"With a Pure Intention of Pleasing and Honouring God": How the Philadelphia Laity Created American Catholicism, 1785-1850

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Abstract
This dissertation explores how Philadelphia Catholics of the early national period sought to reconcile the conflicting forces of spiritual expression, American citizenship, and Protestant antipathy in their quest to establish an American Catholic identity. Previous historians have posited that, by the middle of the nineteenth century, a colonial and early national Catholic identity, articulated by mostly native-born American laypeople and rooted in Enlightenment and republican values, yielded to a European, Ultramontane vision of Catholic community life. It has been assumed that clergy succeeded in squelching lay-led campaigns for ecclesiastical democracy and achieved widespread acquiescence to a more elaborate, authoritarian Church hierarchy as well as a more separatist orientation to the broader Protestant American culture. This study revises the prevailing historiographical formulation by revealing the contributions of the American laity to the reorganization of devotional and parish life in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. It also explores Catholics' continued engagement with their Protestant neighbors. The experiences of Philadelphia Catholics demonstrate that collaboration between clergy and laity was crucial to the articulation and implementation of a common spiritual and social identity.

Special attention to three key developments in the history of early national Catholicism shed light on how conflicts and collaborations between laypeople and their clerical superiors propelled American Catholic community formation. First, fruitful partnerships between clergy and Catholic publishers made it possible for the faith community to deploy a vibrant culture of print to bolster piety and to connect co-religionists both within and beyond Philadelphia. Second, disagreements over the future of trusteeism (the traditional means of founding and managing new parishes) forced Catholics to renegotiate the balance of power between clergy and laity. Finally, Catholics found it necessary to launch compelling apologetic campaigns in the face of rising nativist hostility. Clergy and laity cooperated to overturn popular misconceptions of Catholic doctrine and to demonstrate the community's respectability in the eyes of Protestants. When taken together, these sites of inquiry reveal that both the clergy and the laity were vital contributors to the creation of a distinctive American Catholic identity.

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“WITH A PURE INTENTION OF PLEASING AND HONOURING GOD”: HOW THE
PHILADELPHIA LAITY CREATED AMERICAN CATHOLICISM, 1785-1850

Jennifer Elizabeth Schaaf

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In memory of my grandmother, Rose Delserro.
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ABSTRACT

“WITH A PURE INTENTION OF PLEASING AND HONOURING GOD”: HOW THE PHILADELPHIA LAITY CREATED AMERICAN CATHOLICISM, 1785-1850

Jennifer Elizabeth Schaaf
Daniel K. Richter

This dissertation explores how Philadelphia Catholics of the early national period sought to reconcile the conflicting forces of spiritual expression, American citizenship, and Protestant antipathy in their quest to establish an American Catholic identity. Previous historians have posited that, by the middle of the nineteenth century, a colonial and early national Catholic identity, articulated by mostly native-born American laypeople and rooted in Enlightenment and republican values, yielded to a European, Ultramontane vision of Catholic community life. It has been assumed that clergy succeeded in squelching lay-led campaigns for ecclesiastical democracy and achieved widespread acquiescence to a more elaborate, authoritarian Church hierarchy as well as a more separatist orientation to the broader Protestant American culture.

This study revises the prevailing historiographical formulation by revealing the contributions of the American laity to the reorganization of devotional and parish life in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. It also explores Catholics’ continued engagement with their Protestant neighbors. The experiences of Philadelphia Catholics demonstrate that collaboration between clergy and laity was crucial to the articulation and implementation of a common spiritual and social identity.

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INTRODUCTION

In April 1822, *The New-England Galaxy and United States Literary Advertiser* excitedly reported on sensational events that had taken place on the eighth of that month at St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Philadelphia. A riot, so ferocious that “‘stones, brick-bats, bars of iron railing, &c. literally darkened the air for some time,’” had erupted between warring factions within the congregation. The publishers took for granted that its “readers are already acquainted with the fact that a serious dispute has for a long time existed among the members of St. Mary’s Church.” Like many popular newspapers throughout the country, the *Galaxy* had been reporting on developments throughout the crisis. Lifting a purported eyewitness account from the pages of the *New York Commercial Advertiser*, the New England paper described a “contest, severe, savage and bloody,” that began on the church grounds but ultimately spilled into the sanctuary itself when one faction overwhelmed its foes who occupied the building. The account claimed that “[m]any were knocked down on both sides, and the fall of any one drew upon him some half dozen, who belaboured their victims with clubs. Many have been severely and dangerously wounded, and it is reported, that some have died of their wounds.”¹

