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# John Carroll and the Origins of an American Catholic Church, 1783–1815

Catherine O'Donnell

In 1806 Baltimoreans saw ground broken for the first cathedral in the United States. John Carroll, consecrated as the nation's first Catholic bishop in 1790, had commissioned Capitol architect Benjamin Latrobe and worked with him on the building's design. They planned a neoclassical brick facade and an interior with the cruciform shape, nave, narthex, and chorus of a European cathedral. The Baltimore cathedral, like the American Catholic Church Carroll was then building, would have a republican exterior and an orthodox inner life. It was to manifest the presence of a Catholic Church confidently asserting its place in the landscape of American Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

Historians of American religion have described the decades after the Revolution as the “democratization of American Christianity” and have focused especially on the American roots of the separation of church and state.<sup>2</sup> Catholicism has been all but irrelevant to these accounts. What does a church whose hierarchies lead to a pope in Rome have to do with a distinctly American narrative of religious democratization? A church whose leader was a secular prince would not seem a likely participant in any account of the separation of church and state. Many historians of the Catholic Church, for their part, have sought a place for Catholicism within

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<sup>1</sup> William H. Pierson Jr., *American Buildings and Their Architects: The Colonial and Neoclassical Styles* (New York, 1976), 360–72.

<sup>2</sup> The dominant model remains Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, Conn., 1989).

this story of American religion by implicitly accepting an exceptionalist democratization model and suggesting ways it can be applied to Roman Catholics. Lay influence over parishes and Carroll's election as bishop, these historians argue, reflect the church's adoption of American ideals.<sup>3</sup>

Luca Codignola has attempted to sweep aside that portrayal of a democratic, exceptionalist American Catholic Church. Very little in the institution, he argues, was distinctively American after the Revolution. Instead, "a common attitude" characterized the church in the "North Atlantic world" and in the Holy See. From 1760 to 1830, each maintained "an overall conservatism, a deeply ingrained interest in maintaining the status quo concerning political power." Codignola argues that "all levels of the church's international organization, from the pope down to the thousands of local parish priests and regular missionaries, shared this attitude." He describes the creation of "the U.S. church system after 1776" as the work of the Holy See, whose bureaucrats simply applied to the new Republic the "cautious yet open-minded policy" that had succeeded in Quebec.<sup>4</sup>

In fact neither a vision of the American Church as exceptionalist and democratizing nor a portrayal of it as the product of a unified, Rome-driven, conservative Catholicism suffices. In Europe and America, learned and unlearned Catholics envisioned different roles for the laity, different forms of the Mass, and different relationships between church and state. In the United States, the major Catholic Church architect was Carroll, who engineered the creation of an American see, became the nation's first bishop and archbishop, and shaped the church's institutional and intellectual structures through his sermons, writing, and authority over priests and congregations. Carroll developed an enthusiasm for Christian pluralism that differed from the Holy See's reluctant adoption of a strategy to work with and within heretical states. Far from following Rome in all matters, moreover, Carroll and the English clergy from whom he sought counsel mistrusted the Holy See; far from being frightened into Rome's embrace by the threat of anti-Catholicism, these clerics exaggerated its extent and menace to influence Rome's decisions. And far from presenting a united front, American priests

<sup>3</sup> See John Tracy Ellis, *American Catholicism* (Chicago, 1956); Patrick W. Carey, *People, Priests, and Prelates: Ecclesiastical Democracy and the Tensions of Trusteeism* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1987); Leslie Woodcock Tentler, "On the Margins: The State of American Catholic History," *American Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (March 1993): 104–27; Jay P. Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension* (New York, 2002); John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Luca Codignola, "Roman Catholic Conservatism in a New North Atlantic World, 1760–1829," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 64, no. 4 (October 2007): 717–56 ("common attitude," 719, "North Atlantic world," 720, "overall conservatism," 720–21, "all levels," 721, "U.S. church system," 729).

were so fractious that the need to control them became one of the few points of wholehearted agreement between Rome and Carroll.<sup>5</sup>

The developing church was not simply the American wing of a harmonious, conservative monolith. But its distinctiveness did not result solely from the influences of the new nation. Though Carroll's embrace of religious pluralism responded to American circumstances and ideals, it owed much to the difficult histories of the Jesuit order and English Catholics. Carroll, moreover, sought to preserve and even strengthen the American Catholic Church's hierarchies, defending prelates' authority over priests and priests' authority over congregations. His adroit management of Rome and of American perceptions crafted a church that thrived in a democracy without being democratic.

Between the end of the Revolution and his death in 1815, Carroll sought a place for the Catholic Church using three strategies. First, he engineered the creation of an American see to resist the reach of the Roman authorities he deeply mistrusted. Second, he worked to preserve a distinctively Catholic priesthood, hierarchy, and spirituality. Third, he argued that the resultant Catholicism was no less a part of American Christianity than were the myriad Protestant denominations.

Close attention to the years in which Carroll guided the American Catholic Church clarifies the institutional and intellectual origins of what would become America's largest Christian denomination.<sup>6</sup> It also casts doubt on the usefulness of pouring all postrevolutionary religious developments into a democratizing, Americanizing, and Protestant mold. The Catholic Church thrived not despite Carroll's preserving its hierarchies but in great measure because of the order and coherence those hierarchies furnished. Such a success was not anomalous among American Christian denominations. Furthermore, rather than assuming a defensive posture to protect a marginalized and beleaguered church, Carroll developed an aggressive vision of a common Christianity empowered by the revolutionary era's movement away from formal establishment. Carroll's assumption that harmony must be produced

<sup>5</sup> Emile Appolis, *Le "Tiers Parti" catholique au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1960); Joseph P. Chinnici, *The English Catholic Enlightenment: John Lingard and the Cisalpine Movement, 1780–1850* (Shepherdstown, W.Va., 1980); Chinnici, *Living Stones: The History and Structure of Catholic Spiritual Life in the United States* (New York, 1989); Suzanne Desan, *Reclaiming the Sacred: Lay Religion and Popular Politics in Revolutionary France* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1990); Dale K. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560–1791* (New Haven, Conn., 1996); James E. Bradley and Van Kley, eds., *Religion and Politics in Enlightenment Europe* (Notre Dame, Ind., 2001); Ronald A. Binzley, "Ganganelli's Disaffected Children: The Ex-Jesuits and the Shaping of Early American Catholicism, 1773–1790," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 26, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 47–77.

<sup>6</sup> According to Peter W. Williams, Catholicism is "the largest single religious organization in the United States." See Williams, *America's Religions: From Their Origins to*

without unity—an assumption forged in English and Jesuit history—also proved a prescient vision of America's religious future.

Both Carroll's and Rome's efforts to create a viable U.S. Catholic Church began in 1783 during negotiations over the Treaty of Paris. Rome sought to use French leverage to ensure that the emerging New World state would tolerate the Roman Catholic Church. Persuaded that there would be no increase in Catholic civic disabilities as a result of independence, and cognizant of the need to avoid "constraining these new republicans to receive . . . sacraments from foreign bishops," Rome requested that the Continental Congress approve plans for an American Catholic hierarchy.<sup>7</sup> Congress rebuffed the overture: since the matter was "purely spiritual, it is without the jurisdiction and powers of Congress, who have no authority to permit or refuse it, those powers being reserved to the several states individually."<sup>8</sup>

This reply held out the possibility that individual states might deny Rome's request even as the Continental Congress politely ignored it. Given, moreover, the new nation's manifestly Anglo-Protestant culture, the United States might have seemed stony ground for Catholicism. But in the late eighteenth century, Rome saw rocks and thorns everywhere. Protestant confessional states had grown in number and strength, and governments in Catholic countries increasingly encroached on the Holy See's authority. The Continental Congress's claim of indifference to ecclesiastical matters therefore seemed more promising than threatening. The United States was led by "heretical" officials, the cardinal prefect wrote to the apostolic nuncio, but a *modus vivendi* could likely be found. Nor did the states seem uniformly hostile; a Catholic leader, or prelate, might be possible in Pennsylvania or

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*the Twenty-First Century* (Chicago, 2002), 55. See also Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), chap. 9.

<sup>7</sup> "Instructions for the Nuncio at Paris (Doria Pamphili). Instructions for His Lordship the Nuncio to France, sent with a letter of the Congregation this 15th of January, 1783, with the approval of the Holy Father," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 21, no. 1 (March 1910): 188–89 (quotation, 189). Rome's instructions for the apostolic nuncio, Guisepe Doria-Pamphili, are found in the archives of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith (Propaganda). Where possible I cite the English translation of Propaganda documents found in *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, since they are most readily available. Those relating to the United States ("America Centrale") are in *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide Records, 1622–1903*, on microfilm at the University of Notre Dame Archives, Notre Dame, Ind. (noted in the archives by the acronym MPFR). Finbar Kenneally provides a sound guide, despite occasional omissions. See Kenneally, *United States Documents in the Propaganda Fide Archives: A Calendar*, ser. 1, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C., 1966). Also useful is Luca Codignola, *Guide to Documents Relating to French and British North America in the Archives of the Sacred Congregation "de Propaganda Fide" in Rome, 1622–1799* (Ottawa, Ontario, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789*, May 11, 1784, <http://memory.loc.gov/> (quotation).

