nuclear age...

Although the bishops are in solidarity with the culture, "as bishops and pastors ministering in one of the major nuclear nations, we have encountered this terror in the minds and hearts of our people—indeed we share it." This solidarity is not capitulation to the culture. The bishops emphatically state, "we speak as bishops of the Church in the United States, who have both the obligation and the opportunity to share and interpret the moral and religious wisdom of the Catholic tradition by applying it to the problem of war and peace today." Recognizing both the complexities of the modern world and the "moment of supreme crisis identified by Vatican II" the bishops echo the words of the Holy Father, we need a "moral about face." The whole world must summon the moral courage and technical means to say no to nuclear conflict: no to weapons of mass destruction; no to an arms race which robs the poor and the vulnerable; and no to the moral danger of a nuclear age which places before humankind indefensible choices of constant terror or surrender. Peacemaking is not an optional commitment. It is a requirement of our faith.

The United States bishops' pastoral The Challenge of Peace is a signpost of the church's attempt to fulfill the call of the "the Pastoral Constitution [of the Church in the Modern World] … to bring the light of the gospel to bear upon the signs of the times." The peace pastoral offers an effective teaching document that reflects the standards of a rational argument, retains the particularity of the Catholic tradition, and provides moral insight into the complex and contemporary issue of nuclear warfare.

The issues of nuclear war and armaments are not simply items on the Catholic agenda

153 The Challenge of Peace, 4.
154 Ibid., 1.
155 Ibid., 5.
156 Ibid., vi.
157 Ibid., vii.
158 Ibid., 13.
but issues for all humanity. The bishops’ audience is both the Roman Catholic community and the larger society. The pastoral letter is the bishops’ attempt to stimulate public discourse; “we want it to make a contribution to the wider public debate in our country on the dangers and dilemmas of the nuclear age.”

Unlike the traditional episcopal role of advocacy for the Catholic sub-culture, the peace pastoral is a manifestation of the public church as the advocate for all humanity. The peace pastoral’s process of dialogue and consultation, and its call for collaboration with other institutions to foster a new sense of the public order illustrates well the public church. *The Challenge of Peace* is a public document; it reflects a process of dialogue with experts in fields both within and outside the theological arena. Less an attempt to offer a blueprint for the solution to the nuclear issue, the pastoral attempts to ensure that the moral and ethical foundations and assumptions of the wide range of positions surrounding the nuclear issue were voiced in the public forum. In listening to a wide range of experts with conflicting positions, the church began a “process of theological analysis with a concrete examination of the nature of the questions to be addressed, then moving to a theological reflection on their major characteristics of the problem.”

*The Challenge of Peace* as an ecclesial text of the public church raises the consciousness of all people as to the moral implications for one of the most urgent issues facing the human

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159 Ibid., ii.

160 During the first year of the pastoral committee’s existence under Cardinal Bernadin as chair, a series of hearings were conducted involving experts representing a wide range of positions on issues pertinent to the nuclear discussion. Including biblical scholars, a variety of ethicists representing a spectrum of positions, retired military personnel, representatives of pacifist organizations, and two former secretaries of defense, the committee attempted to grasp the multitude of issues connected with the question of nuclear warfare. These hearings were not held simply to provide much needed data; ultimately, they required that each contributor articulate in a persuasive and competent manner his or her own position. Not solely informational, these hearings were an example of the pastoral’s intent: to provide a catalyst for public discourse.

community: nuclear arms. The bishops relied on the larger wisdom of the universal Church in their pastoral role as bishops of the United States. Investigating the issues of the nuclear debate through a method of serious dialogue they responded to what Gaudium et spes hoped the church would be: "to be present in the midst of history of the drama of history, to be visible and vocal at all the key places where decision are made which shape the fabric of human life."162 The pastoral is an example of one local hierarchy to be present in the midst of the nuclear debate.

The church is not the only institution involved in the public discourse but it does have a unique function. The church's specific contribution in the public discussion is its ability to bring a systematic capability to raise and address the moral dimensions of public issues and it also brings the capability to engage the members of its constituency in public discussion about these issues.163

The church's competency is to provide a moral voice in the discussion of matters of public policy and social issues. Through the church's social ethics, often the mediation of its public theology, the church attempts through persuasive moral argument to influence its own constituency and those within the larger society. Ultimately this public discourse will shape public opinion that can influence and shape public policy. The church is convinced that beneath the public conversation there are operating assumptions and premises about human nature, the value of the person, and a specific world-view. The church hopes to surface these operating assumptions and to add to the public conversation its own persuasive voice. In carrying out the church's mission it hopes to shape public opinion in order to shape public life so the true value of the human person is recognized, safeguarded, and promoted. Without necessarily espousing specific policies, the church fulfills a fundamental aspect of its

162 Ibid., 111.
163 Hehir, “From Church-State to Religion and Politics,” 56.
mission: its obligation to communicate to all its understanding of the human person, its worldview, and the answer to all of human history, Jesus Christ.

The conciliar document *Dignitatis humanae* establishes the freedom of the church to fulfill its mission within a pluralistic world, and *Gaudium et spes* provides the theological justification for this ecclesial mission to be concerned specifically with the *res publica*.

*Gaudium et spes*

shifts our self-understanding as Church away from such images like the water-tight barque of Peter sailing majestically through the roiling waters of history, occasionally tossed by the waves of human existence but essentially distinct from and unchanged by, the sea of temporal life. Rather, this is a church which will focus its mission on human persons and not just on souls. A Church which is in the modern world, not above the world or set at odds with it. For it is in the world that the God of history will be encountered.164

The public church is a response to the American culture that tends to minimize the role of religion and ecclesial communities. The public church is not only an ecclesial response to the American culture but also a manifestation of the new relationship between the church and culture found in the Second Vatican Council.

**Conclusion**

The public church is the ecclesial manifestation of the mutual yet critical relationship between culture and Christianity; it reflects the dismantling of the Catholic sub-culture in the post-conciliar church. In the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic church is called to scrutinize the signs of the times in light of the gospel and can now be counter-cultural without creating, sustaining and defending itself as a sub-culture. The ecclesial presence ushered in at the Second Vatican Council allows for a new mode of presence best described in Martin Marty's typology as a "public church." In the council

documents there is little to support the totalist and triumphalism of Medieval Christendom, or a tribal sub-culture. Rather, the documents of the Second Vatican Council are consistent in their rejection of the privatist tendencies both of the Modern era and from within the church itself. The Second Vatican Council provides the theological foundation for the Roman Catholic church as a public church.
Chapter Four

Bernard Lonergan: A Resource for the Public Church

Introduction

Martin Marty’s assertion that the public church is the optimal ecclesiology for the American context contains an explicit challenge. He challenges each ecclesial community to “discover not invent the public church and to make its form and understanding and work explicit.”¹ In conjunction with the preceding chapters, chapter four continues, but does not exhaust, the response to Marty’s challenge. In this chapter, the public church’s form, understanding, and work is further illuminated by appropriating several categories from the work of Bernard Lonergan and considering them in tandem with characteristics of the public church identified in the conciliar documents.

Applying the work of Bernard Lonergan to the topic of the public church may seem surprising. After all, Lonergan’s opus does not include direct references to the public church. Although Lonergan, a Roman Catholic philosopher and theologian, makes reference to the church, it is not a primary focus of his work. It would seem that another author would provide a more valuable resource for the task at hand. At the same time, Bernard Lonergan, in the words of Frederick Crowe, is a generalist who “belongs to that class of thinkers (not very numerous) who have aimed at fundamental ideas, ideas of a type that should have wide-ranging implications, ramifications, applications, [and] adaptations.”² As a generalist, the foundational character of Lonergan’s enterprise allows him to be an optimal resource for the

particular topic of the public church. Crowe cites the increase of the application of Lonergan's ideas to topics he did not specifically consider and asserts that "what is involved in applying the ideas of a generalist thinker like Lonergan to a particular topic .... focuses on the need for intelligent (fuller and more determinate understanding) rather than merely logical mediation." In other words, the present chapter's consideration of Lonergan and the public church is not "the easy path of simply adding a conclusion to premises." Rather, the application of Lonergan to the public church both promotes and facilitates a deeper understanding of the public church, and provides the means to respond successfully to Marty's challenge of making the understanding of the public church more explicit.

The public church is an ecclesial expression of the faith and culture relationship and it espouses a critical engagement with the host culture. This critical engagement does not necessitate a totalist, tribalist or privatist position in order to safeguard "the truth it knows." Chapter three identified several implicit characteristics of the public church in the conciliar documents *Gaudium et spes* and *Dignitatis humanae*. The characteristics of the public church identified in the previous chapter provide a necessary component of the Lonergan and public church discussion. The council's anthropology is an alternative to the misconceptions of the human person prevalent in contemporary American culture. In stark contrast to the anthropology underpinning the individualism of the American ethos, the council proclaims the human person is transcendent. The person is by nature social and intimately connected to the larger social order. The transcendence of the human person, grounded in a salvific and dynamic relationship with God, bestows upon each person his or her divinely initiated dignity. The promotion of the dignity of the human person is at the heart of the church's

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3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., 15.
mission in the world. The church and world relationship is described best as a critical and dialogical mode of ecclesial presence. The church is vigilant in its promotion of human dignity and steadfast in its transformative mission of creating situations that advocate, promote and reflect the true dignity of the human person. A fruitful conversation between Lonergan and the public church must include the following characteristics: a critical anthropology, an ecclesial presence marked by critical engagement and dialogue, and the transformative mission of the church firmly established in the classic faith and culture relationship. These characteristics of the public church constitute the “particular” component in the “Lonergan and public church” genre.

In light of these aforementioned characteristics, what ideas and foundational categories of Lonergan are best utilized to realize a fuller and more determinate understanding of the public church? In considering the foundational categories Lonergan can provide, it is important to reiterate the contribution Frederick Crowe attributes to a “generalist”. Lonergan’s contribution to a fuller understanding of the public church is not a process of logical mediation, a method of adding conclusions to stated premises. It is not to proceed with the intention or expectation of finding a direct correlation between Bernard Lonergan and the attributes of the public church. Rather, the “transition from general to particular, from Lonergan’s categories to the characteristics of the public church, if it is to advance our knowledge and understanding, requires further insights that will themselves be creative and hard won.” This chapter’s “conversation” between Lonergan and the public church builds upon the contribution of the previous chapters and moves forward in a more

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5 Crowe makes the distinction between “Lonergan on...” and “Lonergan and...” Crowe posits, “the difference illustrates the difference between mediating and mediated functions; in the first we are much more limited by what we find in research, in the second we can be more creative.” See note 12 in ibid., 29.  
6 Ibid., 14.
explicit understanding of the public church.

The previous chapter established the anthropological focus in *Gaudium et spes* and *Dignitatis humanae* as vital for the self-understanding of the Roman Catholic church as a public church. Anthropology is fundamental to Lonergan’s work, and his understanding of the authentic human subject offers a corrective to the anthropological foundations and assumptions underpinning contemporary American culture. Lonergan’s anthropology of the “authentic human subject” strongly critiques “the manager” and “the therapist”, which fall short of grasping the true nature of the human person, and promote the polemic configuration of the public and private spheres.

Lonergan’s anthropology offers a corrective to the common misperception of a fractured relationship between the individual and the larger social order. Lonergan maintains that the human person is radically social; the person is in a relationship of self-mediation with the larger world, the “human” world. The individual’s self-constitution occurs, “against the backdrop of an enormous community of meaning and value of which he [sic] himself [sic] is not the author.”

The human world is the world of meaning and value and this matrix of communities is where each person authentically or unauthentically “decides for himself [sic] what [he] is to make of himself [sic].” The human person is who he or she is because of the communities, societies and cultures encountered by the human subject. The larger human world of meaning and value not only “set the conditions for an individual’s self-responsibility. [the human world] is itself the product of the self-responsibility of earlier

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individuals and groups." The human world we live in is the product of the human operations of those who have gone before us and of our contemporaries. Consequently, the matrix of communities of meaning and value, this human world, is authentic to the extent human subjects and communities are authentic. To the extent the human world is constituted by unauthentic human operations progress is stymied and there is bias and decline. The church, as a community of meaning and value, is not exempt from unauthenticity or bias. Nonetheless, the church finds its true mission not over and against, separate from, and not peripheral to the human world, but as an agent of transformation bringing an end to unauthenticity and decline and promoting authentic community within the human world. Lonergan’s foundational categories of (1) anthropology, (2) communities of meaning and value, (3) progress’ decline and recovery, and (4) the redemptive role of the church in the world will be explored in order to come to a more determinate understanding of the public church.

The scope of this chapter neither permits an exhaustive consideration of Bernard Lonergan’s opus. nor attempts an exhaustive illustration of Lonergan’s contribution to the public church. As a foundational thinker, Lonergan extensively considered the categories introduced in this chapter. In this chapter, however, each will be considered only to the extent that they illustrate and illuminate the understanding, form, and work of the public church.

**Critical Anthropology**

There are four points at which Lonergan’s critical anthropology can help our understanding of the public church be made more explicit. First, the public church is a response to the cultural factors present in the American ethos that minimize the social

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implications of the Christian faith. The anthropology of the public church actually
counteracts the legacy of a pervasive individualism with its proclivity to envision two distinct
spheres. a “private sphere” where religion is often understood as one among many private
choices and, a “public sphere”, where religion is generally perceived as intrusive. At the
heart of the public church’s mission is the transformation of culture, or more accurately, the
transvaluing of culture. The public church acts as an agent of cultural transformation by
indentifying the social implications of the Christian faith and actively persuading its
constituency to be agents of authentic cultural development. The public church seeks to
create an alternative situation where religion and the church can take their rightful place in
the social order. This rightful place is in contrast to the role often assigned to religion and the
church in the existing configuration of the public and private spheres.