The events of April 8 were, indeed, horrific. Some antagonists from among an estimated eight hundred people dismantled the parish’s brick and iron railing to supply themselves with weapons for a melee that lasted the better part of a morning. This was only the latest confrontation in a fierce, decade-long power struggle among Philadelphia Catholics that had occasionally degenerated into outbursts of violence. Like their co-religionists throughout the nation, they found themselves bitterly divided over whether they should cede prerogatives of parish management to clergy or cling to longstanding traditions of lay oversight of churches and institutions. An observer mourned that the crisis, “has entered (almost) every family. It has entered (almost) every heart. Friendship and charity and domestic peace have perished as it advanced.” And Philadelphia Catholics faced another dilemma that compounded the crisis

¹*The New-England Galaxy and United States Literary Advertiser*, April 19, 1822 (Volume 5, Number 236).
unfolding within their own ranks. Protestants throughout the city and the nation watched in awed fascination as Catholics seemed to confirm Americans’ worst fears of their doctrinal backwardness, their degeneracy, and their unfitness for integration into mainstream American culture. Dissensions within their community were bad enough; the growing disdain of their Protestant neighbors made matters worse. Catholics chafed under the unflattering reportage that grossly exaggerated the savagery of the encounter and lowered them in the esteem of their neighbors.²

Like their counterparts in many major American cities, Philadelphia Catholics were struggling to steer their rapidly growing and increasingly visible community into a new era. As they sought to meet members’ demands for greater spiritual and social services, they were forced to confront whether the established mechanisms for institution building suited their changing circumstances. Like most parishes in the city (and the nation) St. Mary’s had been chartered and bankrolled by laymen. Once the parish had been established, lay trustees (who were elected by parishioners) oversaw various aspects of the community’s welfare. They raised funds and oversaw expenditures, managed the church building and grounds, and superintended various parish-based clubs and benevolent societies. Early on, they also took a strong role in recruiting the priests who would minister to the community and in paying those clergymen’s salaries. The trustees who shouldered these considerable responsibilities carried on a tradition that stretched back to the earliest Catholic settlements of colonial North America. Few clergy and little oversight from Rome left many Catholic laymen struggling to piece together the rudiments of a faith community for themselves. And their makeshift efforts typically met with the approbation of grateful clergy who shared their ambition but lacked the resources to build and staff the institutions that could support Catholic community life.

But as an American Catholic hierarchy slowly and fitfully cohered, beginning with the appointment of John Carroll as the first American bishop in 1784, the clergy sought to impose

structure and discipline on the unruly American mission. Clergymen waged a determined campaign of consolidation to regularize Catholic devotional life and to secure doctrinal and temporal authority for themselves. Many clergymen had been born and educated in Europe where, they (erroneously) claimed, acquiescence to ecclesiastical authority came more easily. So, even as they encouraged laymen’s ambitions to establish Catholic parishes and social service organizations, they professed to be flummoxed by those laymen who proved unwilling to surrender such longstanding American prerogatives as the power of the parish purse and consultative privileges in the selection of pastors.

Zealous Catholic community building and the clergy’s aggressive campaign for consolidation took place against the backdrop of persistent Protestant suspicion. As historian Jon Gjerde recently observed, from the Protestant perspective, Catholics were “[m]embers of a faith controlled by a tyrannical and authoritarian hierarchy centered outside the United States,” and thus they were viewed as “an organic bloc of people who would not easily be digested by the American body politic.” Protestant hostility to the Catholic presence grew in tandem with Catholics’ rising spiritual and institutional strength. So it is hardly surprising that Catholics who routinely contended with the insults and petty prejudices of their neighbors should view intra-community disputes with heightened alarm. They recognized that their hopes of integrating into the American mainstream depended on Protestants’ perception of them as honorable and decorous. Thus the violence of April 8 must be understood as much more than a skirmish in the war between clergy and laity over consolidation. It must be understood as one of many episodes through which the competing claims of Catholic spiritual expression, American citizenship, and Protestant antipathy collided and forced members of a beleaguered faith community to grapple with an emerging American Catholic identity.\(^3\)