Maryland, if he “carefully avoided to assume any temporal jurisdiction or authority.”<sup>9</sup> It was thus with equanimity and even optimism that Rome added the new United States to its roster of missions capable of some form of local Catholic governance.

As Rome pondered how best to work with the new nation, Carroll, the nation’s most prominent Catholic priest, pondered how best to work with and around Rome. Carroll belonged to the influential Maryland Catholic clan that had produced Charles Carroll, signer of the Declaration of Independence. John Carroll had sailed for Europe as a boy in 1748 and remained there training and then living as a Jesuit. When he learned, in early 1773, that Pope Clement XIV was about to suppress the Jesuit order, Carroll attributed the act to a weak pope “entirely governed by [a] junto” and deplored “the toleration allowed here to every thing done or said against us, while oppressed innocence is not allowed to urge the least defence in its favour.”<sup>10</sup> Exiled from his spiritual and literal home, Carroll, then a secular priest, sailed in 1774 for an America he had not seen in more than twenty-five years.

After Carroll arrived in the rebelling colonies, the Continental Congress sent him on an ill-conceived mission with Benjamin Franklin to win over Canadian Catholics to the cause of independence. Despite the mission’s failure, Carroll fervently believed the Revolution would result in greater liberty for Americans and specifically for American Catholics. By 1783 Carroll hoped that the United States could bring forth a purer Catholicism than that which had produced Clement XIV. He believed that Rome—specifically the group of cardinals known as the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith (the Propaganda), tasked with overseeing mission

<sup>9</sup> “The Cardinal Prefect to the Nuncio at Paris, To Monseigneur the Archbishop of Seleucia, Apostolic Nuncio at Paris,” Sept. 27, 1783, *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 21: 199 (quotations). The cardinal prefect added that “it is to be desired that, some day, this new republic may have a Catholic minister at Paris” (*ibid.*). See also “Luzerne to Vergennes (Extract). Extract of the communication of the Chevalier de la Luzerne to the count of Vergennes under date of Annapolis, January 31st, 1784,” *ibid.*, 21: 203. The document in the Propaganda Archives is also labeled “Extrait de la dépêche . . .,” *Scrittura riferite nei congressi*, ser. 1, sec. 2, fol. 351, in *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide Records*, reel no. 42.

<sup>10</sup> John Carroll to Thomas Ellerker, Jan. 23, 1772 [1773], in Thomas O’Brien Hanley, ed., *The John Carroll Papers* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1976), 1: 27–28 (quotations, 1: 28). Where possible I cite Hanley’s volumes for convenience’s sake. I have not relied solely on that collection, however, due to the omissions cataloged in Thomas W. Spalding, *John Carroll Recovered: Abstracts of Letters and Other Documents Not Found in the John Carroll Papers* (Baltimore, 2000). For accounts of Carroll’s life and Carroll family history, see Peter Guilday, *The Life and Times of John Carroll, Archbishop of Baltimore, 1735–1815* (Westminster, Md., 1954); Annabelle M. Melville, *John Carroll of Baltimore: Founder of the American Catholic Hierarchy* (New York, 1955); Ronald Hoffman with Sally D. Mason, *Princes of Ireland, Planters of Maryland: A Carroll Saga, 1500–1782* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2000); Binzley, *U.S. Catholic Historian* 26: 47–50.

churches worldwide—posed at least as much of a threat to a sustainable American Catholic Church as did American anti-Catholicism. But he shared with Rome, despite his anger, a determination to defend the church from those who would assault its spiritual authority.

Cooperative efforts, but not unalloyed cooperation, proved possible. The former Jesuits and the Propaganda shared a sense of the Catholic Church's vulnerability and a determination to preserve it. The Jesuits' suppression had stemmed from Rome's effort to meet the demands of Europe's developing nations and empires. Alienated from each other by that attempted solution, the Propaganda and the ex-Jesuits in England and America were nonetheless united in confronting how the church should define and defend its authority in the modern era. Catholicism faced challenges from seemingly opposite directions. Enlightenment and Reformation emphasis on the power of individual human reason assaulted the church's claims to be the arbiter of the true faith. Protestant nation-states inspired by these views rejected the church entirely. At the same time, Catholic states such as France and Portugal extended claims over their inhabitants' loyalties, resisting Rome in a way that threatened to sever traditional church ligatures. Worse yet, Anglo-American Protestants made sense of these apparently contradictory developments—the valorization of individual will and the augmentation of national authority—by defining both against papist Roman Catholicism. England and its colonies were places in which liberty thrived exactly because the state restrained the Catholic Church, the enemy of liberty. Indeed antipopery was the ghost in the machine of Anglo-American republicanism: in republicanism's ontological opposition, power sought dominion over individuals and the globe, and it was indistinguishable from popery. Good republicans vowed to defend liberty by opposing such power, and much of their independence of mind and their patriotism were defined against Catholics' slavish, unpatriotic obedience to a Roman pontiff.<sup>11</sup>

Despite these challenges Carroll, his English ex-Jesuit brethren, and the Propaganda all hoped that the early American Republic presented an opportunity to found a sustainable American Catholic Church. Carroll further believed that it had become possible to disrupt the association of Catholicism with tyranny and antinationalism. The American Revolution had supplied practical reasons for loosening restrictions on Catholics, and the Revolution had conjured a different association with tyranny: Britain,

<sup>11</sup> The foundational description of republicanism is in Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967). Bailyn directly addresses "fear of the conjunction of civil and ecclesiastical tyrannies," and the shadow of "popery" is evident throughout the republican language presented (*ibid.*, 98 n. 3). For a description of the importance of the rhetoric and pageantry of antipopery to American colonial culture, see Brendan McConville, *The King's Three Faces: The Rise and Fall of Royal America, 1688–1776* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2006).

the leading anti-Catholic state. Catholicism's emphasis on faith and works, rather than predestination, made it potentially compatible with the non-Calvinist Protestant Christianity emerging in the new nation. English and Jesuit tradition promoted lay responsibility and discipline, and scarcity of clergy in the United States rendered that virtue a necessity, further aligning American Catholicism with Protestant piety.<sup>12</sup> Thus Carroll hoped to turn the colonies' break with England into a rupture with the larger intellectual, social, and political tradition of Anglo-American antipopery.

The Revolution improved conditions for Catholics in England and America. Confronted with overseas rebellion, ongoing Irish unrest, and the need for soldiers, the British government reduced the civil disabilities Catholics suffered under. As American states rewrote their constitutions during the war, some lessened restrictions on Catholics. In 1779 Carroll wrote to his close friend, English ex-Jesuit Charles Plowden, describing the changes in glowing terms: "I am glad . . . to inform you that the fullest & largest system of toleration is adopted in almost all the American states: publick protection & encouragement are extended alike to all denominations, & R[oman] C[atholics] are members of Congress, assemblies, & hold civil & military posts, as well as others. For the sake of your & many other families I am heartily glad to see the same policy beginning to be adopted in Engl[an]d and Irel[an]d: and I cannot help thinking that you are indebted to America for this piece of service."<sup>13</sup>

Despite gently needling Plowden, Carroll knew that American Catholic opportunities emerged from English ideas and practices. By the American Revolution, England had long been a site of struggle over Catholicism's place in a Protestant society and, more broadly, over the extent of government's place and interest in controlling and monitoring religious belief and practice. Just as English suspicion of Rome long predated Henry VIII's

<sup>12</sup> *The Pious Guide to Prayer and Devotion: Containing various practices of piety calculated to answer the various demands of the different devout members of the Roman Catholic Church* ([Washington], D.C., 1792); Robert Emmett Curran, ed., *American Jesuit Spirituality: The Maryland Tradition, 1634–1900* (New York, 1988), 20; Chinnici, *Living Stones*, 10–11, 26–30.

<sup>13</sup> Carroll to Charles Plowden, Feb. 28, 1779, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 51–55 (quotation, 1: 53). Useful accounts of Catholics' changing rights and status in eighteenth-century England and America include Guilday, *Life and Times of John Carroll*, 10; Thomas J. Curry, *The First Freedoms: Church and State in America to the Passage of the First Amendment* (New York, 1986); Patrick W. Carey, "American Catholics and the First Amendment: 1776–1840," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 113, no. 3 (July 1989): 323–46; Edwin S. Gaustad, "Religious Tests, Constitutions, and 'Christian Nation,'" in *Religion in a Revolutionary Age*, ed. Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville, Va., 1994), 218–35; John Vidmar, *English Catholic Historians and the English Reformation, 1585–1954* (Portland, Ore., 2005), 4–5; Michael Steven Carter, "Mathew Carey and the Public Emergence of Catholicism in the Early Republic" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 2006).

break with the church, so English subjects' ties to Catholicism persisted long after it. The English Reformation comprised innumerable small steps, each with the possibility of a refusal or a spiritual withholding. Prayer books were changed or not, oaths taken or not, habits of mind redirected or not. The profusion of decisions helped create what John Bossy has called "the baffling fertility of the religious imagination of Englishmen."<sup>14</sup> It also continually raised the question of which parts of that imagination the state should try to know and control. Monarchs weighed the earthly and heavenly rewards of religious conformity against the need for domestic peace. The Elizabethan religious settlement tipped the scales in favor of the latter. Oaths required of Catholic subjects always restricted their ability to profess allegiance both to country and to faith, but the extent of the interference and of enforcement varied. Popery, most Englishmen agreed, was the enemy. But what actually counted as popery, and what should be done about it, was often negotiable.<sup>15</sup>

Within England, Jesuits' reputation and actions promoted, at first unintentionally, an understanding of temporal and spiritual authority as distinct. Non-Catholics perceived Jesuits as the pope's advance guard, accused of involvement in the 1605 Gunpowder Plot and the fictitious 1678 Popish Plot. Even many English Catholics feared and mistrusted Jesuits. Some Catholics proved their loyalty to the crown by offering up the Jesuit order as the real papists, those loyal to the pope at the expense of all else. Thus Jesuits were, before and after the order's suppression, presented as the "bad" Catholics against whom other English Catholics defined themselves as loyal members of the polity. Jesuits, for their part, argued that English Catholics should be wary of modifying their religion to meet the demands of their earthly governors. But Jesuits urged tolerance in the non-Catholic lands in which the order tended to work, and, despite their reputation as unreconstructed enemies of Anglican England, some English Jesuits argued that Catholic and Protestant could coexist peacefully within a state. Most importantly, in the very act of defending themselves from accusations of disloyalty, Jesuit authors began to assert that Jesuit goals were purely spiritual and not political. The long-running English, intra-Catholic argument thus inched toward a shared if still contested view that religious and political allegiances were separate matters. By the eighteenth century, Whig theory, embraced by

<sup>14</sup> John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570–1850* (New York, 1976), 5.