The transformation of culture through human agency, and the transformation of
ecclesial self-understandings in relation to cultural factors are manifestations of a decidedly
modern change of horizons. The public church’s attempt to effect cultural transformation
through an analysis and critique of the operating values of the host culture, is not possible
when culture is perceived as static, universal and normative, as if there is just one culture.
Rather, what is required is the realization that there are many cultures and these cultures can
develop or stagnate; they can regress or flourish. In other words, culture is not a monolithic
entity composed of fixed institutions and immutable laws that one is “educated into,” as in
the image of the “cultured person.” Most certainly, to understand both cultural pluralism, the
inherent differences existing among cultures, and cultural development and decline, the
living testimony of a culture’s achievements and the legacy of its errors, necessitates a shift
of horizons.
How can Lonergan’s thought deepen our understanding of the social and cultural characteristics of human persons? Bernard Lonergan identifies this shift of horizons as the shift from a classicist world-view to historical mindedness. In the transition from classicist to historical mindedness, culture as normative and static is rejected in favor of an empirical understanding of culture as “the set of meanings and values that inform a way of life.”

Meaning is intrinsic to culture, and meanings are felt, intuited and manifest in the behavior of human subjects in rites, symbols, and language. To embrace an empirical understanding of culture, however, one must grapple with the question of oneness and differentiation, with unity and multiplicity. In other words, is there a universal base from which to understand cultural pluralism and the ebb and flow of a culture’s history? Is there a foundation for attempts at a general critique of culture, such as the public church espouses as fundamental to its mission? Bernard Lonergan’s answer to these ageless questions is found in his historical apprehension of the human subject. The transition from a classicist to historical mindedness, the shift from a static and fixed world view to a changing and developing world, necessitates an apprehension of the human subject as dynamic and historical.

A second characteristic in the anthropology of the public church is the moral nature intrinsic to the human subject and the human world. Bernard Lonergan rejects the static and abstract understanding of the human subject reflective of the classicist world view. In opposition to apprehending “man [sic] abstractly through a definition that applies omni et soli and through properties verifiable in every man [sic], Lonergan’s anthropology reflects the

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transition to historical mindedness which demands another way of apprehending the human subject. This transition effects a shift from starting from static first principles about an abstract human subject to the transition to a dynamic method that has come to be named “transcendental”. This latter understanding of the human subject ascribes the qualities of developing, emerging, dynamic and historical to the human person. The former classicist view of the human subject leads to a static, unchanging and fixed notion of the human person and of his or her world. Lonergan’s historical apprehension of the human subject leads him to perceive the human subject as a knowing, and choosing, and deciding subject. Lonergan contends the human subject can know the real, and the true and the good, and is responsible to decide and to act accordingly, for one’s self and for others.

The transcendental method’s dynamic structure lends itself to the image of the human person as a “living question,” or in Lonergan’s own words, the image of “the eros of the human spirit.” The transcendental notions, which “are contained in the questions prior to answers, are the radical intending that moves us from ignorance to knowledge. They are a priori because they go beyond what we know to seek what we do not know yet.” They are unrestricted as compared to our answers that continuously give rise to more questions. The transcendental notions, “that is our questions for intelligence, for reflection, and for deliberation, constitute our capacity for self-transcendence, ...and [that capacity] becomes an

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14 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 13.
15 Ibid., 11.
actuality when one falls in love."16 Lonergan contends in the questions for intelligence and reflection, the human subject is in dynamic anticipation of the real and the true. in questions for deliberation the subject is in anticipation of the good.

So intelligence takes us beyond experiencing to ask what and why and how and what for. Reasonableness takes us beyond the answers of intelligence to ask whether the answers are true and whether what they mean really is so. Responsibility goes beyond fact and desire and possibility to discern between what truly is good and what only apparently is good.17

Lonergan maintains that within each and every human person is the longing and desire to know, within each and every person is the desire for authenticity: the desire of responsible and worthwhile action, and within each person is the desire for transcendence.

The transcendental method, "which one IS no mere technique or procedure, rather it is ourselves creating all other procedures, processes, techniques and methods. It is ourselves open to the whole range of reality."18 Lonergan defines method as, "a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results." 19

What are these operations Lonergan speaks of in relation to method? They include among others: seeing, hearing, inquiring, understanding, formulating, reflecting, judging, deliberating, deciding, and speaking. Lonergan states that these operations follow a basic pattern, are spontaneous and familiar, and are intentional and conscious. They are conscious because the human subject is capable of being present to his or her operations.

Lonergan distinguishes four levels of consciousness and intentionality, which are

16 Ibid., 105.
17 Ibid., 11.
successive, related and qualitatively different. There is the empirical level on which the subject senses, perceives, imagines, feels, moves, speaks and experiences. There is the intellectual level when one inquires, organizes, understands and articulates our understanding. On this level the subject raises the question “what is it?” and grapples with the presuppositions and implications of our expression. On the rational level the subject, having questioned his or her own understanding asks the further question, “is it so?” At this level, the “rational subject sublates the intelligent and experiential subject.” As the subject questions his or her own understanding, asking whether he or she has things right by marshalling the evidence pro and con, and judging this to be so or not to be so. After reflecting critically and weighing the evidence the subject passes judgment on the truth or falsity, probability or certitude of a statement. One can make a judgment to the effect that one’s insight is correct or incorrect once all further relevant questions have been answered. Once one comes to judgment, however, one’s integrity is at stake. In other words, in the process of coming to judgment it is the authentic subject who has not eliminated relevant data in order to protect one’s own interests. Finally, having made a judgment of fact, the subject asks and then decides, what one should do in response to that judgment? This is the responsible level on which we are concerned for ourselves and others, our own activities and goals and so we deliberate and evaluate and decide our course of action, which we carry out. It is the authentic subject, Lonergan contends, who acts not merely from satisfaction but from true value.

20 Ibid., 9.
21 Bernard J.F. Lonergan, “The Subject,” in Ryan and Tyrrell, eds., A Second Collection, 80. Lonergan qualifies Hegelian use of the term “sublation.” Lonergan understands the four levels as distinct and related, and lower levels being retained and preserved, yet transcended and completed by the higher level. He does not espouse Hegel’s view that the higher reconciles a contradiction in the lower. See note 12 on page 80.
Lonergan asserts that to know what should be done, however, is not the same as doing it. One can know what should be done and still not do it; therefore, "morality may be thought of, ... as the extension of knowing into doing."\textsuperscript{22} It is not enough simply to determine the responsible course of action, one must carry out this decision. What is at stake at the fourth level is the existential choice, "the discovery of oneself as a moral being, the realization that one not only chooses between courses of action but also thereby makes oneself an authentic human being or unauthentic one."\textsuperscript{23} Lonergan's anthropology envisions the human subject as a moral subject, he corrects an anthropology detached from "the context of theology and metaphysics of modernity."\textsuperscript{24} Human agency is neither morally neutral, nor are the products of human agency, the human subject's societies, cultures, and communities morally neutral. The existing misconception of a "morally neutral public zone" is corrected by Lonergan's anthropological foundations. Lonergan reminds us that human living is a moral enterprise; restricting and compartmentalizing the moral dimension of life to the "private" sphere and eliminating it from the public sphere is an aberration based on a flawed anthropology. Lonergan's anthropology illustrates both an alternative to the compartmentalized human subject of American individualism and a viable anthropology for the public church.

A third characteristic of the public church is its rejection of a morally neutral public sphere and its criticism of religion's marginalization to the private sphere. On this point, too, Lonergan's discussion of anthropology can deepen the understanding of the public church. Although self-transcendence occurs on the second and third levels of consciousness, on the

\textsuperscript{22} Terry J. Tekippe, \textit{What is Lonergan Up to in Insight?} (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1996), 133.
\textsuperscript{23} Lonergan, \textit{Method in Theology}, 38.
\textsuperscript{24} Walter Kasper, "Theological Anthropology," 45.
fourth level, with the human subject's openness to love and its transformative and healing power, self-transcendence reaches a fuller realization. Self-transcendence is possible because of love. Lonergan maintains that "self-transcendence reaches its term not in righteousness but in love and, when we fall in love, then we are lifted above ourselves and carried along as parts within an ever more intimate yet ever more liberating dynamic whole." It is the love of one's family, love of husband and wife; it is the love of parents and children, manifested in parental self-sacrifice, or even in tremendous personal risk to ensure the safety of a child. It is the love of the civil community manifested in the individual's choice to yield one's interest of personal safety, profit, or gain, in regards to the greater needs and good of the larger group. It is God's love, the free gift given in the depths of each person's heart. To say the authentic human subject is transcendent is to claim our innate orientation to the divine.

The question of God arises out of the very experience of the basic and primordial human drive towards meaning, truth and value. ... It implies that the religious question is not some late addition to an already constituted and functioning human consciousness, but the unstated implication of the meaning, truth, and value of the very pursuit of meaning, truth and value that distinguishes human existence. If that pursuit defines the existential project of each individual quest for authenticity, then the religious question is part of the very stuff of that existential moment in which we ask not merely about the world we inhabit but about the self we shall become and the world we shall create.

While it is true the capacity for self-transcendence becomes an actuality when one falls in love and is in a state of being in love, "being in love with God as experienced, is being in love in an unrestricted fashion." This unrestricted fashion reflects God's love as the basic fulfillment of our capacity for self-transcendence. God's love is not the product of our knowledge or even our choice, being in love with God is God's gift to us, given to us first

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and freely. It is the experience of mystery, and it is conscious on the fourth level of intentional consciousness, a "consciousness that deliberates, makes judgments of value, decides, acts responsibly and freely."\(^{28}\) God's love occupies the ground and root of the fourth level of consciousness, moving the human subject to conversion, to act responsibly and freely in promoting the human good of all. God's love is a healing love which affirms each person, empowers him or her to lovingly serve others, bringing into the midst of the human world God's reign.

Lonergan understands the human orientation to the divine as the foundation of the human person's authentic self-transcendence. Religion, faith and religious belief are understood in light of the very call to human authenticity, not merely as optional private choices as in contemporary American culture. Lonergan's understanding of religion and faith are intrinsically grounded in his anthropology and concomitant with human authenticity. Religion and the question of God are at the heart of the self-transcendent subject, one's authenticity is firmly grounded in the relationship with the God who reveals God's self as love outpoured into the person's heart. The importance of faith, the question of God, and the role of religion cannot be limited or marginalized to the private sphere without detriment to authentic living, rather each is a necessary element of the common world we create and share.

Lonergan's anthropology challenges the pervasive understanding of self-fulfillment, whether as economic success or an exalted sense of self, espoused by the representative characters of the manager and the therapist. For Lonergan the human person's self-fulfillment is union with God.

\(^{28}\) Ibid., 107.
Man’s [sic] transcendental subjectivity is mutilated or abolished unless he [sic] is stretching forth towards the intelligible, the unconditioned, the good of value. The reach, not of its attainment, but of his intending is unrestricted. There lies within his [sic] horizon a region for the divine, a shrine for ultimate holiness... [it is] our native orientation to the divine.29

Lonergan’s anthropology provides a corrective to the operating anthropology underpinning the current configuration of the private and public spheres in the American ethos. If a primary task of the public church is to work toward an alternative situation in which the authentic role of religion and the Church operate, an alternative anthropology is necessary. The anthropology of the manager and therapist place the question of God at the periphery of human living. These representative characters are grounded in a faulty anthropology, which must be corrected. Lonergan’s understanding of the authentic human subject posits God as the ground of our conscious, intentional operations of human attention, intelligence, reasonableness and responsibility constituting our capacity for self-transcendence. The question of God is not a peripheral question for the human subject, it is of paramount importance for one’s authenticity and self-transcendence.

A fourth characteristic of the public church is its criticism of American culture for splitting the world of the person into the public and private spheres. Lonergan’s anthropology offers a corrective to the operating anthropology reflected in the representative types of the “therapist” and the “manager”, both of which dominate the American ethos and shape the configuration of the private and public spheres in contemporary American culture. Lonergan explains that human self-transcendence and the achievement of full authenticity cannot happen in isolation as an internal process of maturation alone. The human person is intrinsically social, and authenticity is attained only through the human person’s

29 Ibid., 103.
appropriation of, and contribution to his or her social, cultural, and religious heritage. The human subject is not only born into a natural world, but also into the world of families, communities, religions, societies, and cultures constituted by human meanings. Unlike the natural world that is not a human product, the “human world” is mediated by meanings and values. It is the world that is constituted by others’ understandings and judgments and mediated through language, beliefs, symbols, roles, customs and other carriers of meaning. The human subject inherits the world mediated by meaning and value through the mediation of one’s contemporaries and the people who have gone before us.

The intrinsic connection between the human subject and the larger human world Lonergan calls mediation. Mediation is how the human subject spontaneously informs his or her concrete experiences with meaning and value.

Operations are said to be immediate when their objects are present. So seeing is immediate to what is being seen, hearing to what is being heard, touch to what is being touched. But by imagination, language, symbols, we operate in a compound manner; immediately with respect to the image, word, symbol: mediately with respect to what is represented or signified. In this fashion we come to operate not only with respect to the present and actual but also with respect to the absent, the past, the future and the merely possible or ideal or normative or fantastic.30

The human person engages in the task of self-constitution as one’s conscious operations are informed by the various meanings and values of the larger world mediated by meaning and value. The established roles and beliefs of this “human world” provide the human person with the “currency” for his or her own self-constitution and self-definition. The world mediated by meaning and value, is a “far larger world”31 where the individual shares in “the public fund” of human knowledge, and the possibility of the emergence of a creative existential self is mediated by the achievements of earlier generations. In this larger world,

30 Ibid., 28, italics mine.
31 Ibid., 98.
...we emerge as persons, meet one another in a common concern for values, seek to abolish the organization of human living on the basis of competing egoisms and to replace it by an organization on the basis of man's [sic] perceptiveness and intelligence, his reasonableness, and his responsible exercise of freedom.  