This dissertation traces the efforts of Philadelphia Catholics in the early national period to build a vibrant spiritual and social community within mainstream Protestant society. Previous

historians have posited that, by the middle of the nineteenth century, a colonial and early national Catholic identity, articulated by mostly native-born American laymen and rooted in Enlightenment and republican values, yielded to a European, Ultramontane vision of Catholic community life. As historian Dale Light has argued, Ultramontanism in this context referred to more than an expectation of deference to the Church hierarchy. It also referred to a campaign on the part of “new leaders of the Church in America” to vociferously oppose “liberal and other modernizing elements within the church.” The Ultramontanists among the American hierarchy benefited not only from the support of Rome, but also from new, mostly Irish immigrants, who began arriving in greater numbers by the third decade of the nineteenth century. Because these newcomers were unfamiliar with American republican prerogatives and accustomed to submit to clerical authority, they easily fell in line with the consolidation project. By mid-century, campaigns for ecclesiastical democracy had been soundly defeated and supplanted by widespread acquiescence to the Church hierarchy and a more separatist orientation to the broader Protestant American culture.  

It is certainly true that consolidation triumphed over trusteeism. And historians of Catholicism are right to perceive slightly more insularity among American Catholics of the antebellum era. But the prevailing historiographical tale of an Ultramontane sensibility imposed on American Catholics from above fails to account for the considerable contributions of the American laity across all socio-economic and ethnic strata to the reorganization of devotional and parish life in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. It also fails to account for Catholics’ continued engagement with their Protestant neighbors. The experiences of Philadelphia Catholics demonstrate that, even in the midst of turmoil and dissension, lay initiative remained crucial to the articulation and implementation of a common spiritual and social identity. And, while all constituencies within the Catholic community looked to Rome for spiritual succor and organizational guidance, all parties—both lay and clerical—understood that Americanization was inevitable. Each constituency had its own perspective on what Americanization should look like.

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depending on its place within the church hierarchy, socio-economic status, gender, and ethnicity. And each constituency, while primarily concerned with what would be most spiritually satisfying, articulated a vision for Philadelphia Catholicism that was informed by fears and insecurities borne of living in a hostile Protestant culture.

Historians’ embrace of the consolidation narrative undoubtedly has much to do with the limitations of sources. While it is relatively easy to reconstruct the lives of prominent clergy who were active in the American mission, it is more difficult to revisit the ordinary communicants who occupied the pews. However, a careful examination of key developments in the history of early national Catholicism makes it possible to discern a great deal about lay Catholics’ attitudes and experiences. So, while this dissertation is organized chronologically, it is by no means an exhaustive and complete narrative of events. Rather, it sheds light on the manner in which conflicts and collaborations between laypeople and their clerical superiors propelled American Catholic identity formation. It pays particular attention to Catholics’ reliance on print culture as a means of forging a common faith community; the struggle to find an effective balance of power between clergy and laity over the course of the trustee crisis; and the efforts of American Catholics to launch compelling apologetic campaigns in the face of rising nativist hostility. When taken together, these episodes provide a revealing pastiche of Catholic life in early national Philadelphia.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the American mission field called for a peculiar kind of community formation that was as much virtual as it was actual. An American Catholic identity had to be forged cooperatively across colonial and, later, state borders. Philadelphia Catholics who felt little sympathy from their Protestant neighbors found they could identify closely with their coreligionists in New York, or Charleston, or Baltimore, who faced familiar forms of discrimination. The persistent prejudices of local Protestants and broad, but thin, geographic dispersion of coreligionists set up the conditions under which print culture became the first and most crucial means of creating a shared American Catholic identity.
For much of the colonial period, Catholics’ primary agents for obtaining religious publications had been the itinerant clergymen who visited irregularly according to variable factors such as weather, health, and financial means. Early on, these itinerants relied on cheap reprints of imported European works to catechize American Catholics. But by the early nineteenth century, the laity had come to demand greater access to more diverse forms of Catholic literature. So clergymen began to work cooperatively with the handful of Catholics in the printing profession to meet the needs of this burgeoning market. Reprints of sermons that celebrated the consecration of new American-based dioceses or the installation of American bishops made it possible for American Catholics to participate from afar in landmark events in the progress of the American mission. In a similar fashion, pamphlets outlining instructions for the American laity to participate in jubilee festivities and significant holy days bound American Catholics to the global Church. American Catholics sought to transcend local prejudices by forging a sense of kinship and common spiritual purpose with co-religionists beyond their immediate locales.