<sup>15</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580* (New Haven, Conn., 1992); Ethan Shagan, "Confronting Compromise: The Schism and Its Legacy in Mid-Tudor England," in *Catholics and the "Protestant Nation": Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England*, ed. Shagan (Manchester, Eng., 2005), 49–68; Peter Marshall, *Religious Identities in Henry VIII's England* (Burlington, Vt., 2006); Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500–1700* (Manchester, Eng., 2006).

some Catholic clergy, further posited that a tolerant polity in which reason could pursue religious truth was the most desirable earthly arrangement.<sup>16</sup>

The argument that one could be a good Catholic and a good Englishman never prevailed within the British Isles in part because of Jesuits' own reputation for overreaching. Though asserting the difference between temporal and religious authority might counter accusations that English Catholics could be loyal only to the pope, the same assertion also threatened a central claim of the English state: earthly and spiritual lines of authority converged in the monarch. The problems were not purely theoretical. In 1780 the Gordon Riots demonstrated the power of popular antipopyery, and the question of Catholic rights in England continued to be inextricable from the endless problem of Ireland.

The American state, by contrast, laid no claim to religious authority. As a result asserting a distinction between temporal and spiritual powers did not in itself challenge the state. America's developing cultures, furthermore, posited indigenous peoples and England as foundational enemies more often than they summoned the specter of Catholic plotters of the English past. Thus the United States offered a place in which the arguments and habits of English Catholicism, which tended to privatize religious experience and authority, could be freed of the civic threats posed by that privatization.

Practically, the Revolution's results for Catholics were mixed. The nation had few priests, but its approximately twenty thousand free members made it a larger Christian denomination than the Methodists and not much smaller than the Baptists.<sup>17</sup> Catholics, moreover, seemed poised to participate in the Republic with few disabilities. Some states had reduced bars to Catholic civic participation, and the religious patchwork left by England's habit of contracting out imperial settlement meant that there was no possibility of the colonies adopting an overall religious establishment. There simply could be no American confessional state at the federal level and, even at the state level, establishment of all forms could be seen as losing ground.

<sup>16</sup> Chinnici, *English Catholic Enlightenment*, 38; Harro Höpfl, *Jesuit Political Thought: The Society of Jesus and the State, c. 1540–1630* (New York, 2004), chaps. 5–7, 9; Thomas M. McCoog, "Construing Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1582–1602," in Shagan, *Catholics and the "Protestant Nation,"* 95–127; Johann P. Sommerville, "Papalist Political Thought and the Controversy over the Jacobean Oath of Allegiance," *ibid.*, 162–84; Victor Houlston, *Catholic Resistance in Elizabethan England: Robert Persons's Jesuit Polemic, 1580–1610* (Burlington, Vt., 2007).

<sup>17</sup> Jon Butler, Grant Wacker, and Randall Balmer, *Religion in American Life: A Short History* (New York, 2003), 143. Carroll's 1785 estimates of the Catholic population were "about 15,800" in Maryland, 3,000 enslaved, and "at least seven thousand" in Pennsylvania "but very few Africans." He continued, "In Virginia . . . not more than two hundred," and in New York "I hear there are at least fifteen hundred." See Carroll to Leonardo Antonelli, Mar. 1, 1785, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 179–85 (quotations, 1: 179). Carroll estimated that there were nineteen priests in Maryland at the time and five in Pennsylvania and implied there were fewer still in any other state.

“Divine providence has so directed the course of human affairs,” Carroll wrote in a 1785 sermon expressing gratitude for the Revolution, “the Holy Ghost has so worked upon & tutored the minds of men, that now, agreeably to the dictates of our own consciences, we may sing canticles of praise to the Lord in a Country no longer foreign or unfriendly to us, but in a Country now become our own.”<sup>18</sup>

As Carroll envisioned an American Catholic Church, he drew on the counsel and friendship of two former Jesuits whom he had known in Europe. Plowden was an erudite, astonishingly well-connected cleric living after the suppression as tutor and chaplain to an aristocratic English Catholic family. John Thorpe, a Jesuit agent in Rome at the time of the suppression, stayed there afterward, managing to remain in the good graces of the cardinals of the Propaganda. Aiding these former Jesuits in their negotiations with Rome was the fact that Rome’s expectations had changed since the days when excommunicating Elizabeth I seemed advisable. The Propaganda moved toward the position that Jesuits and English Catholics had come to: in the modern era, asserting the distinction between temporal and spiritual authority was not an assault on Roman Catholicism but a way to defend it.<sup>19</sup>

Carroll, his English brethren, and Rome thus had overlapping, if not entirely unified, goals in the years after the Treaty of Paris. For Rome the challenge was to create a Catholic Church in America that was loyal to the true faith. It should neither unnecessarily provoke the American government nor indulge in the creeping nationalism that seemed to infect European Catholicism. For Carroll and his English brethren, the challenge was to create a church with those characteristics and protect it from misguided Roman interference. Carroll was also determined to create a church that governed its clergy and guided its laity while eschewing not only temporal but also spiritual claims on others.

Despite their differences all parties believed that creating a viable church required appointing an American prelate. Carroll, Plowden, and Thorpe were convinced that the church’s future depended on whether Rome would appoint a vicar apostolic or a bishop in ordinary as head of the American Catholic Church. A bishop would have greater control over priests and properties, and his powers would emerge from his own office rather than being temporarily delegated to him by the Holy See. It already

<sup>18</sup> “Sermon on Gratitude,” 1785, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 159–60 (quotation, 1: 159); Butler, Wacker, and Balmer, *Religion in American Life*, 146; Tricia T. Pyne, “The Politics of Identity in Eighteenth-Century British America: Catholic Perceptions of Their Role in Colonial Society,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 15, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 1–14, esp. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Geoffrey Holt, *The English Jesuits, 1650–1829: A Biographical Dictionary* (London, 1984), 195, 246; Codignola, *WMQ* 64: 721.

seemed clear that Carroll, because of his appropriate age, nativity, and high standing with Franklin and the Continental Congress, would be Rome's choice for either position. But Carroll, Plowden, and Thorpe believed that only as a bishop would Carroll have the power to control property and appointments and to prevent Roman interference that might corrupt the church, prompt a resurgence of Protestant hostility, or both.

Carroll's faith in the United States and his mistrust of Rome led him at times to misjudge allies and opponents in this effort to maneuver a see into existence. Carroll believed Franklin shared his desire to create a national church with a bishop. But unbeknownst to Carroll, Franklin—apparently unable to take seriously the need to create an American Catholic Church and eager to win more favor with France—proposed to the Holy See that a French cleric oversee the American church. Carroll and his brethren also assumed that the Propaganda would staunchly oppose the appointment of a bishop in ordinary. Yet here, too, they were not quite right. Rome was indeed distrustful of a Jesuit resurgence and inclined more generally to want considerable oversight over mission churches. But the Propaganda—like Carroll and unlike Franklin—also believed that the church could and must be founded in America in a locally sustainable way.<sup>20</sup>

Exaggerated though it was, Carroll, Plowden, and Thorpe's mistrust of the Propaganda marked the nascent church. The Society of Jesus had devoted itself to defending papal supremacy, and it had been destroyed by the pope himself. English culture lent intensity to these clerics' conspiracy vision: they couched their suspicions of Rome in the tradition of English oppositional rhetoric, with its language of corruption, power, and endangered liberty. They used republican rhetoric, which had been created in part out of hostility to Catholicism, to condemn one form of Catholicism in the service of creating another. "I presume you know something of the foul side of Rome," Plowden cautioned Carroll in 1784. "The Propaganda . . . will use every art to extend their own dominion and influence in your country. Under favour of spiritual grants they will labour to acquire temporal authority."<sup>21</sup> Carroll wrote to Plowden, "Your information of the

<sup>20</sup> Carroll to Charles Plowden, Feb. 27, 1785, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 166–69, esp. 1: 169; Carroll to "the Gentlemen of the Southern District," 1787, *ibid.*, 1: 226–34, esp. 1: 233. See also "The Nuncio to the Cardinal Prefect" and enclosures A, B, C, September 1783, *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 21: 192–95; "The Cardinal Prefect to Luzerne; Copy of the Note sent to the Chevalier de la Luzerne, May 12, 1784," *ibid.*, 21: 204–6. The document in the Propaganda Archives is also identified "Copie de la note adressee . . ." Scrittura riferite nei congressi, ser. 1, sec. 2, fols. 371, 374r, in *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide Records*, reel no. 42. Luca Codignola discusses Benjamin Franklin's role in the negotiations. See Codignola, *WMQ* 64: 730 n. 14, 731–32 n. 16.