This meeting of one another in a concern for common values and meaning, Lonergan understands as community, which he contends is indispensable for human living. Lonergan maintains that community is foundational to the larger social order and the human world. Community forms spontaneously among those individuals who share interests and skills. Individuals create community and community creates individuals in a process of mutual self-mediation and self-constitution. As an instance in the world mediated by meaning and value, community is not simply an aggregate of individuals, because “that overlooks its formal constituent, which is common meaning.” Community is only made possible by some degree of common experience, manifested in a common history people share. It is given shape and substance through common understandings and common judgments, and agreement as to truths of facts and values and the meaning of experience. Community becomes effective through decisions and common commitment for the sake of common goals and values.

Lonergan asserts that “community unites or divides, begins or ends, where a community of experience, understanding, judgment, and decision begin and ends.”

Lonergan’s understanding of the human person and the larger social order in a relationship of mutuality and mediation challenges the American concept of the “unencumbered self” as the mark of the free person. The individual neither stands prior to the larger world, nor in a state of perennial conflict with the larger world, both attributes of American individualism. Rather, individuals exist in a matrix of communities, where each person authentically or

32 Ibid., 10  
33 Ibid., 356.  
34 Ibid., 79.
unauthentically "decides for himself [sic] what he [sic] is to make of himself [sic]." True freedom, for the authentic human subject, is not unlimited emancipation from traditions and communities advocating the misconception of the person as an "unencumbered self." True freedom, Lonergan maintains, is the person striving towards authenticity in the midst of the larger network of communities, the very context of his or her existential project.

Lonergan invites each person to attend to the spontaneous yet free method of our understanding and our deciding. It is an invitation to the "highest form of self-knowledge, the knowledge which encourages and facilitates our responsibly and lovingly fulling our desires." Human authenticity is self-transcendence and one strives towards authenticity by the self-appropriation of the transcendental method through the transcendental precepts: Be Attentive, Be Intelligent, Be Reasonable, Be Responsible. Be in Love. "By 'precepts' Lonergan does not mean external directives; he means the spontaneous urges in us to pay attention, to understand, to settle true from false, to settle right from wrong, and to love." Lonergan shows us that human living is a matter of performing intentional operations informed by meaning, "meaning is constitutive of human living; human living without meaning is infantile." Meaning, as constitutive of human living, develops in human collaboration and is subject to change as is evident in the change in structures, forms, and the plurality of cultures.

The public church seeks to transform the meanings and values that shape the current American culture in order to create an alternative situation. The alternative situation, however, depends upon human agency as the catalyst for the transformation of culture. The

35 Ibid., 240.
36 Gregson, "The Desire to Know," 23.
public church’s work and mission within the American culture is dependent upon anthropological foundations. Lonergan’s anthropology of the “authentic human subject” proves a solid resource for the public church. Not only does his anthropology illuminate the deficiencies of the operating anthropology underpinning American culture, his anthropology makes explicit the challenge to the public church’s constituency to greater authenticity as the means to true cultural transformation.

To summarize, Lonergan’s thought helps us to make more explicit the critical anthropology employed by the public church. First, the transition from a classicist world view to historical mindedness allows an understanding of culture as empirical. There is no one fixed culture, rather, there is a diversity of cultures and, they develop and regress, they are transformed and transvalued, as the result of human agency. Second, the shift to historical mindedness is concomitant with a shift to method in the apprehension of the human subject. Lonergan’s understanding of the transcendental method establishes the human subject as dynamic and the creative force underpinning culture. Lonergan reminds us that human agency, which shapes and fashions the world we live in, is inherently moral. Third, both the question of God and the role of religion in Lonergan’s anthropology are intrinsically connected to the authenticity of each and every human subject. Human living, the intentional operations of the human subject’s understanding, knowing, deciding and choosing, is a moral endeavor. Consequently, the world shaped by human agency is inherently moral. To compartmentalize the world into opposing spheres of public and private, designating the former as morally neutral and the latter as morally optional, is the social manifestation of a skewed anthropology. Lonergan provides the public church with a solid anthropological foundation for understanding the question of God and the role of religion, not as being
peripheral to life, but are in fact pivotal for the human and cultural authenticity. Fourth, Lonergan contends that self-transcendence, the achievement of full human authenticity, is attained only in the appropriation and development of the human subject’s social nature. In contrast to the skewed anthropology reflected in the representative characters of “the manager” and “the therapist”, Lonergan maintains the human subject is social by nature. The larger social order, the vast array of communities the human subject participates in and contributes to, is the arena for his or her self-authenticity. Authentic human living calls for social involvement and social responsibility, two attributes the public church calls its constituency to embrace.

Communities of Meaning and Value

The Second Vatican Council provides a foundation for the self-understanding of the Roman Catholic church as a public church, in large part because of the council’s articulation of the church and world relationship. The conciliar document, *Gaudium et spes*, envisions a church not only *in* the world, but situates the church in a relationship of critical engagement with its host culture. The public church differs significantly from both the totalist mode of ecclesial presence, which leads to the elimination of the tension between faith and culture, and the tribalist mode that meets the larger world with defensiveness and intolerance. The public church seeks to engage the host culture in a spirit of mutual understanding and dialogue in order to promote a situation conducive of true human dignity. Although the public church understands itself as a unique voice shaping the host culture through public discourse, it does not see itself as the *only* voice. Open to dialogue and striving towards mutual understanding, the public church collaborates with other constituencies in the larger social order to promote the common good.
Underpinning the defining characteristics of the public church is a specific understanding of the church-world relationship. The public church's commitment to partnership and dialogue and, its mission of the transformation of culture are grounded in a specific understanding of the church and world. The public church's critical engagement with the values informing the lives of individuals and institutions, in essence its understanding of its own "worldly" mission, also presuppose an understanding of the relationship between the church and the world. Therefore, any attempt to develop a fuller understanding of the public church necessitates a consideration of the relationship between the church and the world and, second, an articulation of a viable paradigm situating the church within the public discourse. There are four points of convergence in Lonergan's thought that provide a valuable resource for an understanding of the church—world relationship that illuminates the self-understanding of the public church and, its critical engagement and dialogue with the host culture.

One characteristic of the public church is that it situates itself within the larger cultural context assuming a valid role in the public discourse that shapes the meanings and values of the host culture. The first theme from Lonergan's work that contributes to the public church's understanding of the church-world relationship, is his distinction between the world of immediacy and the human world, the world mediated by meaning and value. Lonergan contends that the world of immediacy is the world of the child. "The world of what is felt, touched, grasped, sucked, seen, heard. It is a world of immediate experience, ... , of image and affect without any perceptible intrusion from insight of concept, reflection or judgment, deliberation or choice." The human world is a larger world and it is the product of

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human operations. Lonergan asserts the human world is the world mediated by meaning and value which, "is what is intended in questioning and is determined not only by experience but also by understanding and, commonly, by judgment as well. This addition of understanding and judgment is what makes possible the world mediated by meaning." 40 This larger world of meaning and value is not simply the result of the individual subject's operations; it is actually the product of human cooperation.

Each person lives in the midst of this larger world and the reality is such that each person's operating is actually "co-operating" with others in a pattern within the larger social framework. Gradually and continuously the individual learns by trial and error how to co-operate in the multiple situations of one's life as he or she is presented with the challenges of new situations.

As adaptation to ever more objects and situations occurs, there goes forward a twofold process. There is an increasing differentiation of operations so that more and more different operations are in one's repertory. There is also a greater multiplication of different combinations of differentiated operations. 41

The social institutions of the human world, as expressions of human cooperation, are the product and manifestation of human subjects meeting their particular good. 42 These patterns of cooperation reflect common acceptance and common understanding on the part of human subjects and, in fact, are the genesis of the social institutions of our contemporary world.

Lonergan challenges the misconception that the social institutions that make up the larger social order can be likened to machines which run automatically.

40 Ibid., 77.
41 Ibid., 27.
42 Lonergan defines "instances of the particular good" thus: "By such an instance is meant any entity, whether object or action, that meets a need of a particular individual at a given place and time. Needs are to be understood in the broadest sense; they are not to be restricted to necessities but rather to be stretched to include wants of every kind." Ibid., 48.
This attitude of reification confuses institutions with material products of human agency... [rather] institutions are made up of human beings who cooperate in their building. Social institutions are more like languages than they are material objects, they are not fixed and immutable entities, but change as the ways in which human cooperation constructing them change.\textsuperscript{43}

The cooperation among various communities of meaning and value constitutes the larger social order, the sum total of various social institutions. Lonergan asserts that human cooperation is not an abstraction. Rather, human cooperation is manifested in such institutions as,

the family and manners (\textit{mores}), society and education, the state and the law, the economy and technology, the \textit{church} or the sect. They constitute the commonly understood and already accepted basis and mode of cooperation.\textsuperscript{44}

Cooperation is far from being an abstraction; cooperation is manifested in the world in which we live, both individually and with each other, as we pursue the challenge of authenticity.

The public church is one community of meaning and value, among many such communities, in the larger human world. To recognize the public church as a community of meaning and value is to acknowledge that it is a human community. Lonergan maintains community is not simply an aggregate of individuals, rather it is an instance in the world of meaning and value, present when there is common experience, understanding, common judgment and common values. The communities of meaning and value that comprise the larger social order are in fact patterns of cooperation that respond to specific human needs of social living. The unique identity and function of each community of meaning and value is the result of human operations and its resultant common meaning: its common understanding, judgments, and values. The complexity of human needs and the myriad of


\textsuperscript{44} Lonergan, \textit{Method in Theology}, 48, italics mine.
communities responding to these needs must eliminate any understanding of the church as the *only* community of meaning and value in the social order. The public church maintains its identity and its own unique self-understanding without succumbing to a totalist mode of relating to the larger social order. In other words, the public church can embrace the legitimate role of multiple communities of meaning without necessarily withdrawing into a position of defensiveness, suspicion or inevitable resignation. The public church can retain its own uniqueness and openly acknowledge the uniqueness of the other communities comprising the larger social order. At the same time, the public church, as a legitimate community of meaning and value, does not acquiesce to factors that may attempt to minimize its own distinctive common meaning and value in the larger world. The human world Lonergan reminds us, is comprised of communities of meaning and value, and the public church is one among such communities; it neither espouses a totalist or tribalist position in the world, nor acquiesces to cultural factors promoting a privatist position.

A second characteristic of the public church is its commitment to dialogue and cooperation with other communities of meaning and value. Dialogue and cooperation are constitutive to the self-understanding of the public church as it fulfills its mission of creating a situation promoting human dignity. Lonergan is a resource for this characteristic of the public church, too. Lonergan’s theme of human authenticity is the second point Lonergan contributes to the understanding of the public church’s presence in the larger social order. Lonergan not only focuses on the authenticity of the human subject but also on the authenticity of a community, the authenticity of the network of communities comprising the larger social order, and the authenticity of the meaning and values informing the institutions in the social order. Whether on the part of an individual subject, or on the part of
communities, authenticity moves beyond questions for intelligence and reflection, the
anticipation of the real and the true, to questions for deliberation and discernment for action.
The anticipation of the good. Lonergan insists that the human good is concrete; it is neither an
abstraction, nor is it a mechanistic entity divorced from human agency. Rather it is a process,
"not merely the service of man [sic], it is the making of man [sic] his [sic] advance in
authenticity, the fulfillment of his affectivity and the direction of his [sic] work to the
particular goods and a good of order that are worth while. 45 Lonergan's understanding of
"the good of order" accentuates what Lonergan means by the human good as concrete.

The good of order is not "merely a sustained succession of recurring instances of the
types of the particular good. Besides that recurrent manifold there is the order that sustains it.
This consists basically in (1) the ordering of operations so that they are cooperations and
ensure the recurrence of all effectively desired instances of the particular good, and (2) the
interdependence of effective desires or decisions with the appropriate performance by
cooperating individuals. 46 In other words, the good of order does not refer only to the
individual procuring instances of the particular good, for example one's own education. it
focuses on the levels of cooperation that constitute an order for these to recur for more than
the individual. In this case an education for all of those who would desire it reflects an
effective good of order. Neither abstract nor mechanistic, the good of order is the concrete
manner in which cooperation is actually working. An effective good of order requires
cooperation between the necessary institutions in the larger social order and "skillful people
working together to meet one another's needs against all obstacles within constantly

45 Ibid., 52.
46 Ibid., 49, italics mine.
changing circumstances."47 The effective functioning of the good of order requires and depends upon authentic performance on the part of individuals, and cooperation within and among various communities within the larger social order. An effective functioning of the good of order moves towards the realization of the human good, which Lonergan describes as a situation where, "individuals do not just operate to meet their needs but cooperate to meet one another’s needs. As the community develops its institutions to facilitate cooperation, so individuals develop skills to fulfill roles and perform tasks set by the institutional framework."48 An exaggerated exaltation of the individual, as is manifested in American individualism, hinders the necessary cooperation needed for an effective good of order and stymies the realization of the human good.

Authentic performance on the part of individuals, and cooperation within and among various communities within the larger social order, promotes the functioning of the good of order and contributes to the realization of the human good. The social institutions that comprise the larger social order provide a distinct and legitimate function as they meet specific human social needs. Lonergan, however, reminds us they are also instrumental to the functioning of the good of order. In other words, the economic and the political communities are in fact social institutions meeting economic and political needs respectively. The challenge of authenticity, however, demands they collaborate with other communities of meaning and value, including religious institutions, to foster the common good. Consequently, the public church, to be an authentic human community, is bound to this same collaboration expressed in its practice of cooperation and its promotion of community, the

48 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 52.
ideal basis of society. But as Lonergan reminds us, community is not simply an aggregate of individuals, rather it is an instance in the world of meaning and value, present when there is common experience, understanding, common judgment and common values. Common meaning constitutes community and "the genesis of common meaning is an ongoing process of communication." Community is reached only through the painstaking process of dialogue within and among the various communities that make up the larger human world. The cooperation necessary to advance the common good in society is concomitant with dialogue among the communities of meaning and value. This dialogue must begin with a spirit of openness, continue with the attitude of seeking mutual understanding and judgment and, be effective through a willingness to combine efforts to realize the common good.