Philadelphia became the epicenter for Catholic publishing in the United States. Famed Philadelphia publisher Mathew Carey spearheaded the effort with his 1791 attempt to found an “Institution for Printing Roman Catholic Books,” and numerous Catholic publishers and clergymen aimed to realize his vision. Progress was so considerable that, three decades later, his co-religionists Bernard Dornin and Augustine Fagan could specialize in publishing Catholic works almost exclusively. Increasingly, these Catholic entrepreneurs catered to patrons’ desire for additional kinds of publications, such as Catholic domestic novels and gender-specific hagiographic works. And, by mid-century, they scrambled to meet the laity’s demands for apologetic literature that would allow them to more eloquently and effectively defend the faith against Protestant slurs.

Of course, printed materials were an expedient and not a replacement for the institutions that would structure Catholic community life. As soon as numerical and financial support allowed, Catholics established the churches, graveyards, and gathering places that would provide them
with specific venues for the exercise of their faith. In many cases, these initiatives were launched by enthusiastic laypersons who proceeded in advance of the clergy. Laymen insisted that such efforts were never intended to usurp clerical prerogatives, but merely to encourage the settlement of clergy amid the fledgling Catholic community.

Progress remained slow, not only because of financial and demographic constraints, but also because of fears of Protestant retribution. Philadelphia Catholics only managed to establish their first parish in the city in 1733. They located themselves strategically on tiny Willings Alley, below Walnut Street and between Third and Fourth Streets. Once they had raised the funds to build a handsome brick structure, they eschewed any ornamentation that might attract unwanted attention. Instead, parishioners opted for a façade that would blend seamlessly with the townhouses of the neighborhood. Only after walking through a narrow passageway that opened onto a hidden courtyard did they find themselves enveloped by the familiar visual markers of Catholic spiritual life. They knew only too well that to be Catholic in Philadelphia was to risk verbal scorn and, on occasion, physical danger.

Gradually and cautiously, Catholics expanded the parishes and services that tended to the needs of the faithful. In 1785 Bishop Carroll reported to Rome that approximately 7,000 Catholics resided in Pennsylvania with five regular priests to serve them. By this time, the city of Philadelphia was home to two parishes: St. Joseph’s, founded in 1733 and St. Mary’s, founded in 1763. And plans and fundraising were underway for the erection of two additional parishes: Holy Trinity, dedicated in 1789; and St. Augustine’s, dedicated in 1801. By 1822, the Catholic Almanac and Laity’s Directory could report that one-fifth of Philadelphians practiced the Catholic faith. Only Baltimore, seat of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States, could boast of a more sizeable Catholic population or more clergymen in residence.5

Catholics intended their parishes to serve as more than dispensaries for the sacraments. They established lively centers of sociability that served both spiritual and social ends. By the first decade of the nineteenth century, Philadelphia Catholics had founded multiple confraternities, rosary bands, and charitable organizations to assist the disadvantaged among them. These societies united co-religionists in a common spiritual purpose and encouraged them in the practice of their faith. They also collapsed the boundaries between parish and domestic spaces by encouraging laypeople to engage in home-based devotional exercises and to police one another’s behavior outside of churches for the good of the community. And while clergy always served consultative functions on the boards of these associations, laypeople provided the energy and exertion that made many of them enormously successful.

Many parish organizations pursued agendas of social uplift. Parish schools did more than impart the principles of the faith to children and adults. Catechism teachers (often laymen and laywomen) imparted the foundations of reading, writing, and arithmetic. And as considerable numbers of immigrants, mostly poor and Irish, swelled the ranks of the Philadelphia Catholic community by the 1830s, associations specifically intended to facilitate newcomers’ assimilation into American society emerged. Organizations such as the St. Joseph’s Emigrant Society and the Pennsylvania Catholic Total Abstinence Society aimed to do more than meet the immediate material and spiritual needs of the newcomers. They promoted a vision of mainstream American respectability that would reflect well on the entire Catholic community.

Unsurprisingly, respectability was the special concern of upper and middle class Catholics who feared that working class people and impoverished immigrants among them confirmed Protestants’ worst fears of Catholic iniquity. And while plenty of disadvantaged Catholics availed themselves of services and embraced the views propounded by Catholic social service organizations, many others articulated alternative notions of propriety. They rejected co-religionists’ emphasis on decorous behavior and instead privileged service to the parish community as the true measure of Catholic honor and esteem. Many Catholic clergy supported
the respectability campaigns undertaken by the elite members of their flocks. But most members of the rapidly expanding hierarchy were European-born and -educated immigrants themselves. Unfamiliar with American manners, and unused to managing the hostility of American Protestants, they focused their apologetic efforts narrowly on defense of the doctrines of the faith.