<sup>21</sup> Charles Plowden to Carroll, Apr. 4, 1784, Carroll Letters and Documents, in *Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore*, reel no. 4 (the microfilm is available at the University of Notre Dame Archives, noted by the acronym MABA).

intention of the Propaga gives me concern no farther, than to hear that men, whose institution was for the service of Religion, should bend their thoughts so much more to the grasping of power, & the commanding of wealth: For they may be assured, that they never will get possession of a six-pence of our property here.”<sup>22</sup> Carroll insisted to Plowden that “no authority derived from the Propagda will ever be admitted here; that the Catholick Clergy & Laity here know that the only connexion they ought to have with Rome is to acknowledge the pope as the Spirl Head of the Church; that no Congregations existing in his states shall be allowed to exercise any share of his Spirl authority here.”<sup>23</sup>

Rome, however, was far from the only threat. The very proliferation of dangers inspired the ex-Jesuits’ broader strategy. Carroll and his brethren worried that the American Catholic Church, distant in every way from Roman authority, would attract those hoping to escape conventional constraints, in this case wayward priests looking to slough off the authority of orders or bishops. Carroll also believed that some lay Catholics, particularly immigrants, associated America with false ideas of liberty, leading them to challenge priestly authority. Thus coercion from Rome and licentiousness from those who wished entirely to escape Rome threatened the church. The clerics also feared a resurgence of American anti-Catholicism. These problems did not, however, compound each other. Carroll and the other ex-Jesuits believed that anti-Catholicism and the threat of renegade European priests could together be used to pressure Rome to create a bishop. An American priesthood controlled by this local bishop could then create an orderly Catholicism that would not incite backlash.<sup>24</sup>

Thorpe insisted that Carroll write to Cardinal Leonardo Antonelli, secretary of the Propaganda, and to Cardinal Vitaliano Borromeo, a member of the Propaganda sympathetic to the need for broad faculties for Carroll. Thorpe urged Carroll to describe America in such a way as to make Rome fear American anti-Catholicism more than it feared Jesuits or a too-independent Church. “If you manage your own affairs, as was more than once hinted to you,” Thorpe wrote, “the very nature of the government, wherein you reside, will supply you with means of honestly influencing [Cardinal Antonelli] to do what you know to be most conducive to the good of religion there.”<sup>25</sup> Carroll followed Thorpe’s advice, even drafting a letter

<sup>22</sup> Carroll to Charles Plowden, Sept. 26, 1783, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 77–80 (quotation, 1: 78).

<sup>23</sup> Carroll to Charles Plowden, Apr. 10, 1784, *ibid.*, 1: 145–47 (quotation, 1: 146). See also Binzley, *U.S. Catholic Historian* 26: 65–71.

<sup>24</sup> Carroll to Charles Plowden, May 26, 1788, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 311–12, esp. 1: 311.

<sup>25</sup> John Thorpe to Carroll, Mar. 7, 1787, Carroll Letters and Documents, in *Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore*, reel no. 5.

to the Propaganda on the back of one of Thorpe's letters. Thus, though Carroll had long sought the appointment of a bishop, he broached the idea forcefully to Rome only when he reported an Irish priest's disobedience and explained the threat such disobedience, in combination with lurking anti-Catholicism, posed to the church. Letters from Thorpe in Rome make Carroll's strategy clear: "Your information of [the priest is] in the hands of Card. Borromeo, it could not be in better for your purpose."<sup>26</sup> Thorpe worked to convince the Propaganda that Carroll—not Rome—needed to control such priests to prevent state or popular attacks on American Catholicism.<sup>27</sup>

The next year Thorpe neatly summarized the strategy as a whole: "The Cardinal [Antonelli] has a fixed notion of your civil government being extremely jealous of its own authority, and particularly so in respect of Rome and religion. In regard of priests to be sent thither, he is very cautious, or rather absolutely will not proceed without advice from thence whatever their qualifications be here known to be. This principle, when you know it, may on several occurrences be of great service to you."<sup>28</sup> Writing directly to the pope, Carroll implied that ungoverned priests might ally with straying laity or Protestants. "Holy Father," Carroll wrote in 1788, "If among the clergy there are some men of intractable character . . . In seeking an excuse for their obstinacy they stressed a reason most likely to win favor with the heterodox, namely, that the authority of the ecclesiastical superior put over us by the Sacred Congregation was illegal, because it was set up by a foreign tribunal."<sup>29</sup> In fact Carroll knew that clerical disobedience had roots in ethnic conflict, doctrinal disagreements, and alcohol use more than in disdain for a vicar apostolic. But Carroll had a strategy: he would use Rome's belief that Americans, like the English, were hostile to Catholicism as well as Rome's fear of the corrosive effect of a Protestant majority on Catholic clergy to ensure the creation of an American see.

Mistrust of Catholicism was a real force in American life, not something Carroll, Plowden, and Thorpe cynically conjured. Carroll, however, also used the antippery threat to shape American Catholicism as he thought best. The language and timing of Carroll's letters reveal that he emphasized or downplayed the antippery threat as suited his goal of creating an

<sup>26</sup> John Thorpe to Carroll, Jan. 11, 1788, Carroll Letters and Documents, *ibid.*, reel no. 5.

<sup>27</sup> Draft appears on back of John Thorpe to Carroll, Dec. 2, 1786, Carroll Letters and Documents, *ibid.*, reel no. 5; Carroll to Leonardo Antonelli, Mar. 18, 1788, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 282–91.

<sup>28</sup> John Thorpe to Carroll, Mar. 13, 1789, Carroll Letters and Documents, in *Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore*, reel no. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Carroll to Pius VI, Mar. 12, 1788, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 279–82 (quotation, 1: 279).

American Catholic Church with considerable independence from Rome. Carroll wrote Apostolic Nuncio Guiseppe Doria-Pamphili in 1784: "Your Excellency will understand easily this delicacy in reviewing in spirit the nature of our governments, and their jealousy of all foreign jurisdiction: a jealousy which has excluded Catholics from any part in the civil administration of several of our states. True, they are tolerated everywhere; but it is only in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia that they enjoy advantages common to those of other citizens."<sup>30</sup> To Borromeo, for whom a more sanguine description suited, Carroll had conveyed the same facts a few months before, with different emphasis. "You are not ignorant," he wrote, "that in these United States our Religious system has undergone a revolution, if possible, more extraordinary, than our political one. In all of them, free toleration is allowed to Christians of every denominations; and particularly in the States of Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia, a communication of all Civil rights, without distinction or diminution, is extended to those of our Religion. This is a blessing and advantage, which is our duty to preserve & improve with the utmost prudence."<sup>31</sup>

In a letter to Cardinal Antonelli, Carroll described American Episcopalians' separation from English Anglicanism and attributed it to American mistrust of external control; the description was a veiled warning about the possible path of American Catholicism.<sup>32</sup> Fear of foreign influence in general, and of popery in particular, was a tool Catholics seeking to shape the church used, not just a weapon non-Catholics used to try to destroy it.

Carroll's stratagems helped to tip the Propaganda toward appointing a bishop and actively ensuring that Carroll controlled clerical appointments. But the process remained volatile. When an Irish priest who had visited the United States published a tract accusing Carroll of promoting a Jesuit conspiracy in the new nation, the Propaganda reacted with alarm. A shaken Thorpe wrote that Cardinal Antonelli, in his anxiety over the accusations, wanted to send an Italian priest, the Abbe Moretti, to America. Thorpe explained that the Propaganda would have used Moretti, though motivated by sincere zeal, as an "informer."<sup>33</sup> Thorpe successfully reassured Cardinal

<sup>30</sup> Carroll to Giuseppe Doria-Pamphili, Nov. 26, 1784, *ibid.*, 1: 152–55 (quotation, 1: 152–53).

<sup>31</sup> Carroll to Vitaliano Borromeo, Nov. 10, 1783, *ibid.*, 1: 80–81.

<sup>32</sup> Carroll to Cardinal Antonelli, Feb. 27, 1785, *ibid.*, 1: 169–79, esp. 1: 169–71.

<sup>33</sup> John Thorpe to Carroll, Feb. 7, 1790, Carroll Letters and Documents, in *Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore*, reel no. 5 (quotation). Irish priest Patrick Smyth arrived in the United States in 1787 and had left by spring 1788, provoking Carroll's immediate suspicion. See Carroll to [Thorpe?], May 8, 1788, vol. 892, fols. 532r–33r, Riferite nelle congregazioni generali, in *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide Records*, reel no. 12. For an abstract, see Spalding, *John Carroll Recovered*, 5. See also Carroll to [Thomas Betagh], July 9, 1788, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 314–16. In the same year, Smyth published the accusatory *Present State of the Catholic Mission, Conducted by the Ex-Jesuits in North-America* (Dublin, Ireland, 1788). Claudius de La Poterie caused more distress

Antonelli that no Jesuit conspiracy existed, and the movement continued toward establishing a see and toward trusting in Carroll's administration of it. But a divided church, not a united one, had brought into existence this first American see. In 1790 Carroll was consecrated as its bishop.