Public discourse and dialogue, among and within the various constituencies in the larger social order, are often hindered by the individualism of the American ethos. Public discourse becomes saturated with the "language" of individualism and the social institutions informed by the tenets of individualism jettison true cooperation. In this milieu the public church attempts its mission of promoting the common good, through dialogue and cooperation within its constituency, and with other communities of meaning and value. The public church promotes and witnesses to the realization of community, as the means of fostering the human good so often compromised by individualism.

Lonergan is a resource for situating the public church in a church-world relationship that challenges misconceptions about the authentic role of religion and church in the American ethos. The public church does not accept a marginal role in the American ethos. Rather, it claims a legitimate role within the larger social order. Having established the public

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49 Ibid., 357.
church within the larger social order, Lonergan is a resource both for situating the public church as a legitimate community of meaning and value among others in the human world, and establishing community, cooperation and dialogue as constitutive to the public church.

A third characteristic of the public church is implied by its rejection of the idea of a morally neutral public sphere. Despite the widespread acceptance in the American culture of the idea of a morally neutral public square, the public church rejects this notion. The world, Lonergan reminds us, is the result of human operations that are inherently moral, as are the social institutions they produce. The present configuration of the public and private spheres in the contemporary American culture creates the illusion of a demarcation between a moral realm and a neutral public sphere. Consequently, the institutions comprising the public sphere are often perceived as morally neutral entities. The political and economic, and even the educational institutions and systems, are frequently perceived in a mechanistic manner rather than as the products of human moral agency. The public church, in its critical engagement of culture, not only rejects the idea of these social institutions as “value-free” but it also seeks to identify exactly what values inform and sustain these institutions. An instrumental component of the public church’s mission to transvalue culture requires the ability to clarify and disclose the values underpinning social institutions and to analyze how these same institutions function in the good of order. At the heart of the mission of the public church is the promotion of an effective good of order, one that promotes the human good. The public church seeks to identify and correct whatever hinders the realization of the human good. Therefore, cultural analysis is a necessity for the mission of the public church, and it is the genesis of a third characteristic of the public church: the public church unmask...
contribution Lonergan brings to the discussion of the public church, specifically to its task of critical engagement with the host culture, is his understanding of an authentic scale of values. The scale of values is the key to understanding any given society, and it is instrumental to the integrity of the church’s mission, specifically the mission of the public church.

Lonergan reminds us the human world is the world mediated by meaning and the world of value.

Knowing a world mediated by meaning is only a prelude to man’s [sic] dealing with nature, to his [sic] interpersonal living and working with others, to his [sic] existential becoming what he [sic] is to make of himself [sic] by his [sic] choices and deeds. So there emerge questions for deliberation. Gradually they reveal their scope in their practical, interpersonal, and existential dimensions.50

While the first three levels of intentional consciousness allow the human person to come to judgments of fact. “intermediate between judgments of fact and judgements of value lie apprehensions of value. Such apprehensions are given in feelings.”51 Lonergan grants feelings a pivotal role, “there are in full consciousness feelings so deep and strong, especially when deliberately reinforced, that they channel attention, shape one’s horizon, direct one’s life.”52 Feelings move our consciousness as well as the operations. The question of “is it worthwhile?” is the question of value, and values are revealed in the ambiguity of human feelings demanding discernment.

Feelings. when authentic, not only respond to value, but they “do so in accord with some scale of preference.”53 and this scale of values is “the key to the structure of society.”54

In Lonergan’s scale of values, values are positioned in an ascending order. they mutually

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50 Lonergan, “Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,” 173.
51 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 53.
52 Lonergan, Ibid., 32.
53 Ibid., 31.
54 Doran, Theology and the Dialectics of History, 95.
condition each other and, they are constituted by authenticity and unauthenticity. The scale of values includes: vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious values.

Vital values are the values conducive to health and strength, grace and vigor. Social values consist of a social order whose schemes of recurrence guarantee vital values to the whole community. Cultural values are the meanings, values, and orientations informing the living and operating of the community. Personal value is the authentic subject as originating value in the community. And religious value is the grace that enables the subject, the culture, the community, to be authentic. At each successive level we are carried to a greater degree of self-transcendence in our affective and effective response.  

The scale of values is a mirror of the authenticity or unauthenticity of a society. Underpinning an authentic society is a good of order in which cooperating subjects and communities ensure a situation of true value.

The scale of values operates in an ascending order leading Lonergan to maintain that, the “more basic levels are required for the emergence of higher levels. [and] they also set problems that only proportionate developments at higher levels can solve.” In other words, it would be doubtful that people who have not sufficiently met their basic vital needs could initiate or sustain an appropriate and effective social order. At the same time, problems occurring at the lower levels of the scale, the lack of meeting vital values of food, shelter, and health, are solved only by the higher social values. Only in the social order, at the level of social values, can social institutions initiate and sustain appropriate schemes of recurrent cooperations capable of meeting the needs of these basic levels. If vital values such as food, clothing, and other necessities for health are not equitably distributed, this will only be addressed by effective changes in the function of the social institutions in the good of order.

The values of the scale are not only in ascending order and mutually condition each

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55 Ibid., 94.
56 Ibid., 95.
other; they are also constituted by authentic and unauthentic performance. So it is conceivable that the recurrent social schemes necessary for an effective distribution of the vital goods can function unauthentically and be responsible for an inequitable distribution of these goods. When this occurs and there is a breakdown on the level of the social infrastructure what is required is proportionate developments at the next level, the level of culture. “The theoretical developments required to institute alternative technologies, economies, polities, and communities, [to address problems at the lower levels] are a function of culture, specifically the superstructure.”57 The needed changes in social values depend upon new cultural values that will inform new social structures. Lonergan envisions culture as the "superstructure" and the vast array of social institutions as the "infrastructure." He "proposes a distinction between the social and cultural, akin to the old relationship between body and soul."58 The values of a culture become visible in the larger social sphere. because. "culture rises on the base of social institutions. [and] the integrity of the institutions is a function of the meanings and values that inform them."59 Lonergan’s scale of values provides a resource for a deeper understanding of the American culture and the integrity of the mission of the public church within this culture.

American culture is permeated by an unchecked individualism that informs the everyday values that shape the infrastructure and its social institutions. The loss of genuine cultural values, the transcendent values that arise from the “pursuit of the beautiful, the intelligent and the good, are evacuated from the cultural scene.”60 As individualism reigns

57 Ibid., 97.
59 Doran, Theology and the Dialectics of History, 98.
60 Ibid., 103.
authentic cultural values “retreat into the margins of society”61 to the private sphere. Religion and morality become restricted to the private sphere and are considered merely “private concerns,”62 devoid of social implications or obligations. Therefore, the notion of a morally neutral public square is fueled by individualism’s triumph over authentic values promoting the human good, and community as constituent to its attainment. The American culture often perceives the moral and the religious as obsolete or inconsequential, because “the good, which is the objective that guides and orders the pursuit of the true, the intelligible, and the beautiful is rendered inefficacious in the structuring of the cultural and social order.”63 America’s rampant individualism usurps community leading to detrimental consequences for an effective and integral good of order promoting the human good. This has widespread implications for the economic and political institutions in the larger social order.

In the American ethos the infrastructure rises on individualism rather than the authentic value of community, “which is the responsibility of culture to inform and politics to implement.”64 The values of community, the bond between personal and social morality and a necessary sense of self-sacrifice to achieve the common good are overshadowed by the value of individual gain, and the exaltation of individual rights at the expense of social obligation. An economic system informed by individualism is ineffectual in promoting the human good as is evident in the disparity of class, economic inequities, and the gap between those whose vital needs are met and larger groups of people whose needs are not met.

Individualism’s triumph in the American ethos and the surrender of authentic cultural values results in the collapse of an “autonomous determination of the meanings and values

61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
that, through political integrity, would otherwise inform the economic and the institutions of technology.\(^{65}\) Politics, in an authentic culture, "should be the institution whereby the whole community can be persuaded by rational argument and symbolic example"\(^{66}\) to order and regulate itself along the basis of community for the purpose of the human good. In the culture of American individualism, politics defaults on its authentic role within the infrastructure of the culture and results in its becoming "the instrument, not of the common good, but of one or other of the groups constituted by the economic order."\(^{67}\) In the present American context, politics becomes the advocate of special interest groups for economic gain, rather than mediating authentic cultural values to the social order. The result is that "legal and political institutions slip out of the infrastructure and become the 'lowest rung' as it were, of mendacious superstructural edifice erected for the sake of preserving a distorted economic order."\(^{68}\) The unauthentic function of the economic and political institutions as well as the designated marginal role of morality and religion in the larger social order hinder promoting a situation of the human good within contemporary American culture.

At the heart of the public church's mission are the promotion of true human dignity and the creation of situations fostering the common good. Lonergan's scale of values is a key to understanding the authenticity or unauthenticity of any given society, and is a resource for the public church's work and self-understanding. What is an authentic role for the public church in the American culture in light of individualism's defining role in the social order? In what ways can authentic cultural values be identified and promoted within the diversity of the American context? The public church, as an agent of cultural transformation, is

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\(^{65}\) Ibid., 110.  
\(^{66}\) Ibid., 102.  
\(^{67}\) Ibid., 104.  
\(^{68}\) Ibid., 103.
essentially involved in the process of transvaluing of culture. How can the public church promote authentic cultural values, "through which the meanings by which our lives are informed, discovered, expressed, [and] validated, criticized, corrected, developed, and improved, are thus the condition of the possibility of a good social order?" What paradigm exists for the public church to understand its relationship with the host culture in such a way that the public church can analyze and scrutinize cultural values? Lonergan is a resource for this needed paradigm that will illuminate how the public church can effectively influence cultural values as it seeks to create an alternative in a culture of a pervasive individualism.

Lonergan’s notes a distinct dimension within culture itself, identifying the reflexive, objectifying component of culture. This is a fourth point illuminating the role of the public church. The reflexive dimension of culture allows for the necessary analysis and criticism of the immanent meanings of a "way of life" in order to ensure authentic cultural values and promote true development. In addition to Lonergan’s distinction between culture and the social order as infrastructure, he also identifies a distinction within the superstructure itself.

It lies in a distinct dimension of culture, the reflexive, objectifying component. Here [the] immanent meanings [of a way of life] is elaborated, expanded, evaluated, justified or rejected in the criticism of art, of letters, in science, and philosophy, in history and theology. This distinct dimension is in fact an "openness" to analyze, discuss, evaluate, deliberate and act upon the very meaning and values themselves that inform the everyday values underpinning the social institutions of the social order. This is the task of public discourse where various social institutions bring to the common conversation their contribution as to how the common life of a nation should be lived. Ideally, public discourse facilitates mutual

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69 Ibid., 100.
70 Ibid., 95.
understanding among the participants, an understanding that can lead to common values and judgments that will shape and inform the infrastructure of society. These same common values and judgments can also evaluate and critique, justify or reject the operation of the infrastructure. The reflexive dimension of culture and the public discourse it stimulates are important because it creates a “space” within a culture for reflection and dialogue on the very meanings themselves that inform the infrastructure. The public church engages in public discourse in the “space” within a culture for analysis of, reflection on, and dialogue about the meanings that inform the infrastructure of society.

In addition to drawing on the public church’s own unique meanings and values as the resource for the public discourse it also employs a specific method of communicating these meanings and values. Here, too, Lonergan is a resource that illuminates the public church’s style within the public discourse. Although Lonergan makes the distinction between culture and the social order, he nevertheless contends they are both connected in the day to day experience of the human subject and the communities that make up the social order. It is the everyday cultural values that shape the social institutions of life. At the same time, the distinction Lonergan makes between the social institutions and the cultural values is imperative because it allows analysis of the underlying world-views “informing” (cultural values) the more external realm of shared life (social institutions). In other words, culture involves, “the interaction of two dimensions: more hidden sets of assumptions (meanings and values) and the more manifest field of observable social patterns (common ways of life).”

Lonergan’s distinction between the reflexive, objectifying component of the superstructure and the everyday cultural values that inform the social order is likewise important. It is here

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that "there is a disastrous possibility of a conflict between human living as it can be lived and human living as a cultural superstructure dictates it should be lived." The public church's mission of critical engagement involves an analysis of the actual values informing the concrete social order, in other words, how the superstructure dictates we should live. The public church, in a variety of ways that includes public discourse, offers its understanding of alternatives for the possibility of how life could be lived.

To sum up Lonergan's understanding of communities of meaning and value is a pivotal resource for understanding the public church's critical engagement with the world and its dialogical presence within the host culture. First, his distinction between the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning and value situates the public church within the larger world mediated by communities of meaning and value. As one of many such communities the public church can retain its identity without withdrawing from the larger world, meeting the world with a tribal belligerence, or find a need to create its own parallel world alongside other legitimate communities in the social order. Second, Lonergan's insistence on human authenticity and the authenticity of communities challenges the church with the same criteria as other authentic communities. The public church is called to establish community, which is the ideal basis of society, and to strive through dialogue to strive towards common understanding, common judgment and common values in order to join efforts to create situations promoting the human good. Third, Lonergan's scale of values illuminates the public church's mission of transvaluing culture. The scale of values is key to understanding a given society and culture. It provides the public church with a paradigm for its task of cultural analysis in the American ethos and in turn provides an understanding for

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72 Doran, Theology and the Dialectics of History, 95.
both the public church presence and method in the public discourse. Fourth, Lonergan’s distinction of the reflexive dimension within culture itself, allows a “space” for the public church to analyze and critique the meanings and values of a “way of life,” which is a vital role of the public church. Without succumbing to the pitfalls of the totalist, the tribalist, or the privatist modes, the public church attempts true dialogue with other communities of meaning and value in the American context. A consideration of Lonergan’s broad category of communities of meaning and value more fully illuminates the church-world relationship the Second Vatican Council promulgated; it also provides a paradigm for the understanding, work and mission of the public church in American culture.