In the absence of clear direction from their clerical superiors in matters of gentility and propriety, the laity became the chief architects of Catholic respectability. And they discerned that recasting the American Catholic character in a more favorable light required carefully calibrated performances of gender. In furtherance of this objective, Catholic women were continually exhorted to display a becoming meekness and piety. Community members understood women's labors on behalf of cherished devotional and social service causes were crucial to the efflorescence of the faith. But, from both pulpits and the pages of prescriptive literature, they warned Catholic women to implement those objectives from subordinate positions behind their male counterparts and the women religious whose spiritual qualifications supposedly superseded their own. Laywomen chafed against the constraints placed on them by this newly articulated feminine ideal and sought ways to direct the progress of Catholic community formation in spite of its very real limitations.

Catholic laymen faced their own set of gender-based challenges as the community coalesced into its more hierarchical configuration. Laymen had long been admonished to emulate their spiritual heroes among the clergy and, increasingly, to subordinate themselves to clerical directives. But they found they could not capitulate to the purported superiority of a clerical masculine ideal and simultaneously mount a compelling defense of their prerogatives under the trustee system. Laymen struggled to popularize their own version of a lay masculine ideal that celebrated men’s stewardship of appropriately pious Catholic households, service to the faith community, and fluency in Catholic doctrine.

So it was with considerable mortification that Philadelphia Catholics endured not one, but two, clerical sexual scandals that discredited the entire faith community with imputations of
maligned virtue and gender disorder. Father William Hogan, an outspoken defender of lay prerogatives, became the conduit through which the entire system of trusteeism came to be condemned. His rumored dalliances with his female congregants tainted laywomen’s virtue and impugned laymen’s masculinity. As the crisis escalated, trustees found their humiliation compounded by accusations that Hogan had raped and assaulted a former member of his flock. It is impossible to determine whether the charges against Hogan were true or were manufactured by overzealous partisans of clerical authority. But, regardless of the veracity of the allegations, the public spectacle that attended the ensuing trial inflicted considerable damage on Hogan’s disgraced faction. Meanwhile, pro-bishop forces arrayed against the trustees found themselves mired in their own public relations disaster. A woman claiming to carry the unborn child of Bishop Henry Conwell swore a paternity suit against him. Both clergymen's ignominious journeys through the courts subjected Philadelphia Catholics to the prurient interest of the general public and the derision of their Protestant detractors.

The trustee dissensions and their attendant scandals left Catholics desperate to rehabilitate their sullied image in the eyes of their neighbors. So it was with considerable hopefulness that they welcomed a new bishop into the community in late 1830. Francis Patrick Kenrick had been born and educated in Ireland. But more than a decade on the American mission in Bardstown, Kentucky, had provided him with the knowledge and experience to adroitly balance the imperatives to serve the Catholic community and to productively engage Protestant detractors. Like all American bishops, he strongly advocated Ultramontanism and the imposition of hierarchy on the faithful. But his comportment and erudition endeared him to his battle-weary flock. Even before a definitive indictment of the trustees had arrived from Rome to bolster his case, Kenrick had managed to peel many partisans away from their ranks. It seemed to many Philadelphia Catholics that a division of labor might be established whereby spiritual and many temporal matters could be ceded to the Bishop even as laymen and laywomen retained a considerable sphere of influence in which to pursue their social and devotional interests and thereby advance a positive impression of their religious community to all Philadelphians.
Alas, by this time, Philadelphia Catholics found themselves caught up in a resurgent No-Popery movement spearheaded by virulently prejudiced organizations such as the American Protestant Association. They faced resentment of Irish Catholic immigration, fears of papal incursions into the western territories, and unrelenting propaganda rolling off Protestant religious presses throughout the country. These developments overwhelmed Catholics’ efforts to convince their fellow Americans of their respectability and qualifications for inclusion in American society. So when, in 1842, Bishop Kenrick pressed his claim to release Catholic school children from mandatory Protestant religious exercises in the public schools, he did so with considerable delicacy and a repeatedly professed willingness to compromise. But the climate was inhospitable, and his appeal became the fodder for a bitter propaganda campaign that would culminate in riot and bloodshed.