One task completed, Carroll contemplated the next. As bishop and, after 1808, as archbishop, he sought to craft a religion palatable to American society but still Catholic. Using his authority over priests, his public visibility via sermons and publications, and his continuing communication with Rome, Carroll sought to achieve three related objectives. The first was to conform some minor Catholic practices to what he viewed as republican standards of conduct. The second was to declare publicly that Catholicism's spiritual claims were limited to its flock and that Catholic clergy neither judged nor sought to control other Christians. The third, which flowed from the first two, was to convince Protestant Americans that Catholicism, even with the distinctive hierarchies and doctrines Carroll had every intention of defending, was a no less civically useful Christianity than were the various Protestant denominations.

American Catholicism was to be respectable and accessible. In his sermon expressing gratitude for the Revolution, Carroll made clear his goal of incorporating Catholicism into American Christianity. Urging Catholics to cultivate "the first of Christian duties . . . a Spirit of peacefulness, & Mutual love," Carroll reminded them, "Your particular circumstances call upon you for uncommon watchfulness over yourselves, & unusual exertions in all the exercises of a christian life. The impressions made by your conduct will be lasting impressions; & the opinion favourable or unfavourable to our holy religion, which shall result from observing your Manners, will have consequences extending down to the remotest times." If Catholics so conducted themselves, Carroll continued, Americans as a whole would be like the earliest Christians, who "buried all distinctions of birth & country in the happy and comfortable character of disciples of Jesus."<sup>34</sup> Carroll's effort to make Catholicism intelligible to Americans was sometimes literal: he hoped

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when he wrote at great length to the Propaganda, accusing Carroll of favoring Jesuits. See La Poterie to the Propaganda, Jan. 6, 1790, *Scrittura riferite nei congressi*, ser. 1, sec. 2, fols. 541–42, in *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide Records*, reel no. 42. Carroll was mistrustful of Thorpe by 1789. See Carroll to Thorpe, June 1, July 13, 1789, *Scrittura riferite nei congressi*, ser. 1, sec. 2, fols. 121v–22r, *ibid.*, reel no. 43; Thorpe to Carroll, Feb. 7, 1790, Carroll Letters and Documents, in *Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore*, reel no. 5; Thorpe to Carroll, Aug. 21, 1790, *ibid.*, reel no. 5. Thorpe offered Carroll further dramatic evidence of Rome's mistrust of former Jesuits: Cardinal Antonelli, Thorpe reported, interrogated two American boys studying in Rome "on the Jesuits, whom they had known in their own country, whether they were reputed to be yet Jesuits, whether they assembled together, had a noviciate, and admitted novices among them, and other questions to like purpose" (*ibid.*).

<sup>34</sup> "Sermon on Gratitude," in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 159 ("first of Christian duties"), 160 ("buried all distinctions").

to obtain permission for the Mass to be said in English rather than in Latin so that Catholics could understand it and Protestants would not mistrust it. He also advocated that distinctive religious observances such as Catholic funerals be conducted in accordance with quiet, conciliatory English Catholic practices.<sup>35</sup>

In this molding of Catholic institutions and a Catholic community, Carroll advocated caution. ("While both [prudence and zeal] are desirable," Carroll wrote memorably to Cardinal Antonelli, "prudence is most desirable, and particularly in Boston."<sup>36</sup>) But caution was not withdrawal into a Catholic subculture. Carroll was a confident public presence in architecture, in print, and in person. Working to create in Georgetown College a source of future clergy, he nonetheless counseled against entirely separate Catholic education; in his 1786 proposal, he wrote that the school "will open to students of every religious profession . . . who . . . will be at Liberty to frequent the Places of Worship and Instruction appointed by their Parents."<sup>37</sup> Carroll was also pleased to serve on the boards of institutions that educated both non-Catholics and Catholics. As early as 1784, he wrote to a fellow ex-Jesuit, "Being admitted to equal toleration, must we not concur in public measures, & avoid separating ourselves from the Community? Shall we not otherwise be marked, as forming distinct views, & raise a dislike which may terminate in consequences very disagreeable to us?"<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Carroll to Joseph Berington, July 10, 1784, *ibid.*, 1: 147–49, esp. 1: 149; Carroll to Arthur O'Leary, 1787, *ibid.*, 1: 224–26, esp. 1: 225; Carroll to Claudius de La Poterie, Dec. 24, 1788, *ibid.*, 1: 333–37, esp. 1: 334; Charles Edwards O'Neill, "John Carroll, the 'Catholic Enlightenment,' and Rome," in *American Catholic Preaching and Piety in the Time of John Carroll*, ed. Raymond J. Kupke (Lanham, Md., 1991), 1–26.

<sup>36</sup> Carroll to Leonardo Antonelli, Apr. 14, 1789, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 356–58 (quotation, 1: 357).

<sup>37</sup> "Proposals for Establishing an Academy, at George-town, Patomack-River, Maryland," in Robert Emmett Curran, *The Bicentennial History of Georgetown University: From Academy to University, 1789–1889* (Washington, D.C., 1993), 1: 1.

<sup>38</sup> Carroll to Ferdinand Farmer, December 1784, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 155–58 (quotation, 1: 158). See also Carroll to Hyacinth Gerdil, December 1795, *ibid.*, 2: 159–62. Catholics "must . . . take care lest unnecessary withdrawal from non-Catholics alienate them from our doctrine and rites, for, as they outnumber us and are more influential, they may, at some time, be inclined to renew the iniquitous laws against us" (*ibid.*, 2: 160). For other approvals of the desirability of mixed education, see Carroll to John Thorpe, Feb. 17, 1785, *ibid.*, 1: 162–66, esp. 1: 164; Carroll to Plowden, Feb. 27, 1785, *ibid.*, 1: 167; Carroll to Joseph Edenshink, April–June 1785, *ibid.*, 1: 185–88, esp. 1: 186. In his characteristic manner, Carroll described Georgetown differently to different correspondents. In correspondence with Cardinal Antonelli, Georgetown became not a mixed college but "a proposed establishment, which being designed for promoting the best causes, may greatly contribute to spread the empire of true Religion, and a respectful attachment to the Holy See." See Carroll to Leonardo Antonelli, 1787, *ibid.*, 1: 235. Though not precluding a mixed student body, the text led the reader's mind in other directions. See Joseph Agonito, "Ecumenical Stirrings: Catholic-Protestant Relations during the Episcopacy of John Carroll," *Church History* 45, no. 3 (September 1976): 358–73, esp. 364–65.

Insistent that clergy avoid offending Protestant mores, Carroll knew that one sure way to insult a Protestant was to tell him he was going to hell because he was not a Catholic. Carroll labored to separate his church from the popular conception—grounded in some strains of Catholic thought—that church teaching denied salvation to all but the flock. Informed by the long argument between Anglicanism and Catholicism as well as by John Locke and Joseph Priestley, Carroll asserted the Catholic Church's superiority on the grounds of toleration, not of truth. Though the church taught that only its members could be saved, Carroll wrote in a defense of Catholicism he published in 1784, "the *members of the catholic church*," he argued, were not just those who identified themselves as Catholics but rather "all those, who with a sincere heart seek true religion, and are in an unfeigned disposition to embrace the truth." The Catholic Church taught "nothing, that is not professed in the public liturgy of the protestant episcopal church; and nothing, I presume, but what is taught in every christian society on earth." The church, Carroll insisted, also refused to judge the state of Catholics' souls, leaving such penetration to God alone. "Let any one compare this explanation of our doctrine with the doctrine of protestant divines," Carroll wrote pointedly, "and discover in the former, if he can, any plainer traces of the savage monster intolerance, than in the latter."<sup>39</sup> A true church, like a true republic, did not read its members' hearts.

Carroll did not intend to make all Christian religions equal. Instead he refused publicly to condemn other faiths while also believing—and insisting his fellow Catholics believe—that the Catholic Church was the true church. The word heresy threatened to break open the delicate philosophical and practical links being forged. Carroll continued to use the term in correspondence with clergy, even playing up his heretical surroundings when, for example, he asked for financial contributions from Latin American prelates. But in print Carroll defined heresy not as departure from Catholic teaching but rather as the willful refusal to believe what an individual knew was correct; it was a definition that accepted the reality of pluralism even as it maintained the idea of truth. In his presentation of the church to the United States, Carroll came to avoid the concept of heresy entirely; thus, he tried to conceal language, in the brief establishing the see and in his consecration oaths, that deemed heterodoxy undesirable.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> John Carroll, *An Address to the Roman Catholics of the United States of America, By a Catholic Clergyman* (1784; repr., Worcester, Mass., 1785), 13 ("members"), 14 ("nothing"), 15 ("Let any one"). See also [John Locke], *A Letter Concerning Toleration: Humbly Submitted, &c.* (London, 1689); Joseph Priestley, *An Essay on the First Principles of Government, and on the Nature of, Political, Civil, and Religious Liberty* (Dublin, Ireland, 1768); Chinnici, *English Catholic Enlightenment*, chap. 1; Chinnici, *Living Stones*, 7–10.