**Progress, Decline, Redemption**

There are three points at which Lonergan’s understanding of progress, decline, and redemption can further elucidate the understanding of the public church. First, the public church is a human community existing within a cultural milieu of rampant individualism; it can neither claim it is exempt from the unauthenticity of individualism. nor can it relinquish its unique role and identity as a catalyst for authentic cultural transformation. In the American culture the legacy of individualism has skewed the function of the good of order hindering the common good and desensitizing the larger culture to the benefit and necessity of social responsibility. In addition, the marginalization of authentic cultural values, including the potential of religion and faith to contribute to the promotion of the common good, creates a void in the public sphere. The public church, as one of many legitimate communities within the social order, understands itself as an ecclesial response to this void and a catalyst to create a more authentic culture. Its mission is not simply to critique the host culture’s failings but to bring about a transformation of the very meanings and values
currently underpinning the host culture. The transformative role of the public church is indicative of its belief that it is possible for culture and social institutions to change, and furthermore, of its conviction that the public church plays a vital role in what is required for authentic cultural change.

At first glance, the public church’s mission and self-understanding seem to raise a contradiction. As a human community subject to unauthenticity, how can the public church claim, not only to identify what is in need of correction in the host culture, but also maintain that it bears a significant solution for the creation of an authentic culture? What may seem contradictory, however, is clarified through a consideration of Bernard Lonergan’s understanding of progress, decline and redemption as the three principles of human history. Lonergan’s understanding of human history provides a means of grasping the public church as a human community without relinquishing its unique identity as a redemptive community.

Bernard Lonergan defines history, not as a series of dates and events, rather “human affairs are the stuff of history.” Human affairs, Lonergan reminds us, result either from the human subject’s move towards authenticity and self-transcendence, or his or her retreat from self-transcendence into what Lonergan names the unauthentic. “Human history is the story of progress, decline, and recovery [redemption], and its principles are intelligence, sin, and grace.” While it is possible to consider these three principles separately in order to grasp Lonergan’s understanding of human history, in what we know as human history, these three principles coexist.

Lonergan contends that “progress proceeds from originating value, from subjects being their true selves by observing the transcendental precepts: Be attentive, Be intelligent,

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Be reasonable, Be in love." The human subject's existential project is a life long venture on a precarious road to self-transcendence; authenticity is neither a possession to be gained once and for all, nor is authenticity without its demands on the human subject. "Human authenticity is never some pure and serene and secure possession. It is ever a withdrawal from unauthenticity, and every successful withdrawal only brings to light the need for further withdrawals." Human history is marked by the achievements of human subjects who in fact have been faithful to the demands of intelligence and responsibility, and to this extent there is true development.

Progress illuminates what is required for true development within the world. If authenticity brings about situations of progress and the common good then situations, both past and present that stymie or resist the common good are the result of a "deflection of human consciousness from its intrinsic and ideal norms: intelligence, reason, and responsibilities." The deflection from the ideal norms of consciousness Lonergan calls decline. Decline exists as a result of inattentiveness, failures to understand, mistaken judgments and evil choices. It is evident that human history is not a straight line of progress rather past and present situations bear the mark of decline. Decline "brings about a personal and social situation where confusion and disvalue abound, and where it is hard to know where to begin to set things moving again in a positive direction." Decline is as much of a fact of our human history as is the experience of progress; and Lonergan identifies the root of decline as bias.

Human subjects do not grasp authenticity once and for all. Within the subject is a

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75 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 53.
76 Ibid., 110.
77 Komonchak, "The Church," 224.
78 Gregson, "The Desire to Know," 29.
tension created by our natural and spontaneous, physiological and psychological tendency to focus on the self, hindering self-transcendence. This tension Lonergan identifies as "bias." Lonergan cites four forms of bias: dramatic, individual, group and general bias,\(^7\) and each is rooted in the tendency for immediate physical and psychological gratification. Dramatic bias is the unconscious motivation or conditioning that hinders potential images for insights we do not want. Therefore, there are certain experiences left unattended, consequently these experiences are not understood, the truth not discovered and, healing and effective action prevented. The unconscious desire to avoid pain resulting from an unresolved trauma is an example of dramatic bias. Individual bias, like dramatic bias, is grounded in self-interest, but unlike the latter it is conscious. It is the subject's egoistic choice to attend to matters that pertain to one's own self-interest and to remain indifferent to the concerns of others. It is a refusal to choose the world of true value in lieu of a self-centered satisfaction.

Lonergan identifies the social manifestations of dramatic and individual bias in the form of group bias and general bias. Group bias is the correlative to individual bias. It occurs when any group eliminates ideas or data that could possibly challenge the group's own self-interests and self-advantage. A group's self-interest could be its hold on some aspect of the larger society, its expression of power or anything that bolsters a group's egoism at the expense of the greater common good. The group rationalizes its own behavior by promoting and encouraging a justification for its action, an ideology, and thus blinds itself to the real situation. Finally, there exists general bias also referred to as the bias of common sense. General bias is the disregard for the theoretical questions, the long-range consequences and the ultimate issues and, instead the embrace of the short-term solutions that may be more

\(^7\) The discussion of bias and Lonergan relies heavily on Robert Doran's initial chapter, "The Human Subject," in *Theology and the Dialectics of History.*
immediately gratifying to one’s self or a specific group. General bias is “a violation of the deepest orientation of our consciousness to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible,” and this ultimately leads to alienation. General bias creates situations devoid of the transcendental exigencies and hindering self-transcendence, resulting in decline, unauthenticity, and social breakdown.

Lonergan insists, however, that human history is more than the principles of progress and decline; “God has not left the human race to its own devices, but that he [sic] has intervened to repair the evil we have done, to reverse its momentum, and restore its creative powers.” Human history involves a third principle co-existing with progress and decline, and this is the redemptive principle of human history.

Beyond progress and decline there is redemption. Its principle is self-sacrificing love. To fall in love is to go beyond attention, intelligence, reasonableness, responsibility. It is to set up a new principle that has, indeed, its causes, conditions, occasions. ... In the measure that the community becomes a community of love and so capable of making real and great sacrifices, in that measure it can wipe out the grievances and correct the objective absurdities that its unauthenticity has brought about.

Self-sacrificing love transvalues not only human subjects but communities, and provides in the midst of a world of both progress and decline, a third principle: redemption.

Lonergan maintains a religion that “promotes self-transcendence to the point of self-sacrificing love will have a redemptive role in human society and culture.” The public church is a community of meaning and value among the larger matrix of communities in the human world. As are all communities, the public church is historical, subject to the ambiguous nature of authenticity and yet graced with a redemptive role in society. The public

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80 Gregson, “The Desire to Know,” 33.
83 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 52.
church retains its redemptive role to the extent it embraces and lives the self-sacrificing love that is the criterion for the redemptive role of any community. The public church "will have a redemptive role in human society inasmuch as love can undo the mischief of decline and restore the cumulative process of progress."\textsuperscript{84} The transformative mission of the public church is a redemptive mission as it attempts to undo unauthentic values that hinder true human progress and exacerbate situations marked by decline in the American ethos.

Second, the public church accentuates the social dimension of the Christian faith, counteracting the cultural bias of religion as a personal preference and consequently, socially ineffective. On this point, Lonergan's categories of progress, decline and redemption continue to be an asset to develop and deepen our understanding of the public church. Lonergan situates the particular role and function of religion within the simultaneous principles of progress, decline and redemption. "Authenticity can be shown to generate progress, unauthenticity to bring about decline, while the problem of overcoming decline provides an introduction to religion."\textsuperscript{85} Lonergan identifies and defines religion as a social reality, a community in the world mediated by meaning and value. "Religion becomes an institution, a distinct and palpable reality. It is a region of human culture, an integral part of the social order, an explicitly acknowledged part in a tribal or national tradition."\textsuperscript{86} Religion as an integral part of the social order counteracts the exclusively individualistic conception of religion and ecclesial life within the American ethos. Religion, described in terms of its ability to overcome decline, accentuates the social aspect of its redemptive role. Self-sacrificing love is a redemptive activity underpinning the social mission of the public church

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 55.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 288.
as it counteracts the mischief of decline and alienation in the social order. The public church emphasizes the social implications of faith and the role of religion in public life. A primary focus of its mission is to counteract tendencies from both within and outside its own community that foster an understanding of faith and religion as limited to the private sphere. Lonergan’s account of progress, decline and redemption as social entities challenges American culture’s individualistic perception of religion and levies a similar challenge to the constituents of the public church.

Third, Lonergan proves to be a valuable resource for illuminating further the understanding of the public church as a redemptive community and a catalyst for the transvaluing of American culture. Situating religion within the principles of progress, decline and redemption allows Lonergan to establish characteristics of an authentic religion. Lonergan contends authentic religion is social and, to the extent it embraces self-sacrificing love it is self-transcending. In its embrace and promotion of this self-sacrificing love religion becomes a social force to undo the situations of decline and unauthenticity. The transformative role of the public church, its redemptive activity, is grounded in the self-sacrificing love that is able to counteract decline and unauthenticity. 

Lonergan defines religion as the capacity of human consciousness to apprehend “the world as mediated by ultimate meaning and motivated by ultimate value. [And] commonly the religions apprehend ultimate meaning and ultimate value symbolically.” The fidelity of self-sacrificing love that is constitutive of the redemptive role of religion in general is for the public church specifically “seen to be a fidelity to the just and mysterious law of the cross

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that has provided the central religious category of the entire Christian spiritual tradition.88

Lonergan’s principles of progress, decline and redemption and the theological description of self-sacrificing love as the “law of the cross” converge and elucidate the redemptive role of the public church. The public church’s redemptive role is social; it moves ever more closely to creating situations of the human good and undoing the mischief and evil that prevents and hinders such situations. Lonergan’s understanding of the law of the cross,

shows the powerful relevance of the death of Jesus to the power of evil in the world. Evil in human affairs seems to generate more evil. Resentment breeds more resentment, killing more killing. Jesus represents an ending of that cycle by his active reception of the evil meted out to him and his transformation of it into forgiveness. The cycle of decline which we live out and extend through our biases receives a powerful initial transformation by Jesus’ refusal to give in to it or to continue it. By accepting the love manifested in Jesus’ death, we can become active collaborators with him and the Father in the transformation of evil into good.89

The acceptance of the self-sacrificing love manifested in the law of the cross is the foundation for the church’s mission of transformation of the culture. The answer for the undoing of the evils of the social order is found in “the experience of the death and resurrection of Jesus God’s answer, his [sic] personal response, to the problems of human evil and his [sic] invitation to us to actively share in the overcoming of evil.90 In the acceptance of God’s answer to evil, in the law of the cross, human subjects are enabled to collaborate with others in shaping and creating situations of the human good. It is the acceptance of this love that allows communities to be communities of redemptive activity not only proclaiming this love but also witnessing to this love in the world.

Three points allow us to summarize how Lonergan’s understanding of progress,

88 Doran, Theology and the Dialectics of History, 113.
90 Ibid., 113.
decline and redemption help us to grasp more fully the self-understanding and mission of the public church. First, his understanding of human history as the simultaneous principles of progress, decline and redemption establishes the public church’s redemptive role in the human world mediated by meaning and value. The public church, although not exempt from the realities of unauthenticity, is graced with a redemptive role in the struggle against bias. In other words, to understand the public church both as a human community and as a redemptive community are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Second, Lonergan’s defines the social function of religion in relation to social progress and social decline. Religion is social and an integral part of the fabric of cultural life. This contrasts sharply with American culture where religion and ecclesial life are often minimized and privatized. Not only does Lonergan accentuate the social nature of religion, which is pivotal to understanding the public church, he asserts the redemptive role of religion. To the extent a religion embraces self-sacrificing love it is redemptive and it has the potential to undo decline and promote authenticity. The public church’s social mission can be understood as a redemptive activity in the American culture as it strives to undo decline and social breakdown. Third, the public church appropriates the ultimate meaning and ultimate value of this self-sacrificing love symbolically in the “law of the cross.” To the extent the public church can espouse self-sacrificing love as an ultimate value, it will be an authentic and transformative presence within the American culture.

The Redemptive Role of the Church

There are three points at which Lonergan’s understanding of the redemptive role of the church furthers the understanding of the public church. The public church’s mission involves critical engagement with the host culture; it is an engagement that actively pursues
dialogue with other communities of meaning and value in order to create a social order more conducive to the human good. The public church contributes to the public discourse its own meanings and value in the hope of transforming the values of the host culture. Present in the larger social fabric of American culture, the public church does not fall victim to a manner of ecclesial presence that typifies the totalist or tribalist mode. Rather the public church charts a different course in its relationship with culture by its refusal to accept the cultural misconception marginalizing it to the periphery of either social or personal life. Through the Christian message the public church hopes to create an alternative situation to the existing context of pervasive individualism that stymies both the common conversation and the common social commitment needed to transform the social order.

The first point at which Lonergan helps us to make our understanding of the public church more explicit is his understanding of the church as a community of meaning and value that is the historical and social sign of the redemptive Christ in the world. Lonergan defines the Christian church as “the community that results from the outer communication of Christ’s message and from the inner gift of God’s love.”91 The church, as any community, is an instance of common meaning. Community “begins or ends, just where the common field of experience, common understanding, common judgment, common commitments begin and end.”92 The distinctiveness of the church resides not in the inner gift of God’s love, which is a universal gift, but rather in the church’s understandings, judgments, decisions and commitments that builds upon this inner experience of divine love. The uniqueness of the church is not rooted in its being exempt from the task of human operations and cooperations constitutive of other communities. Rather the distinctiveness lies in its common meaning, the

91 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 361.
92 Ibid., 79.
“result” of it common experiences, understandings, judgments and decisions.