The immediate catalyst for a notorious and cataclysmic riot of 1844 was an erroneous report that a public school teacher from the Kensington section of the city had been ordered to dispense with religious observances altogether. The American Protestant Association and the Native American Party organized a joint protest at Kensington’s Nanny Goat Market—Irish turf—daring local residents to counter-protest. The initial wave of violence that gripped the city stretched from May 6 through May 8, during which time pitched battles took place throughout the city’s heavily Catholic neighborhoods. Four nativists were killed and numerous rioters on both sides of the conflict sustained serious injuries. The devastation to property was considerable. Nativists looted and burned Irish homes and businesses. They pillaged, desecrated, and attempted to burn one parish and rectory and succeeded in looting and burning another. They also inflicted considerable damage on a convent house that had been vacated by Sisters of Charity some years before the conflagration. By the fourth day after the outbreak of violence, city officials placed Philadelphia under martial law and posted guards at each of the city’s Catholic churches.
The nativist riots were a bitter reminder to Catholics of how little they had achieved in their quest for acceptance in Philadelphia society. They capitulated to Kenrick’s pleas for restraint and watched in horror as the nativist dead were celebrated as martyrs to a righteous cause. They rebuilt their shattered neighborhoods in the looming shadow of Grand Jury findings that placed blame for the riots squarely on Catholic shoulders. The jury had repeated the well-worn claims that Catholics provoked the crisis by campaigning to eliminate the Bible from public schools and asserted that nativists had been savagely assailed in the midst of a peaceful protest.

Philadelphia Catholics came together to defend their beleaguered community. In their Address of the Catholic Lay Citizens, they did more than offer a counter-narrative to the tragic events of May 6 through 8. They also offered an impassioned defense of religious liberty for all Philadelphians and a desperate plea for acceptance. “We are Philadelphians, and we love our city,” they wrote. “Many of us can say it is the home of our childhood, the habitation of our wives and children—it contains the ashes of our fathers.” But the success of such a pamphlet relied on the good will and receptivity of a Protestant audience. And, in this, Catholics found themselves bitterly disappointed. Many Protestant Philadelphians acknowledged the bias of the Grand Jury report and decried nativists’ blatant provocation of their Irish Catholic neighbors. Yet very few were willing to repudiate the prejudices that had inspired the nativist protests in the first place. Cooler-headed Philadelphians may have longed for the rule of law. But they recoiled at the prospect of integrating growing numbers of Irish Catholics into the community.6

By the time a second wave of violence erupted later in 1844 (prompted by taunting nativist displays at the city’s July 4 festivities) Catholics nurtured little hope of reforming the public schools. Increasingly, the Catholic community turned its attention to establishing a system of parochial education that would shield Catholic children from the prejudices of teachers and classmates. But their campaign did not signal a new, separatist orientation among Philadelphia

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Catholics. Indeed, in the aftermath of the riots, Catholics expanded their social service efforts, devoting more resources to meeting the needs of community members from within their own ranks. They aimed to inculcate self-sufficiency and American manners and customs in newcomers so they might represent the faith more positively.

Philadelphia Catholics also maintained their apologetic campaigns on behalf of the faith. Catholic publishers continued to refute misrepresentations of Catholic doctrine and practice. And they aimed to subvert critics’ claims of Catholics’ inability to assimilate. But a shift in tone is discernible in the productions of the post-riot era. Catholics pursued these long-standing strategies more quietly. They pressed their claims more carefully. And they picked their battles more selectively. For example, Bishop Kenrick never again broached the issue of Protestant Bible reading in public schools. He came to consider the issue too volatile, too contentious, to justify a public campaign against it.