<sup>40</sup> Carroll to Leonardo Antonelli, July 2, 1787, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 255–58, esp. 1: 255–56; Carroll to Michael Alvarez y Cortes, Apr. 9, 1796, *ibid.*, 2: 172–74, esp. 2: 172; Carroll to Antonelli, Apr. 23, 1792, *ibid.*, 2: 26–39, esp. 2: 28; Carroll, *Address*

Ecumenism had limits. Carroll lamented intermarriage and did not want Protestant ministers preaching in Catholic churches, though Catholic priests borrowed Protestant sanctuaries. Nor did he want Catholics to help neighbors erect Protestant churches, though Protestants so aided Catholics. Still Carroll avoided acknowledging discord and distinction. Religious judgments were not to disrupt the Christian community or the political community Carroll saw as its analog. Sometimes requirements were obvious: Carroll distanced his church from any quest to use the state to punish nonbelievers. "I do not think, that J. Christ ever empowered his church to recur to the means of force & bloodshed, for the preservation of faith against error," Carroll wrote firmly to a fellow priest in 1797.<sup>41</sup> Church discipline was not civil discipline, religious authority not earthly authority. At other times matters required circumspection and finesse. After George Washington's death, Carroll delivered and published a deeply admiring "discourse." He urged priests to do the same. But he also advised them to take care not to "form their discourses on the model of a funeral sermon . . . but rather . . . compose an oration, such as might be delivered in an academy."<sup>42</sup> Indeed they ought to remove the Host if speaking in a Catholic church. Washington was an admired and virtuous leader, but he was not a Catholic, and by Rome's standards, if not by Carroll's, he was a heretic. Washington must not accidentally be given a Catholic funeral, even as he also must not be publicly judged wanting by clergy who were Catholic citizens of Washington's Republic.<sup>43</sup>

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to *Roman Catholics of America*, 18; Carroll to Charles Plowden, Sept. 2, 1790, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 453–55, esp. 1: 454; Carroll to Plowden, Sept. 7, 1790, *ibid.*, 1: 459–60, esp. 1: 459; Carroll to Plowden, Oct. 4, 1790, *ibid.*, 1: 474–75, esp. 1: 475. John Thorpe reassured Carroll, "You are certainly not obliged to prosecute [heretics] by law, because you have no tribunal for that purpose and the law of God forbids you to injure their persons." See Thorpe to Carroll, July 20, 1790, Carroll Letters and Documents, in *Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore*, reel no. 5. See also Thomas W. Jodziewicz, "A Short Account . . . Of the Consecrating of the Right Rev. Dr. John Carroll (1790): Two Intersecting Roman Catholic Stories," *Catholic Social Science Review* 12 (2007): 253–71. Jodziewicz emphasizes Carroll's wish that Rome's influence not be trumpeted, but Carroll was also opposed to the church's public denigration of non-Catholic American Christians.

<sup>41</sup> Carroll to Robert Plowden, July 7, 1797, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 2: 217–19 (quotation, 2: 219).

<sup>42</sup> Carroll to "The Clergy on General Washington," Dec. 29, 1799, *ibid.*, 2: 295–96 (quotations, 2: 296).

<sup>43</sup> Carroll to Charles Plowden, Feb. 12, 1803, *ibid.*, 2: 407–9, esp. 2: 408; Carroll to William Vousdan, Sept. 10, 1801, *ibid.*, 2: 362–63; Agonito, *Church History* 45: 360–70. See also Joseph P. Chinnici, "American Catholics and Religious Pluralism, 1775–1820," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 16, no. 4 (Fall 1979): 727–46; Thomas W. Jodziewicz, "American Catholic Apologetical Dissonance in the Early Republic? Father John Thayer and Bishop John Carroll," *Catholic Historical Review* 84, no. 3 (July 1998): 455–76. Carroll praised George Washington as a soldier, statesman, and virtuous citizen. See

In these efforts to make Catholicism compatible with American Christianity, Carroll did not republicanize its hierarchy or discipline in ways discordant with Catholic tradition. Trusteeism, in which Catholic parishes had some control over the choice and dismissal of priests and over church property, emerged in the new nation, and Carroll was elected by his fellow American clerics. But lay participation in church governance flourished in England, France, and Germany as well; in the United States, its roots lay in such European traditions and in ethnic conflicts among congregations more than in a distinctively American desire to republicanize the church. Carroll accepted lay participation in church finances but resisted the laity's efforts to control priests; his position was consonant with his distinction between temporal practices, which might benefit from change, and the church's inner life and doctrine, which had to be preserved intact. In 1786 Carroll warned a congregation against proclaiming "a right not only to chuse such parish priest, as is agreeable to them; but of discharging him at pleasure." He continued: "If ever the principles there laid down should become predominant, the unity and Catholicity of our Church would be at an end."<sup>44</sup> In 1788 he shared with Plowden his dismay at a Philadelphia congregation's insistence on "nominating their own Pastors." Carroll wrote, "I cannot express how fatal such a right, if made good, would prove to Religion in this Country."<sup>45</sup> Carroll's distaste for trusteeism was further fueled by his worry that fractious priests and congregations would not impress but appall Protestant neighbors.<sup>46</sup>

For doctrinal and practical reasons, priests must be under the Catholic hierarchy's control. As bishop, Carroll showed enormous patience with

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[John] Carroll, *A Discourse on General Washington: Delivered in the Catholic Church of St. Peter, in Baltimore—Feb. 22d 1800* (Baltimore, 1800). On the early Maryland colony's toleration of Christian denominations, the legacy of which influenced Carroll, see Thomas O'Brien Hanley, *Their Rights and Liberties: The Beginnings of Religious and Political Freedom in Maryland* (Westminster, Md., 1959), 93–108.

<sup>44</sup> Carroll to Dominick Lynch and Thomas Stoughton, Jan. 24, 1786, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 203–6 ("right," 1: 203, "If ever," 1: 204).

<sup>45</sup> Carroll to Plowden, May 26, 1788, *ibid.*, 1: 311.

<sup>46</sup> Luca Codignola departs from the conventional emphasis on trusteeism. See Codignola, *WMQ* 64: 749–56. John R. Dichtl emphasizes trusteeism's roots in ethnic conflict. See Dichtl, *Frontiers of Faith: Bringing Catholicism to the Early Republic* (Lexington, Ky., 2008), chap. 3. On lay control in Europe, see David E. Gerber, "Modernity in the Service of Tradition: Catholic Lay Trustees at Buffalo's St. Louis Church and the Transformation of European Communal Traditions, 1829–1855," *Journal of Social History* 15, no. 4 (Summer 1982): 655–84, esp. 658, 671–72; Carey, *People, Priests, and Prelates*. Jay P. Dolan makes the case for the distinctiveness and significance of American trusteeism. See Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism*, chap. 5. See also Jodziewicz, *Catholic Social Science Review* 12: 262. For examples of discipline, see Carroll to Lynch and Stoughton, Jan. 24, 1786, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 203–4; "Sermon Suspending Andrew Nugent," October 1781, *ibid.*, 1: 262–65; Carroll to Claudius de La Poterie, Apr. 3, 1789, *ibid.*, 1: 353–55; "Sermon on the Excommunication of John Causse," Feb. 19, 1792, *ibid.*, 2: 13–20.

unruly priests but eventually disciplined and excommunicated those whom he believed rejected church teachings or defied superiors. "We have no European metropolis," he wrote to Plowden, and thus there was "the danger of a propension to a schismatical separation from the centre of unity." Carroll wished to create "an uniform discipline" over clergy "in all parts of this great continent; and every measure so firmly concerted, that as little danger, as possible, may remain of a disunion with the holy See."<sup>47</sup> Carroll's priests would be acceptable to their Protestant neighbors, but they would remain Catholic priests. Carroll in fact viewed a disciplined priesthood as necessary to Catholic expansion, and his strategy was hardly unique. Methodism and Mormonism spread as their hierarchy and discipline enabled franchises to be extended across the growing nation.<sup>48</sup>

Carroll's allegiance to the priesthood was spiritual as well as practical. He believed in the priesthood as the path back to the rock on which his church had been founded. A democratized clergy and hierarchy did not have a place in this vision. Instead Catholic traditions offered precedent for procedures—collaborative selection more than election—useful in the new nation. Carroll's beloved Society of Jesus had from 1540 until its suppression been run by superiors general chosen by a subset of the order's priests; he may have had that procedure in mind when he wrote of his hope that the election of future American prelates "will never be vested in the whole body of officiating clergy; but only certain select persons."<sup>49</sup> There were non-Jesuit precedents as well: clergy had elected bishops in German regions since the fifteenth century and Canadian priests elected Jean-Olivier Briand bishop in the 1760s. Rome asserted the right to confirm these selections even as it acceded to the demands of local clergy and governments to shape the local hierarchy. (Because the American government disavowed any interest in the choice of a prelate, Carroll pointed to the threat of antipopery among the sovereign people to argue that the Catholic Church might suffer if Rome appeared to act too directly in choosing a bishop; in that sense, America's republican government was relevant to the negotiations.) Carroll's election, in short, was an American chapter in the transatlantic history of Rome's negotiations with far-flung clergy and states. If Carroll had been

<sup>47</sup> Carroll to Charles Plowden, Oct. 12, 1791, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 522–24 (quotations, 1: 524).