For the Christian church, God’s inner gift of love is understood through the history of Israel and in the salvific event of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. Jesus Christ is the outer word of God’s revelation and congruent with the gift of love that God works within us. In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is, “God’s own entry into man’s [sic] world mediated by meaning.”93 The church results from both this inner gift of God’s universal love and the outward expression of the Christian message. This Christian message, the church’s unique meaning,

is cognitive inasmuch as the message tells what is to be believed. It is constitutive inasmuch as it crystallizes the hidden gift of love in overt Christian fellowship. It is effective inasmuch as it directs Christian service to human society to bring about the Kingdom of God.94

In the communication of the message of Christ, the church leads another “to share in [the church’s] cognitive, constitutive, [and] effective meaning.”95

The church comes to be through the same human operations as other communities and transmits its own unique meanings and values through language, symbol, ritual and beliefs, the same carriers of meaning as other communities. The language of theological definitions that describe and identify the church as a redemptive community, for example the Mystical Body, People of God, or the Body of Christ, must neither compromise the church’s historical reality nor permit it to evade its social responsibility. “The transcendental, supernatural dimensions of the Church do not elevate it out of the range of concrete historicity, they declare the real meaning of human historicity and contribute to its

94 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 362.
95 Ibid.
realization." Redemption, as a principle of human history, is not about escaping history or this concrete world. The church’s redemptive role is within human history and among other communities of meaning and value. Redemption is a not an escape but a healing, a “liberation that enables us to be the redeemed subjects of the world’s self-realization.”

Central to Lonergan’s thought is the relationship of community and the human subject. Human subjects who share common meaning and value form community and, an individual becomes who he or she is within a matrix of communities. The constitutive meaning of the church is God’s meaning for the human world as understood in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Christian message, God’s meaning incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ, is transmitted to people of all times and places through the extensive world of language, belief, and values. This transmission of meaning opens up a world for the individual to understand his or her experience in light of the common understandings, judgments, and commitments of the church. The church is not the originator of the inner gift of God’s love but throughout the centuries it provides a community of interpretation for people in different times and places.

The language and symbols a person learns now speak of God as well as man [sic], of both sin and forgiveness, of resurrection as well as death, of freedom and not merely constraint. Personal examples will be not only of selfishness and alienation but of generosity and reconciling love. Roles and institutions will direct people toward authentic living.

This process of human subjects appropriating the Christian message, a process Lonergan refers to as the church’s “process of self-constitution,” Joseph Komonchak describes as two inseparable moments: one objective and the other subjective. “The objective moment

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97 Ibid., 227.
98 Ibid., 230.
99 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 364.
involves reference to the founding and perennially constitutive meanings that center around
the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus." The Scriptures, creeds, the liturgy, are
examples of the carriers of this perennial meaning and these meanings “stand over and
against each generation of Christians as the criterion of their fidelity to Christ’s word.”
The subjective moment in the self-constitution of the church, “shifts to the particular
situations in which its constitutive meanings and values are communicated and received.”
The inseparable quality of these two moments reflects that although there are perennial
meanings and values of the Christian church, the
gospel is always preached to individuals and groups living in specific historical
moments. in communities and societies shaped by human progress and marred by
human sin. ... the gospel only liberates in the concrete, as a word of grace which
makes people free in the ever different here and now.
The public church comes to play not simply as the body of beliefs but how these beliefs are
understood in light of the challenges and questions a particular context raises: in the case of
the public church, the host culture’s individualism is a factor in the appropriation and the
articulation of the authentic meaning of the Christian message in the American context. The
church is historical as human subjects appropriate its constitutive meanings in a given
context; the church is in a process of self-constitution and it is actually an event in history.
The church’s process of self-constitution involves the specific context in dialogue with the
perennial meanings of the Christian tradition. Komonchak reminds us, that these two
inseparable moments are in fact “the interplay between faith and culture.” The public
church is an ecclesial manifestation of this classic faith-culture tension in Christianity. It

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100 Komonchak, “The Church,” 232.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid., 233.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
seeks to challenge the values underpinning the American ethos that foster, rationalize and promote an individualism that curtails the effectiveness of faith, religion and ecclesial life in the social order.

...The basic process by which the Church constitutes itself in response to Christ's word and the Spirit's grace is already a "political" act, that is, an act that decides for and/or against specific options about the character of human society and the direction of human history. It is the process by which God's redemptive intervention in man's [sic] making of man [sic] becomes historically and socially visible and effective.  

In its mission to promote authentic situations more conducive to the human good, the public church shares in the redemptive mission of Christ in the world. It is an active instrument and visible sign in the realization of the meaning of human history, a meaning that is rooted in Christian revelation. It is a sign and witness of the redemptive Christ in the world, liberating human subjects in concrete situations in order to create more authentic situations of the human good.  

The second point at which Lonergan contributes to our understanding of the public church is his understanding that the redemptive mission of the church involves working "systematically to undo the mischief brought about by alienation and ideology." The public church, through its witness, public dialogue and public theology, is a historical agent, a catalyst, in the reversal of unauthenticity. Lonergan is uncompromising as to how this reversal comes to pass. "The foundation for social improvements, in [Lonergan's] view, is the authentic subject, not some canonized doctrine, policy, authority, or agenda." If the public church is to be a witness of, and an instrument in promoting authenticity for the transvaluing of the host culture it must "labor to persuade people to intellectual, moral, and

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105 Ibid.  
106 Lonergan, _Method in Theology_, 361.  
religious conversion."\textsuperscript{108} The public church is a catalyst against alienation to the extent it is both a witness to, and a persuasive presence of, a converted community.

Conversion is the process of moving from unauthenticity to authenticity. It is not just development, "it is a change of direction and, indeed, a change for the better."\textsuperscript{109} The converted subject "apprehends differently, values differently, relates differently because he [sic] has become different."\textsuperscript{110} Lonergan speaks of conversion as three-dimensional. It is intellectual inasmuch as it regards our orientation to the intelligible and the true. The intellectually converted subject is freed from equating the criteria for knowledge of the world of immediacy with the criteria for knowledge of the world mediated by meaning and value. An important implication of intellectual conversion is the realization that the world we live in is principally constituted not by sense data, but by human understandings, judgments, and decisions. The personal, interpersonal and social dimensions of our existence, the very world we live in is, constituted by human meanings. Conversion is moral inasmuch as it regards our orientation to the good. The morally converted subject becomes motivated not by satisfaction but by values. To think of "the good as whatever is objectively worthwhile, disregarding subjective comforts,"\textsuperscript{111} as opposed to the good as "whatever satisfies and comforts us, and nothing else" is not a transition effected by logic or persuasion; conversion is necessary for this change of horizons. Conversion is religious inasmuch as it regards our orientation to God. The religiously converted human subject comes to love God with one's whole heart and

\textsuperscript{108} Lonergan, \textit{Method in Theology}, 361.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 100.
\textsuperscript{111} Dunne, "Authentic Feminist Doctrine," 125.
soul; religious conversion is the "fruit of God's gift of his [sic] grace." Lonergan maintains

that although there are different kinds of being in love, and each promotes self-
transcendence,

being in love with God, as experienced, is being in love in an unrestricted fashion. All
love is self-surrender, but being in love with God is being in love without limits or
qualifications or conditions or reservations. Just as unrestricted questioning is our
capacity for self-transcendence, so being in love in an unrestricted fashion is the
proper fulfillment of that capacity.113

The human subject finds his or her proper fulfillment in the experience of being in love with
God, a fulfillment that "sets up a new horizon in which the love of God will transvalue our
values and the eyes of love will transform our knowing."114 Love discloses values that logic
and reason can often overlook. Through conversion

one frees oneself from the unauthentic. One grows in authenticity. Harmful,
dangerous, misleading satisfactions are dropped. Fears of discomfort, pain, privation
have less power to deflect one from one's course. Values are apprehended where
before they were overlooked. Scales of preference shift. Errors, rationalizations,
ideologies fall and shatter to leave one open to things as they are and to man [sic] as
he [sic] should be.115

Conversion is a change of horizons, it is a "transformation of the subject and his [sic]
world... [and] it is a prolonged process though its explicit acknowledgment may be
concentrated in a few momentous judgments and decisions."116 The process of conversion is
susceptible to relapse, and whether few or many, they may be corrected or leave their traces
in the form of bias.

Lonergan understands conversion as an on going process; it is at once "personal,

113 Ibid., 105.
114 Ibid., 106.
115 Ibid., 52.
116 Ibid., 130.
communal, and historical, it coincides with living religion." Conversion is personal but not solitary. It is communal in that conversion can happen to many, and they can form a community "to sustain each other in their self-transformation, and to help one another in working out the implications and fulfilling the promise of their new life." Conversion is historical because these communities can transcend generations, encounter a diversity of cultures and can be challenged by different situations as human subjects appropriate the meaning of the Christian message. While progress results from obeying the transcendental precepts, and disobedience of these precepts results in decline, it is the self-sacrificing love, the redemptive principle of history, which has the power to heal the damage that results from the neglect of the transcendental precepts. The redemptive principle of history is the healing divine presence in human history.

The public church claims a redemptive role as it seeks to transform the values of American culture that foster a privatization of the role of religion and church. It embraces a responsibility for the social order not only seeking to unmask the values that underpin the economic and political subsystems of American life, rather also to transform the cultural values that give rise to these same social institutions. Lonergan's three-fold conversion, intellectual, moral and religious, challenges the public church to be a community promoting and witnessing the implications of conversion. Intellectually converted subjects are able to reject both the notion of a neutral public square and of an unchangeable social order. These common beliefs hamper efforts for social transformation and commitment and cloud the connection between human subjects and the larger social order. Morally converted persons can discern value from satisfaction and choose to act from true value. They are able to

118 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 130.
perceive the blindness and unauthenticity of the individualism of the American ethos and become agents of value in the larger society. In contemporary American culture, the “good” has become what’s good for me. The prevalence of “what’s good for me” with little if any concern about what is “good for us” is an ideology confronting the constituency of the public church. The morally converted subject can see the illusion of this ideology and commit his or her action to promote situations advancing the common good. Lonergan reminds us that true redemptive praxis, the solution to human evil, requires human collaboration grounded in self-sacrificing love. The religiously converted subject recognizes and strives to live the law of the cross, the Christian symbol of God’s self-sacrificing love in Jesus. This self-sacrificing love of God in the person of Jesus Christ is the solution for human evil within history. It is the religiously converted subject who is “the person in his [sic] self-transcendence, as loving and being loved, as originator of values in himself [sic] and in his [sic] milieu, as an inspiration and invitation to others to do likewise.”¹¹⁹ who is the potential catalyst for cultural transformation; together these converted subjects are the community of the public church.

The public church’s mission is to offset alienation by promoting the implications of conversion, becoming a catalyst in the undoing of decline and counteracting the ideology of individualism that permeates and rationalizes the values of American culture.

The public church as a redemptive community of self-sacrificing love is a manifestation of the Christian church’s universal redemptive role within the American culture. This community of redemptive love is a persuasive presence calling for the conversion of its constituency and others in the larger social order. The public church’s mission of transformation of culture will not be possible without human authenticity and a

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 32.
community of converted subjects. The transformation of unauthentic culture, undoing the ever-present bias and ideology of individualism in the American ethos, will not be solved by human efforts alone. The solution "must be a divinely originated solution, a matter of human collaboration with the divine partner in our search for the direction in the movement of life." As a community of self-sacrificing love, the public church becomes a locus for the potential transformation of its own constituency in order to transform the American culture. Through its communal life of an "intersubjectivity in grace, [together] with its own language and symbols, its own roles and institutions, its own interpretive and evaluative culture," it strives not only to be a visible sign and instrument of a redemptive community for itself, but for all people.

The third point that illuminates the understanding of the public church is Lonergan's position that theology "mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of religion in that matrix." Lonergan's description of theology, albeit brief, is significant for the understanding of the public church. The task of theology is one of mediating the significance of a religion's ultimate meanings and values in a specific cultural context. As Robert Doran notes, the universal significance of Christianity is not achieved by

determining the essence of Christian faith and then in a second moment accommodating that essence to present situations, but of progressively discovering the universal significance of belief precisely as the church humbly and faithfully shoulders the difficulties which that belief entails in the current situation.

The difficulty for Christian belief in the current situation of the American context is the cultural tendency to envision faith and ecclesial life as private entities. What is needed is a

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120 Doran, Theology and the Dialectics of History, 113.
122 Lonergan, Method in Theology, xi.
123 Doran, Theology and the Dialectics of History, 108.
retrieval and articulation of the public significance of Christianity and of Christian discipleship for both the constituency of the church and the larger society.

The public church's identity, its self-understanding, is a result of its response to the church's mandate to "evoke an alternative [situation] that approximates more closely the rule of God in human affairs and human history."\footnote{124} The public church's redemptive role involves a theological task as the public church, "desires to move religious belief away from a narrow concern with personal life which effectively has undercut the church's mission to the wider realm of social existence."\footnote{125} As theology reflects on the meaning of Christian religion in a context heavily laden with the ideology of individualism, public theology is the effort to "discover and communicate the socially significant meanings of Christian symbols and traditions."\footnote{126} Public theology develops the implications of religious beliefs for social life, explains and advocates the vision of society the community of faith embraces, and supports the public church as it embarks on the path of persuasion in communicating its message for the American ethos.

If "theology, as the Christian mediation, or communication, between religion and culture must operate as a critical resistance to all biases on all levels, including religious,"\footnote{127} public theology is also an undoing of the bias within the church's own appropriation of the Christian tradition. Public theology seeks to identify and correct those elements of bias and unauthenticity that contribute to the privatization of the Christian faith. Through the

\footnote{124} Ibid., 120.
articulation of the social implications of the Christian message, public theology serves the church in its own authentic appropriation of the Christian message. It provides the theological foundations to call the church to understand and accept its larger role in society and the transformation of culture. Public theology makes explicit the social implications of the church’s doctrine, liturgy, symbols and mission, all of which contribute to the matrix of interpretation available for an individual’s own appropriation of the Christian message.