In this light, it may seem as though the story of Catholic life in early national Philadelphia was one of tragedy rather than triumph. But it would be more generous to the memories of Philadelphia’s Catholic pioneers—both lay and clerical—to emphasize the extent to which they rose above their impossible circumstances to create a spiritual safe haven for themselves in the midst of bigotry and resentment. All constituencies within the community had contributed to the creation of a common identity that bound them to one another and to the religion that sustained them. And in the years following the riots, they continued to nurture and defend their shared faith, staking a claim to their place among the city’s multiplicity of denominations. Philadelphia Catholics had learned—often through bitter experience—that they worked best when they worked together.
On November 7, 1791, twenty-four regular clergymen serving the small and widely dispersed American Catholic community convened in Baltimore for the First Synod of the United States. The assembly met to codify policies in matters such as dispensing the sacraments, stabilizing Church finances, and the manner in which clergy should minister to communicants of mixed-faith marriages. This meeting had been called by John Carroll shortly after his investiture as the first bishop of the American Church, then regarded by Rome as a mission field. In his circular calling for the assembly, Carroll outlined the pastors’ lengthy agenda. He expressed particular concern for “the mode of continuing the episcopacy of the United States; of providing for the decent ordering of divine worship; of establishing uniformity in the administration of the sacraments, & discipline of the diocese; & in the exterior government of its Clergy; of concerting means for the extension of ministers; these are the principal objects, which will engage your attention.”

A visible and active Catholic community was only just beginning to cohere in the newly-created United States. Just six years before, Carroll had dispatched his priests to assist him in ascertaining how many Catholics lived within his jurisdiction. In his 1785 report to the Propaganda Fide, the body within the Vatican charged with overseeing foreign missions, Carroll could definitively claim some 24,500 souls under his pastoral care. And he noted that “[m]any other Catholics are said to be scattered in [Virginia] and other states who are utterly deprived of all religious ministry” and, thus, could not be counted. Carroll reported that seven thousand Catholics resided in Pennsylvania with one thousand residing in Philadelphia proper. Of the twenty-four

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priests serving the American mission, five labored in Pennsylvania. Two of Pennsylvania’s priests, Ferdinand Farmer and Robert Molyneux, resided in Philadelphia, but traveled extensively outside the city to assist their itinerant brethren. Their labors most commonly carried them to Conewago, Lancaster, and Goshenhoppen, where Pennsylvania’s rural Catholics had established outposts.\(^8\)

In Carroll’s estimation, the state of Catholicity left much to be desired. While many Catholics, particularly those born in the United States, were “for the most part sufficiently assiduous in the exercises of religion and in frequenting the sacraments,” he worried that they “lack that fervor, which frequent appeals to the sentiment of piety usually produce, as many congregations hear the word of God only once a month, and sometimes only once in two months.” He linked these lamentable conditions to the acute shortage of priests, the broad but thin dispersion of Catholics across the American landscape, and the apparent religious indifference of recent Catholic immigrants. Carroll reported with regret that Catholic parents and slave owners failed to properly catechize their children and dependents in the rudiments of their faith. And he complained of “abuses” resulting from “unavoidable intercourse with non-Catholics, and the examples thence derived: namely more free intercourse between young people of opposite sexes than is compatible with chastity in mind and body; too great fondness for dances and similar amusements; and an incredible eagerness, especially for girls, for reading love stories which are brought over in great quantities from Europe.”\(^9\)

If Carroll’s report to Propaganda told the whole story, then the state of American Catholicity would, indeed, have been lamentable. It is true that he faced a considerable challenge in seeking to gather the lapsed and indifferent members of his flock. Many itinerant clergymen reported encounters with American Catholics who demonstrated alarming ignorance of the Catholic catechism. And priests repeatedly complained of losing adherents to Protestant sects.

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\(^9\)Ibid., p. 259.
that poached Catholics in remote and underserved areas. In Carroll’s view—and in the view of his clerical brethren in both the United States and Rome—the only remedy was the installation of well-trained clergy in settled parishes throughout the young nation. Toward that end, Carroll and his coterie used the Synod to launch what scholars of early national Catholicism have termed the era of consolidation. As historian Joseph P. Chinnici explains, the period from 1791 to 1866 was characterized by a “search for unity through ecclesiastical discipline—the desire for uniform adherence to ritual practices, patterns of religious behavior, and forms of prayer. It was presumed that a strict observance of universal norms in communal and personal religious life would bind the small community into a coherent whole and unite it to the international ecclesiastical body.”

But Carroll—and the historians who have studied his administration of the American mission—repeatedly failed to acknowledge the extent to which consolidation was not simply imposed upon a scattered and apathetic laity. In his letter to Propaganda, Carroll neglected to mention that many of his intrepid faithful had created loose and provisional associations among themselves to meet their spiritual needs in the absence of sustained clerical direction. In many ways, Carroll’s synod was an attempt to catch up to the laymen and laywomen driving the establishment of Catholic communities and, in the process, forging a uniquely American Catholic identity.