<sup>48</sup> Carroll also deplored priests who "claimed that the papal brief for establishing an Episcopal cathedral in the United States was a very grave act of tyranny" and who argued that ecclesiastical hierarchy was "contrary to the American people[s] right and liberty." See Carroll to Caesar Brancadoro, Oct. 12, 1799, *ibid.*, 2: 286–91 (quotation, 2: 287). Thomas W. Spalding argues correctly that documents left out of Thomas O'Brien Hanley's volumes, particularly letters that found their way to the Propaganda, make clearer Carroll's willingness to offer unruly priests second chances. See Spalding, *John Carroll Recovered*, xxxii–xxxiii. See also Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, 268–75.

<sup>49</sup> Carroll to Charles Plowden, Nov. 12, 1788, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 331–33 (quotation, 1: 332).

compelled to choose between being an elected vicar apostolic and being an appointed bishop, he would not have hesitated in choosing the latter: his goal was to create an American see, not clerical suffrage.<sup>50</sup>

A religion that could thrive in the Republic did not have to be a republican religion. Though he admired liberal English cleric Joseph Berington's views on interdenominational harmony, Carroll disagreed with Berington's suggestion that the pope's authority came from the people. Carroll politely wrote, "is he not jure divino Head of the Church? and is not this a Prerogative independent of the Community?"<sup>51</sup> Carroll calmly insisted that the ethos and procedures of church and state did not have to be similar or even intellectually reconcilable. A majoritarian ethos would always be at odds with Catholicism. Religious judgments should, moreover, not be congruent with those of the state; one must "distinguish," Carroll wrote blandly, "between theological or religious intolerance, which is essential to true religion, and civil intolerance," which was undesirable.<sup>52</sup>

As he worked to shape the church, Carroll also labored to shape Protestants' view of it. His constant goal was to broaden American Christianity to include Catholicism and to make that broadened Christianity the presumptive foundation of citizenship and the nation. Carroll argued that only antiquated—and un-American—thinking assumed that Catholics could not be good citizens. The Catholic Church did not seek "to keep her votaries in ignorance," Carroll wrote in his 1784 defense of the church. "Can a consistent Roman catholic be a candid inquirer in matters of religion? Why not?"<sup>53</sup> "Legislatures," Carroll wrote to the *Columbian Magazine* in 1787, need "the greater fortitude of emancipating their minds from a slavish subjection to the prejudices imbibed during a narrowed British education."<sup>54</sup> Carroll also wrote of Catholics' sacrifices during the Revolution. How could those who fought for America's liberties, went his argument, not deserve to enjoy those liberties? Like many a

<sup>50</sup> In a letter to Cardinal Antonelli, Carroll proposed a system in which "fifteen priests" would choose a bishop, "with the proviso that the Holy See retain the right to reject candidates until someone is chosen who meets the full approval of the Pope." See Carroll to Leonardo Antonelli, Apr. 23, 1792, *ibid.*, 2: 26–39 ("fifteen priests," 2: 32, "with the proviso," 2: 33). See also John B. Toews, "Pope Eugenius IV and the Concordat of Vienna (1448): An Interpretation," *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 34, no. 3 (June 1965): 184–86; Harro M. Höpfl, "Ordered Passions: Commitment and Hierarchy in the Organizational Ideas of the Jesuit Founders," *Management Learning* 31, no. 3 (September 2000): 313–29; Codignola, *WMQ* 64: 724–25. Ronald A. Binzley discusses the relationship between concerns over Jesuit property, hope for restoration, and the creation of a prelate. See Binzley, *U.S. Catholic Historian* 26: 69–71.

<sup>51</sup> Carroll to Joseph Berington, Sept. 29, 1786, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 217–19 (quotation, 1: 218).

<sup>52</sup> Carroll to John Troy, July 12, 1794, *ibid.*, 2: 120–22 (quotation, 2: 121).

<sup>53</sup> Carroll, *Address to Roman Catholics of America*, 7 ("to keep"), 8 ("consistent Roman catholic").

<sup>54</sup> A Reader [John Carroll], *Columbian Magazine* 1, no. 16 (December 1787): 881.

Catholic apologist before him, Carroll also exploited Protestantism's myriad divisions. Since they disagreed violently over doctrine and regularly leveled charges of priest-craft against each other, no single Protestant religion could merge seamlessly with the American nation. Carroll did not hesitate to point out that Americans had had to fight for their independence from a Protestant nation while relying on the help of a Catholic one. "The bitterest enemies of our national prosperity," Carroll wrote in 1789, "possess the same religion as prevails generally in the United States . . . What inference will a philosophic mind derive from this view, but that religion is out of the question? That it is ridiculous to say, The Protestant Religion Is The Important Bulwark Of Our Constitution?"<sup>55</sup>

Thus Christianity mattered to the Republic, but differences among Christians did not. Carroll rebutted deism by noting that it would destroy not only Catholicism but also Christianity; he did not find it necessary to explain why Christianity's destruction was unthinkable. He did not actively seek civic disabilities for non-Christians but made the circle of American citizens congruent with the community of American Christians. Usually implicit, the equation at times was voiced. "Let your earnest supplications be addressed to the throne of grace," he exhorted Catholics, "that every blessing, temporal & eternal may descend on your fellow Citizens, your brethren in Jesus Christ."<sup>56</sup> When he celebrated those who had fought the Revolution, he wrote that "freedom and independence [were] acquired by the united efforts, and cemented with the mingled blood of protestant and catholic fellow-citizens." In the same publication, Carroll made the boundaries of his vision clear: "Thanks to the genuine spirit of Christianity," he wrote, "the United States have banished intolerance from their systems of government, and many of them have done the justice to every denomination of Christians, which ought to be done to them in all, of placing them on the same footing of citizenship, & conferring an equal right of participation in national privileges."<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Pacificus [John Carroll] to John Fenno of the *Gazette of the United States*, June 10, 1789, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 365–69 (quotation, 1: 366–67); A Reader [Carroll] to the editor of the *Columbian Magazine*, Sept. 1, 1787, *ibid.*, 1: 259–61, esp. 1: 259; Chinnici, *Living Stones*, 6; Michael S. Carter, "Under the Benign Sun of Toleration': Mathew Carey, the Douai Bible, and Catholic Print Culture, 1789–1791," *Journal of the Early Republic* 27, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 437–69.

<sup>56</sup> "Sermon on Gratitude," in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 159.

<sup>57</sup> Carroll, *Columbian Magazine* 1: 881 (quotations). Carroll's view of the extent and bounds of religious liberty found expression in a 1786 letter to a European clergyman who had inquired whether it was necessary to seek congressional approval for a Catholic seminary: "The American Congress does not wish to treat of matters which concern one or another group of Christians, but to those who profess a certain creed it allows full liberty, without governmental interference, with respect to whatever pertains to its cult, discipline and internal organization, provided however that no harm ensues to the Republic." See Carroll to John Hock, 1786, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 199. On the limits of religious liberty and the demand of many Americans that the United States

American Christianity had broken government's control over religion and had created a Christian nation. Throughout his bishopric Carroll celebrated America's separation of political and religious authority but yoked Christianity and the nation in conceptual and practical ways. Carroll presciently envisioned a Christianity with an amphibious quality, living in private and public realms. That dual nature would allow it to reject or court state involvement as seemed strategically desirable. Like marriage and economic pursuits, which were cast as private activities but nurtured by law and public policy, Christianity was to be defended from state intrusion even as it relied on state protection and support. Religiosity was to be promoted as a pillar of the polity even as its usefulness was a function of distance from it. Carroll relied on the American government to defend his American Catholic Church from the Holy See, even arguing that "the Constitution" under which "our Religion has acquired equal rights & privileges with that of other Christians" required Rome to help create an American see.<sup>58</sup> He sought not to dismantle governmental support for Christianity but to ensure Catholicism received it. Carroll asked that Catholic priests be paid by Congress to evangelize American Indians, writing to Washington that when "Indian tribes [had] received formerly some instruction in the principles and duties of Christianity . . . a strong attachment was formed in their minds towards the nation."<sup>59</sup> As the War of 1812 ended, Carroll happily complied "with the recommendation of the worshipful Mayor" of Baltimore to declare a day of Thanksgiving.<sup>60</sup> Carroll also unabashedly used civil law to uphold Catholic hierarchy. In his view the state should support denominations' control over who could call himself a minister.<sup>61</sup>

The American Catholic Church and the state were entwined in yet another way: the nation protected slaveholders, and slaveholding helped sustain the

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have "a Christian culture," see Christopher Grasso, "The Boundaries of Toleration and Tolerance: Religious Infidelity in the Early American Republic," in *The First Prejudice: Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in Early America*, ed. Chris Beneke and Christopher S. Grenda (Philadelphia, 2010), 514–45.

<sup>58</sup> Carroll to Farmer, December 1784, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 156.

<sup>59</sup> Carroll to George Washington, Mar. 20, 1792, *ibid.*, 2: 24–25 (quotation, 2: 24).

<sup>60</sup> "Pastoral on Day of Thanksgiving," Oct. 16, 1814, *ibid.*, 3: 299.