The task of the public church is not limited to the recovery of a moral analysis, but includes the contribution of its own understanding of society and of individual and authentic cultural values to the public discourse. The public church has the obligation to provide the public with alternative visions of what is desirable and possible, to stimulate deliberation about them, provoke a reexamination of premises and values, and thus broaden the range of potential responses and deepen society’s understanding of itself.128

The Roman Catholic church as a public church is challenged to “an articulation of the Roman Catholic tradition’s world-view or background theory which informs a social ethic and subsequent public choices.“129 Public theology is the articulation of this tradition that becomes the foundations for the social ethics necessary for the public discourse. Public theology, as a redemptive activity of the public church, attempts to identify and overcome the bias of privatization in the church’s self-understanding, and to contribute to the public discourse for the transformation of culture. The public church presents an alternative understanding of what common life can be like in the American ethos. Through persuasive dialogue and grounded in public theology, the public church seeks to transforms the values of American culture. Its presence is persuasive calling and inviting those within its ranks and

129 Himes and Himes, Fullness of Faith, 23.
others in society to embrace one’s own human dignity and to create situations promoting human dignity for all people.

In summary, how has Lonergan’s understanding of the redemptive role of the church further illuminated the understanding of the public church? Three points of convergence between Lonergan and the public church warrant mention. First Lonergan’s assertion that the church is the historical sign of the redemptive Christ in the world reiterates the understanding of the church as a community of meaning and value that defines itself by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The church is a community of shared meaning and value, united by the Spirit who allows and empowers the believer to accept the implications of the message of Jesus. The appropriation of the Christian message by human subjects in particular situations is in fact a historical sign of Christ’s redemptive message. Redemption is not an escape from history; rather it is articulating the real meaning of human history. In the American ethos, the public church’s mission of transvaluing culture is a manifestation of the redemptive role of the church. Second, Lonergan’s understanding of the redemptive role of the church necessitates undoing the bias and alienation present in the church’s particular situations. The solution to human evil is a divine solution made manifest in the law of the cross. Progress and decline, the following of the transcendental precepts or their rejection, is embraced by God’s redemptive self-sacrificing love. The public church seeks in word and deed to be a community of self-sacrificing love, a community of converted subjects, who are able to offset the ideology of individualism and promote authenticity because they themselves are transvalued. The public church despite its emphasis on the social order does not compromise its own need for conversion. Grounded in the law of the cross, the good of order of the church itself is a visible sign of the self-sacrificing love the church proclaims is needed for
the American context. Lonergan reminds us, however, the church does not exist for itself, "its aim is the realization of the kingdom of God not only within its own organization but in the whole of human society and not only in the after life but in this life." Finally, theology in Lonergan's thought is decidedly contextual. It mediates the meaning of the Christian religion in particular historical and cultural situations. In light of Lonergan's understanding of theology, public theology is a redemptive activity in two pivotal ways. First, it counteracts the tendency to minimize the social implications of the faith within the church's own appropriation of the Christian tradition. Second, while it is not the first language of public discourse, public theology is a resource for much of the church's social ethics. It is through this public discourse that the public church attempts to bring about cultural transformation. The persuasive mode of ecclesial presence espoused by the public church relies upon public theology to articulate its own social tradition. This cultural transformation would undo the bias and correct the ideologies are the result of decline. The public church is the ecclesial manifestation of the proper faith-culture relationship: public theology as a work of the public church is more clearly appreciated as a redemptive activity within a similar faith-culture paradigm.

Conclusion

Bernard Lonergan has proved to be an optimal resource for deepening the understanding of the public church. This chapter's consideration of his four themes - a critical anthropology, communities of meaning and value, progress, decline, and recovery, and the redemptive role of the church - shows how they can provide a significant contribution to illuminate the work and form of the public church. Lonergan's contribution to

130 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 364.
the understanding of the public church, however, cannot be fully appreciated by a mere review or a restatement of the four themes considered in this chapter. Rather, the depth of Lonergan’s contribution is appreciated more fully in light of Lonergan as a “generalist” thinker. As Frederick Crowe contends, placing a generalist thinker in “conversation” with a particular topic is a specific genus. The genus of “Lonergan and the public church” does not result in a process of finding similarities that exist in both and then drawing a series of conclusions. Instead, the genus of “Lonergan and the public church” evokes a deeper understanding of the public church. Precisely because Lonergan is a generalist thinker, a person who has “aimed at fundamental ideas, ideas of a type that should have wide-ranging implications, ramifications, applications, [and] adaptations.”13 his thought makes possible a deeper understanding of the public church.

Why is this the case and how do Lonergan’s categories contribute to this deeper understanding? The four categories considered in this chapter are in fact manifestations of several foundational themes Lonergan addresses. This chapter’s consideration of Lonergan’s categories allows the reader to come to a deeper understanding of the public church in light of the foundational themes of anthropology, the world, and the relationship of the church and the world. This is the necessary context for an understanding of the public church because the genesis of the public church as a type of church comes to be as a result of reflection on these very same foundational themes. Why is this the case? The overt individualism shaping the American ethos reflects a specific anthropology. In turn, the implications of this anthropology generate a perception of the larger world as mechanistic, static and a “given.” This perception of the larger social order stymies the challenge for social change.

Furthermore, the compartmentalization of the role of religion and the churches to the realm of the private, the legacy of individualism, imparts a minimal role for the church in the social order and as an agent of the transformation of culture.

How do Lonergan’s foundational themes of anthropology, the world and the role of the church in the world expand our understanding of the public church? First, his anthropology offers a corrective to the individualism that underpins the existing anthropology described by the representative characters of “the therapist” and “the manager.” Sharply contrasting with the understanding of the human subject as “an unencumbered self,” Lonergan establishes the social nature of the human person. A person becomes who he or she is not by extracting oneself from the traditions, communities and the larger social order, but only in the authentic appropriation of these entities. Lonergan’s understanding of the transcendental method both establishes the intrinsic connection between the human person and the larger social order and establishes the moral nature of the human subject and his or her world. The human person asks questions not only for understanding and intelligence but also for value; the human subject by nature seeks the real, the true and the good. There is no morally neutral sphere of human life or the human world. Not only is the larger social order the result of the human operations, but these operations constitute a moral enterprise. Lonergan’s anthropology not only corrects the representative type of the “therapist” that reflects a fractured relationship between the individual and the social order, but most importantly Lonergan’s anthropology establishes an individual’s social responsibility.

Second, Lonergan’s understanding of the human world, the distinction between the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning and value, brings much to bear on the discussion of the public church. The human world is not a given; it is not a mechanistic
construction that continues to "run" as if independent from human subjects and their decisions. The human world is the result of human agency. It is the world mediated by human subjects’ meaning and values mediated in successive generations through language, institutions, roles and social custom. Lonergan reminds us that to the extent human subjects follow the transcendental precepts the cumulative result will be progress. To the extent these precepts are not followed, the cumulative effect leads to decline and alienation. The world manifests the progress of human subjects and gives evidence of decline in social breakdown, class conflict, and other traces of human unauthenticity in the world. The human world mediated by meaning and value is not unchangeable; although the social institutions are often perceived as such, they are in fact changeable through the very same human agency that originally created the institutions. The process of this social transformation, however, requires a transformation and transvaluing of the cultural values that give rise to the social institutions. To change the world, Lonergan reminds us, requires a change in the human subjects who have constructed the world mediated by meaning and value. Lonergan rejects both the anthropology of "the therapist," and "the manager" and maintains that the authentic human subject is a transcendent subject. The authentic human subject does not passively abdicate responsibility for the larger world, rather he or she is committed to creating a human world safeguarding the dignity of the human person and fostering community as the ideal basis of society.

Finally, Lonergan’s understanding of the redemptive role of the church both situates the public church in the larger world mediated by meaning and value, and reiterates its work and mission in the host culture. The church’s redemptive mission brings to the concrete human world God’s meaning for human history. Decline and alienation are not the last word;
God’s redemption brings about God’s intention for human history. Redemption is God’s solution to the experience of human evil and in the Christian religion the meaning of redemption is the symbol of the cross. The law of the cross is the redemptive self-sacrificing love of Jesus Christ. Redemptive activity heals sinful situations generated by bias and justified by ideology. The public church’s redemptive activity involves promoting, fostering and living this self-sacrificing love. In the church’s own good of order this love transvalues the relational life of the public church providing in the midst of a culture permeated by individualism a visible sign of a redemptive community. In cooperation and dialogue with other communities of meaning and value, the public church is a persuasive presence calling all people to create alternative situations that promote and safeguard human dignity.

Bernard Lonergan provides the depth necessary to respond to Martin Marty’s challenge to make the understanding of the public church more explicit. As a generalist thinker, he has provided a wellspring for deepening the understanding of the work and form of the public church. His contribution has neither been exhausted in this chapter, nor was it meant to be. What is evident, however, is that even a limited consideration of Lonergan and the public church offers the potential and opportunity for further study.
Conclusion

In chapter one I argued that the optimal ecclesiology for the contemporary American culture is Martin Marty's public church. My conclusion is based on three premises. First, Robert Bellah asserts that the present situation in contemporary American culture reflects the rise of the language of individualism. Chapter one traces this rise through Bellah's use of the representative characters of the independent citizen, the entrepreneur, the therapist and the manager. Bellah contends these representative types or characters are images of the dominant meanings and values in the American ethos. In other words, the use of a representative type "is a way by which we can bring together in one concentrated image the way people in a given social environment organize and give meaning and direction to their lives." Currently, the therapist and the manager best describe the American ethos. These two types are expressions of the pervasive individualism that has eclipsed the republican and biblical languages and subsequently dismantled the previously important moral and social context of American individualism. Although these alternative languages have not disappeared, the dominant language of individualism presents a challenge. If individualism's "what about me?" continues to marginalize the question of "what about us?" how can the social issues evident in American life, not only be resolved but also become the subject of an effective public discourse?

Second, Bellah maintains that individualism is so pervasive in American culture it configures the present understandings of the public and private spheres. In the current

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configuration of the public and private spheres faith and ecclesial life have been relegated to the private sphere. Currently, the social implications of faith and the validity of their alternative values are often minimized. The understanding of the legitimate roles for religion and ecclesial communions in public discourse is not widely embraced. At the same time, Bellah challenges communities of memory, including the Christian Church, to be effective agents in re-establishing alternative values and assuming a legitimate role in shaping contemporary American life.

Third, the most effective means for the Church to respond to Bellah’s challenge is Martin Marty’s notion of a public church. Marty uses a sociological typology to illustrate how religions and churches organize and understand themselves in relationship to the larger social order. The public church is best understood within this typology of totalist, tribalist, and privatist. The public church is a way of being church, a “type”, identified by characteristics rather than by denominational lines. The public church relinquishes any claim to totalist expressions reminiscent of the era of Christendom. The diversity of the American population and the non-establishment of religion clause of the First Amendment eliminate the totalist option as an effective mode of ecclesial understanding and expression. Likewise, the public church eschews the belligerence and defensiveness of the tribal mode in order to accept its place among the many constituencies that contribute to the public discourse. In the American context, the Church cannot hope to bring about social transformation without the cooperation and expertise of many other communities.

The public church, as its name reflects, rejects the culturally sanctioned privatist mode of ecclesial understanding and expression. Contemporary culture may assign religion and ecclesial life to the confines of the private sphere thus minimizing its social importance
and labeling religion as one of many private choices, but the mission of the public church actively works against this understanding. The public church espouses dialogue and strives towards mutual understanding with other constituencies in the larger social order as it seeks to help create an alternative situation for our common life. Dialogue and cooperation are not attributes of the totalist, tribalist or privatist modes. However, dialogue and cooperation are necessary for social transformation and therefore, are constitutive of the public church.

The public church’s mission includes an emphasis on the social implications of the faith. This requires each ecclesial community to critically reflect on its own articulation and appropriation of the Christian tradition. In what ways has a particular ecclesial community actually promoted privatizing tendencies among its constituents? Are the social meanings of ritual and symbol lost or overlooked? The public church’s critical engagement is not only with its host culture, but also with its own tradition. This critical engagement generates a public theology that provides a foundation for the public church’s contribution to the wider public discourse and a language for its own members’ appropriation of the meaning of Christian life in the American ethos. Chapter one establishes individualism’s challenge to ecclesial communities in the American culture and establishes the public church as the most effective response of the Roman Catholic church in this cultural context.

In chapter two I responded to Martin Marty’s challenge for each ecclesial community to “discover not invent the public church in its own life”. In this second chapter I uncovered the antecedents of the public church in the Roman Catholic church in the United States. This chapter considered four twentieth century American Roman Catholics. The focus was neither an exhaustive study of their contribution to the Roman Catholic church as a public church, nor a comprehensive analysis of their individual work and thought. Rather, the analysis of
Monsignor John A. Ryan, Virgil Michel, O.S.B., Dorothy Day, and John Courtney Murray, S.J., showed the nascent public church in the Roman Catholic church during the twentieth century. I demonstrated in the second chapter that the characteristics and manifestations of the nascent public church are multi-faceted. Consequently an effective public church would bear these same characteristics today.

Monsignor Ryan reflects that the work of the public church involves the legislative process. Not only does Monsignor Ryan reject the notion that the economic order is exempt from moral analysis, he envisions a legislative role in correcting the abuses rendered by this economic system. In an era where politics and economic life became more and more a national phenomenon, Ryan calls the Roman Catholic church to a social awareness and responsibility that is equally national in scope. At the same time, the daily life of the Roman Catholic church bore the characteristics of the “immigrant Church”. Ecclesial efforts focused both on providing a support structure for those new to the United States and safeguarding their cultural identity by maintaining their understanding and expression of their culture’s expression of Catholicism.