<sup>61</sup> Carroll to Pope Pius VI, 1783, *ibid.*, 1: 68–69, esp. 1: 68; Carroll to Plowden, Sept. 26, 1783, *ibid.*, 1: 78; Carroll to Doria-Pamphili, Nov. 26, 1784, *ibid.*, 1: 152; Carroll to Farmer, December 1784, *ibid.*, 1: 157; Carroll to John Thorpe, Feb. 17, 1785, *ibid.*, 1: 162–66, esp. 1: 164; Carroll to Lawrence Phelan, Oct. 23, 1795, *ibid.*, 2: 152–54, esp. 153. In a letter to a Philadelphia pastor, Carroll explained his hope that American courts would establish religious societies' right to control their membership and discipline. See Carroll to Matthew Carr, Apr. 28, 1800, Carroll Letter Book, 1799–1815, in *Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore*, reel no. 11. For an abstract of the letter and identification of Carr, see Spalding, *John Carroll Recovered*, 35–36. For a discussion of Christian anxiety and authority after the Revolution, see Christopher Grasso, "Deist Monster: On Religious Common Sense in the Wake of the American Revolution," *Journal of American History* 95, no. 1 (June 2008): 43–68.

church. Colonial Catholicism, Carroll explained to the Propaganda, had been “supported not by the contributions of Catholics . . . but by the farms which the first missionaries acquired by purchase and transmitted to their successors”; those farms included plantations on which the enslaved toiled.<sup>62</sup> After the suppression of the Jesuit order and the founding of the new nation, plantations such as Maryland’s Bohemia and White Marsh continued to generate income that supported Catholic priests. Carroll laid plans to use that income to support Saint Mary’s Seminary and Georgetown College, institutions crucial to his hope of creating an American-educated clergy palatable to fellow countrymen. When a Benedictine wrote to Carroll to propose establishing a monastery in Pennsylvania, Carroll cautioned that the laws of that state “admit not slaves,” thus making a workforce for the monastery more problematic than it would be in a southern state.<sup>63</sup> Enslaved labor offered the nearest thing to the kind of subsidy aristocratic families and Catholic governments had furnished the church in Europe. In part because of the funds slavery supplied, Carroll could envision an American Catholic Church not dependent on state support, a church led by a clergy educated on American soil and a part of American culture.<sup>64</sup>

Carroll argued that all would benefit from an American Catholic Church integrated into American Christianity. The church would share Protestantism’s civic status while maintaining its own doctrines and hierarchies; Protestantism would gain because a Christianity undistracted by sectarianism would increase its cultural power even as it lost formal connections to the state.<sup>65</sup> Three decades after Carroll’s death in 1815, an influx of Irish and German Catholics strained the foundations Carroll, his brethren, and Rome had laid for an American Catholic Church. The church’s

<sup>62</sup> Carroll to Leonardo Antonelli, Aug. 5, 1789, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 1: 375–77 (quotation, 1: 376).

<sup>63</sup> Carroll to Michael Pembridge, Sept. 19, 1794, *ibid.*, 2: 128–29 (quotation, 2: 129).

<sup>64</sup> Carroll to Robert Molyneux, Feb. 25, 1807, *ibid.*, 3: 10–11, esp. 3: 11. Documents suggest that the plantations, though not highly profitable, were important to the church’s plans. A 1765 document prepared by the then-Jesuit mission in Maryland gives the value of Saint Inigo’s plantation, its “20 slaves, of which 12 workers,” and records that slaves produced six pounds per year and tenants, four. See “No. 97, 1765, July 23,” in Thomas Hughes, *History of the Society of Jesus in North America, Colonial and Federal, Documents* (New York, 1908), vol. 1, pt. 1: 335–36. Money derived from the White Marsh plantation, owned first by the Jesuit order and then by the Corporation of the Clergy in Maryland, is allotted to “the College of George Town.” See “No. 162 C. 1794, February 25,” *ibid.*, vol. 1, pt. 2: 703. See also “No. 162 D. 1795, June 3,” *ibid.*, vol. 1, pt. 2: 701–20, esp. 703–4. Thomas W. Spalding compiles important documentation of Carroll’s uneasy involvement in slaveholding. See Spalding, *John Carroll Recovered*, 215–19. See also Thomas Murphy, *Jesuit Slaveholding in Maryland, 1717–1838* (New York, 2001), esp. 38.

<sup>65</sup> In Christopher Grasso’s words, Carroll shared the desire of ministers such as Ezra Stiles to “maintain Christianity as the foundation of a nation that had rejected traditional authority”; he could not adopt a Christian common sense that a priesthood and

entanglement with slavery, an institution that had once formed part of its hopes of becoming an accepted part of American civic life, compounded the damage. But Carroll's expectation that the church could thrive in America and maintain its distinctive institutional structure and hierarchies proved correct. In his expectation that the United States would become a landscape of deeply held, competing faiths, Carroll was prescient, more so than those who imagined a future polity unified by shared evangelism, Unitarianism, or unbelief. The key for Carroll was not to reconcile or unify beliefs but to imagine separate realms of authority. Just as bishops and congressmen held regional influence, so would religious and secular authorities govern in certain intellectual, civic, and spiritual realms but not in others.

In reality beliefs and allegiances could not be so neatly divided as sees and states. But the steadfast insistence that they could be divided made harmony possible. When a non-Catholic Baltimorean objected to Carroll's use of the title "Bishop of Baltimore"—pointing out that the city was not a Catholic city and Carroll not the man's bishop—Carroll calmly responded that his authority, so compelling to those who accepted it, had no claim over those who did not.<sup>66</sup> He asserted that authority in Baltimore's imposing cathedral. One could choose whether to pass through the door of Carroll's church, but once inside, a Catholic's allegiance to doctrine and to the spiritual authority of Rome and the American hierarchy should be wholehearted. Mindful obedience would be held up to Anglo-American culture as an example of religious liberty and to Rome as an example of loyal Catholicism.

The difficulty of fitting Carroll's successes within the current narrative of American religion should lead scholars to rethink that narrative and the paradigm of Christianity's democratization. Congregations and parishes, unlike democracies, did not include all those within geographic boundaries. Indeed the separation of church from geography was essential to the separation of church and state and thus a crucial element of postrevolutionary American religion. In neither Protestant nor Catholic churches were doctrinal disputes customarily put to votes: schism and new parish formation, not compromise and majority rule, were the essential acts of American Christianity. To the extent that a democratization model leads one to expect nonhierarchical churches to triumph, its insufficiencies are also evident. Along with Catholics, the Methodists and the Mormons—two of the greatest success stories of postrevolutionary Christianity—offered their adherents strict hierarchies and commanding clergy. By contrast intensely nonhierarchical Christian sects such as the Christian Connection disappeared by the 1840s.

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a Catholic tradition were unnecessary to understanding scripture. See Grasso, *Journal of American History* 95: 67.

<sup>66</sup> John [Carroll], Bishop of Baltimore, "An Answer to Strictures on an Extraordinary Signature," Nov. 21, 1792, in Hanley, *John Carroll Papers*, 2: 69–71.

The Quakers now boast approximately the same number of members as Old Order Amish.<sup>67</sup>

“Democratization” is a loose-fitting cloak not only over denominational structures but also over the beliefs and experiences of postrevolutionary religion. Was a Protestant church that restricted communion to visible saints but allowed lay preaching more or less democratic than one that welcomed all but the flagrantly scandalous while permitting only ordained ministers to preach? Was a denomination that supported class and racial hierarchies, even as it let planters and yeomen, black and white, worship together, more or less democratic than one that appealed only to wealthy New England Brahmins but demanded the end of slavery? The turn away from belief in predestination is considered evidence of the democratization of American religion, but the Catholic Church had never accepted the doctrine of predestination, and the doctrine is neither innately opposed nor linked to any political ideal or setting.<sup>68</sup> Democratization of religion is an analogy, not a description. It distorts even as it illuminates.

Americans’ spiritual lives did not mimic their political lives. American Christianity arose from ancient arguments over the nature of divinity, grace, and works that neither Catholicism nor Protestantism had resolved. The profusion of popular pieties that came to characterize the American landscape was less a function of nineteenth-century American democracy than an unsurprising descendant of the immense diversity of lay and clerical disciplines and experiences that had traditionally characterized Europe. On both sides of the Atlantic, belief and form also evolved in response to the Enlightenment and the rising power of the nation-state. What was distinctive about American religion was neither innately Protestant nor intrinsically democratic. It was to be found in Carroll’s careful positioning of Catholicism within the polity and—he hoped—within the minds and lives of believers. Like American constitutionalism Carroll’s vision emphasized pragmatism rather than metaphysics and favored coexistence over unanimity. As in politics differences were to be carefully bounded even as they were vigorously expressed. Not all religions were welcome in Carroll’s projected America. Nor was irreligion to be condoned. But Christian denominations of differing institutions and beliefs could thrive. Each could claim to sustain American democracy even as each offered Americans a sustenance different from that which democracy supplied. On that principle Carroll set out to build an American Catholic Church.

<sup>67</sup> Jon Butler forcefully argues that “the emphasis on denominational authority clashed with the egalitarian values of the American Revolution,” and “in most denominations, authority continued to flow down from the top, not rise up from the bottom.” See Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, 268, 272 (quotations). See also Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 80; Williams, *America’s Religions*, 132, 154.

<sup>68</sup> Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 170–79.