Virgil Michel’s contribution is a reminder that social transformation cannot be relegated solely to legislative actions. The call for social transformation is also a call for personal conversion; for Michel personal conversion and social transformation are intimately tied to the liturgy. Michel’s promotion of the liturgical renewal and his understanding of the theology of the Body of Christ recaptures the social implications of the Christian liturgy. The community gathered in love and mutuality for the Eucharist is but a microcosm of what the larger social order is called to become. Michel’s insistence on the full participation of the assembly is an expression of the inclusive social order those assembled for Eucharist are
committed to create. At the same time, Michel’s liturgical renewal often conflicted with the
more popular eucharistic devotions of the twentieth century. These eucharistic devotions
tended to emphasize the priest’s role and the reservation of the eucharist and, often lacked the
ability to promote a strong social consciousness. Where Michel’s liturgical renewal
emphasized the integration of the liturgical life with the everyday life of the believer in the
larger world, the devotional life was more confined to the parameters of ecclesial identity and
life. Michel reminds us in his efforts at liturgical renewal that the Roman Catholic church, as
a public church, not only critically engages the host culture, but it actively recognizes the
privatizing tendencies within its own appropriation of the Christian tradition.

Perhaps no greater example of the public church’s critical engagement with twentieth
century American culture is the legacy of Dorothy Day. In the aftermath of the bombing of
Pearl Harbor in 1941 and the United States’ subsequent mobilization for war, Day’s pacifism
was unwavering. Her uncompromising pacifism is both a manifestation of the public church
by its social witness and an instance of “radical Catholicism”, in its refusal to accommodate
the demands of evangelical life with what the culture deems right. At a time when the
national loyalty of American Catholics was questioned, Dorothy’s social witness was a
challenge to the church. Despite the groundswell of support for the United States’ entrance
into the Second World War, Day risked the rejection of her own supporters and the criticism
of the Catholic hierarchy as she resisted the war effort. Day’s social witness challenges the
church to be vigilant in the midst of its own host culture as a witness to its own prophetic
dimension. Dorothy Day’s legacy is her commitment to live the evangelical life in the midst
of a culture that is not an “easy fit” for the gospel. As an antecedent of the public church, Day
challenges the public church to accommodate to neither a naïve nationalism, nor to an
unthinking ecclesial loyalty.

I concluded the second chapter with a consideration of John Courtney Murray's contribution to cooperation between Catholics and non-Catholics for the purposes of social reconstruction. Dialogue and cooperation are constitutive to the public church, and in the intercredal debates of the 1940s, Murray grapples with the question of cooperation in a post-WWII context in need of social transformation. Murray and his opponents, Paul Hanly Furfey, Joseph Fenton and Francis J. Connell, all agree on the need for social reform. The dividing issue is ecclesiological. How can the Roman Catholic church cooperate with non-Catholics and not risk indifferentism? How can intercredal cooperation not diffuse the potential of the Catholic solution to the social ills? Underpinning the debates between Murray and his opponents are two contrasting ecclesiologies. Furfey and Fenton's ecclesiological starting point is the Roman Catholic church as the one true Church, the "bearer of Truth" and consequently, intercredal cooperation becomes highly suspect of both granting rights to error and threatening the unity of the true Church. Without dismissing cooperation entirely, Furfey maintains, "cooperation should mean that non-Catholics and others should cooperate with us [Roman Catholics] and not the other way around." Murray's ecclesiological starting point contrasts with his opponents' "tribal" mode. Murray posits the common ground of cooperation in the "law of human nature." Heavily influenced by the renaissance of Thomism in the 1940s, Murray shifts the foundation of a common ground for cooperation from the confines of religious belief to the more inclusive common ground of believers. Murray maintains it is our common nature that becomes our common ground; the human person is

2 Charles Curran, American Social Ethics: Twentieth Century Approaches (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 190.
able to appropriate the divine truth and not solely within the confines of the Church. Murray’s “anthropological shift” allows the individual to be seen as the locus of the spiritual and temporal orders each maintaining separate ends. The church’s ends are not compromised since the task of the church is to inform the conscience of the believer in the task of transforming the temporal order. Allowing truth to be found in the human person and not only within the confines of Church respects both the temporal and spiritual orders and recognizes the uniqueness of the Church and the needs of the world.

Monsignor John A. Ryan, Virgil Michel, Dorothy Day and John Courtney Murray each manifested qualities of the public church yet they ministered within a church whose official self-understanding provided a contrast to their work. In order for the Roman Catholic church in the United States to be an effective public church there is a need for a shift in ecclesiology on the part of the Roman Catholic church.

In the third chapter I focused on the shift in ecclesiology that allows the theological and conciliar foundations for the self-understanding of the Roman Catholic church as a public church. In part one of the chapter, I examined the growing centralization of the Roman Catholic church in the late nineteenth century. Although there were other forces and movements that contrasted with these centralizing forces, the forces of centralization were very influential both in the universal church and the Roman Catholic church in the United States. This centralization gave rise to a specific mode of ecclesial presence. Joseph Komonchak posits that the Vatican’s response to the questions and challenges of modernity created a “sub-culture” or a parallel world. It would be erroneous to maintain the Roman Catholic church withdrew from the world; rather, it understood itself as a *societas perfecta*, expressing itself as the community of the truth amidst a hostile world. This tribalist mode of
expression and understanding was an ecclesial strategy to present a united and universal resistance to the Liberalism of the modern era. As an ecclesial mode of presence and self-understanding, the tribalist mode hindered the Vatican's study and incorporation of the social sciences into its theological enterprise. Theology's role tended to focus more on supporting the Vatican's tendencies towards centralization than engaging issues external to the church. On the eve of the Second Vatican Council the official ecclesiology of the Roman Catholic church could still be described as a tribalist mode. At the time of the call of the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic church saw the "new situation" to which it ministered and recognized that its mode of ecclesial presence was not the most effective.

In part two of the third chapter my focus turned to the implicit characteristics of the public church contained in two specific conciliar documents. In Gaudium et spes and Dignitatis humanae there exists a theological foundation for the Roman Catholic church as a public church. These implicit characteristics — a critical anthropology, a critical and dialogical mode of ecclesial presence in the world, and the social implications of theology - were each a lens I used to examine the selected council documents.

The first implicit characteristic of the public church is the critical anthropology of the document Gaudium et spes. The emphasis of Gaudium et spes is "not on the world of things but on the world of men [sic] or the human family." The council recognizes an anthropological crisis and its response is a critical anthropology. This anthropology is "critical" because it establishes the human person as transcendent, social by nature, and as imago dei. As image of God, the human person has a divinely bestowed human dignity. This

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critical anthropology, grounded in a christological foundation, shapes the vision of humanity
the church proclaims to the modern world. The dignity of the human person is at the center of
the church’s mission as it seeks to shape a world that safeguards the dignity of all people. The
second characteristic, a critical and dialogical mode of ecclesial presence in the world, is
manifested in Gaudium et spes’ consideration of the church and culture relationship. Central
to the mission of the church is the evangelization of the host culture. The proclamation of the
“good news continually renews the life and culture of fallen humanity; it combats and
removes the error and evil which flow from the ever present attraction of sin.” (GS 58) The
church’s commitment to the dignity of the human person allows all areas of human concern
to be the church’s concern, justifying no morally neutral spheres. Gaudium et spes does not
specifically mention the individualism of the American culture; however, it does provide a
foundation for the public church’s task of critiquing the common misconception of the
political and economic subsystems as a neutral public square. These subsystems are now
understood in light of their contribution to safeguarding human dignity and promoting the
community of life that fosters true human fulfillment.

In Dignitatis humanae the church relinquishes any totalistic modes of expression or
self-understanding. Accepting religious pluralism as the context of the church’s mission, the
church no longer seeks civil establishment but rather the freedom to fulfill its mission of
proclaiming the reign of God in the world. The freedom to fulfill its unique mission in the
world allows and challenges the church to engage critically its host culture. This has
implications for theology, specifically the social implications of theology. Unlike the function
of theology of the Catholic sub-culture, post-conciliar theology critically engages culture for
the purpose of transformation. Post-conciliar theology,
involves a critical correlation between a text and a situation, between the claims of a tradition and the challenges of modernity .... It unites into a single interpretive moment the two goals which had formerly been kept separate: the self-constitution of the Church and the Church's engagement with society.\(^4\)

The council paves the way for a public theology that articulates the public significance of the Christian tradition in the context of the pervasive individualism of the American ethos. In chapter three the pre-conciliar ecclesiology of the Roman Catholic church as a subculture, a parallel world, is contrasted with the ecclesiological developments of the Second Vatican Council. In Vatican II, the totalist, tribalist and privatist mode of ecclesial presence and self-understanding give way to an ecclesiology of critical engagement and social concern. Although there is not specific mention of the term "public church" its ecclesiological foundations are found within the legacy of the Second Vatican Council.

In the fourth and final chapter of this dissertation I demonstrated how Bernard Lonergan is a resource for the public church. I did not attempt to exhaust Lonergan's contribution to the public church. Rather, I illuminated the understanding of the public church by selecting four of his categories for consideration. These categories — his anthropology: communities of meaning and value; history as the story of the simultaneous principles of progress, decline and redemption; and the redemptive role of the church in the world — provide a larger frame of reference for a fuller understanding of the public church.

How do Lonergan's categories successfully lead to a fuller understanding of the public church? Four salient points illustrate Lonergan's contribution. First, Lonergan offers a corrective to the exaltation of the individual that shapes both the private and public spheres of the American ethos. The human subject is a central theme for Lonergan and he contends that

the authentic human subject is transcendent. The subject is intimately connected to the larger social order and his or her existential project is inherently a moral enterprise lived within a matrix of communities. The fulfillment of the subject’s transcendence is God who has created the subject in the divine image.

Second, Lonergan’s distinction between the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning and value establishes the human world as the product of human agency. The human operations and co-operations are the genesis of communities of meaning and value that constitute the larger social order. Through language, symbol and other carriers of meaning, human subjects appropriate the values and meanings of the human world they inherit. Lonergan’s understanding of the human world as the product of human agency is a stark contrast to the mechanistic and static notions of the world. These static world-views often lend themselves to promoting the misconception of the social order as a “given,” unchangeable and immutable. Lonergan’s understanding of the human world as the product of a human agency that is inherently moral, disavows the justification of a morally neutral public square. The human world is the product of human agency and transformation of the world requires transforming human subjects. It is authentic human subjects who create authentic communities and cultures. There is no transformation of the social order without a concomitant transformation of human subjects.

Third, human history is the manifestation of the simultaneous principles of progress, decline, and redemption. The human world is the product of human subjects who follow the transcendental precepts and who fail to follow them. To the extent the transcendental precepts are followed there is progress; to the extent these precepts are ignored or neglected there is decline. The root of decline is bias and in all of its four forms it is a manifestation of
the tendency for immediate physical and psychological gratification. There is, however, a third principle of human history. Human history is not without its redemptive principle. God’s embrace of humanity allows the redemptive love of God to heal human subjects who then can become men and women of originating value. Through the redemptive activity of human subjects and human communities, God’s desire and meaning for human history enters into the human world mediated by meaning and value.

Fourth, the church, as a redemptive community of meaning and value, bears a special mission in the human world. Through the practice and witness of self-sacrificing love of the cross the church is a redemptive community bringing about authentic circumstances that in turn promote human authenticity. The redemptive activity of the church resists the ideologies that promote unauthenticity and stymie true development and progress. As a redemptive community of meaning and value, the public church actively resists the individualism that has skewed the cultural values of the American ethos and contributed to social decline.

Chapter four demonstrated that Bernard Lonergan’s categories are a resource for a deeper understanding of the public church because through them the foundational issues underpinning the very notion of the public church are addressed. These foundational issues – anthropology, the world, and the role of the church in the world – have surfaced throughout this dissertation. Not to consider these foundational issues would be to circumvent the challenge of Martin Marty to “make the form, work and understanding of the public church more explicit.” It is only through a consideration of these core issues that a deeper understanding of the public church is possible.

The primary contribution of this dissertation is to provide an understanding of the public church. Martin Marty’s call to all ecclesial communities to appropriate the public
church is severely hampered unless there is an illumination and articulation of the understanding of the public church. Understanding precedes appropriation; if we do not understand the public church we are limited in our ability to appropriate its characteristics and its mission in the American ethos. More than a decade after Robert Bellah and his associates' landmark work, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life,* Robert Bellah paints a picture of contemporary American culture that is no less permeated by individualism. In an address before the American Academy of Religion in 1996, Bellah underscores the earlier findings of *Habits of the Heart,* and issues a stern warning about the diminishment of a social fabric in the American ethos. The reason for the diminishment, Bellah states,

is in part because of the fact that the religious individualism that I [Bellah] have been describing is linked to an economic individualism which, ironically, knows nothing of the sacredness of the individual. Its only standard is money. What economic individualism destroys, and what our kind of religious individualism cannot restore, is solidarity, a sense of being members of the same body.  

The Roman Catholic church in the United States is not immune to religious individualism. At the same time, a concerted effort on the part of the Roman Catholic church in the United States to grasp an understanding of the public church and to appropriate and express this understanding will be an effective ecclesial response in the American culture. Robert Bellah reiterates his hope that developing a sense of solidarity and social responsibility are possibilities, and he calls our attention to "...the churches, and other religious and civic organizations, and even nooks and crannies in the universities, to which

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we might look\textsuperscript{6} for catalysts of social responsibility and cultural transformation. What can we hope to see if we look to the Roman Catholic church in the United States? We will see the Roman Catholic church, as a public church, as a one of many communities concerned about the common life we share as a nation. In a culture shaped by economic individualism and the diminishment of an awareness of our common life, the Roman Catholic church as a public church states in word and witness, "We beg to differ." This is neither an apologetic stance, nor a confrontational position. Rather it is the voice of civility; it reflects an attitude of openness and mutual respect that characterizes the public church as it enters the public discourse. The Roman Catholic church contributes to the public discourse its understanding of the sacredness of the human person and its vision of a social order safeguarding this human dignity. Finally, we can hope to see the Roman Catholic church as a public church in solidarity with all people, a church that witnesses to the inclusive and self-sacrificing love that has the potential to transform all people who can then effect true cultural transformation. "But the hour is late and the problems mount."\textsuperscript{7} Bellah contends. The task that remains is for the understanding of the public church to be effectively appropriated in the Roman Catholic church in the United States. This dissertation takes a step towards this appropriation.

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., 624.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.
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