Historian James O’Toole’s description of itinerant priest Jean Louis Cheverus’s 1797 visit to Bristol, Maine sheds considerable light on how underserved Catholics persevered in nurturing their faith. Cheverus used the private home of a prominent Catholic family as a temporary parish from which to say Mass, hear confessions, and dispense sacraments for the surrounding faithful. Like all itinerant priests, Cheverus traveled with a surplus of prayer books and catechisms that he dispensed among the laypeople who visited with him. Though he could afford to leave only a few books behind in each locale, he intended for the books to be used communally among the laity. He fully anticipated that the faithful would meet each Sunday and on each holy day of obligation.

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in a private home to recite the prayers appropriate to those occasions. And he expected that children would receive collective catechetical instruction at these gatherings as well. As O'Toole explains, "[n]ecessity had made [underserved Catholics] independent—not autonomous, for they still very much wanted to be a part of their church."\(^{11}\)

Indeed, American Catholics had been founding churches and chapels well ahead of clerical approbation and Carroll's investiture as bishop. In rare, but significant cases, distinguished Catholics of means built chapels on their property, primarily for their own use but often for the betterment of neighboring co-religionists as well. The most famous example of such religious beneficence was the chapel erected at Carrollton Manor, the vast estate owned by Maryland's wealthiest and most powerful Catholic family, the Carrolls. More commonly, small bands of Catholics pooled their resources to establish modest chapels that functioned as community centers for much of the year, but could be put to their intended purposes as houses of worship when itinerant priests made occasional visits.\(^{12}\)

By the time of Carroll's investiture, Philadelphia could boast of three Catholic houses of worship. Members of the Jesuit order had established St. Joseph's chapel in 1733. As the Catholic community grew, laymen spearheaded the founding of St. Mary's Church in 1763. German laymen formed Holy Trinity Church in 1789 to function as the first "national," or ethnic, parish in the United States. And, though by 1796 the city could boast of several more clergymen in residence, the Catholic population placed greater demands on that strained contingent with the founding of St. Augustine's Church. The beleaguered Reverend Matthew Carr, who served communicants at both St. Mary's and St. Augustine's, complained to Carroll that, "[t]he fatigue of attending so numerous and so dispersed a congregation is sufficient to break down in a short time the most vigorous constitution."\(^{13}\)

\(^{12}\)Ibid., pp. 19-21.
\(^{13}\)Letter of April 27, 1801 from Rev. Matthew Carr to Bishop John Carroll, reprinted in American Catholic Historical Researches, Volume 7, Number 2, (April, 1911), p. 169.
The impediments to American Catholic community formation extended beyond the challenge of getting priests into pulpits. American Catholics faced the considerable and sustained hostility of their Protestant neighbors. Protestant animosity to Catholics ran so high that, throughout the colonial period, the “reading” of the Catholic Mass was a criminal enterprise in all but Pennsylvania. And, even there, Catholics’ participation in the rites of their church engendered public censure. Colony founder William Penn found himself mired in controversy when, in 1707, the performance of the Mass at Philadelphia had provoked ministers of the London Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to lodge complaints with royal officials. Penn wrote from England to his agent in the colonies that, “[i]t has become a reproach to me here with the officers of the Crown that you have suffered the scandal of the Mass to be celebrated publicly.” And, though Penn never revoked his guarantee of religious toleration to Pennsylvania’s Catholics, that legal privilege failed to beget popular sympathy for the beleaguered sect. In fact, in both 1740 and 1755, St. Joseph’s faced near destruction at the hands of riotous mobs. In 1760, the Catholics of Lancaster fared even worse than their Philadelphia brethren when hostile Protestants succeeded in destroying the church in that town.\footnote{Martin I.J. Griffin, “The First Mass in Philadelphia,” American Catholic Historical Researches, Volume 12, Number 1 (January, 1895), p. 39; Joseph J. Casino, “Anti-Popery in Colonial Pennsylvania,” The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, Volume 105, Number 3 (July, 1981), pp. 294, 303.}

American Catholics greeted the 1791 ratification of the first amendment with cautious optimism. Indeed, the timing of Carroll’s investiture was no accident. Rome had been pressing for the appointment of an American bishop for decades, and American Catholics—both lay and clerical—had recoiled at the prospect. Such a figure surely would be viewed by Protestants as a sinister instrument of the Pope. But, by the 1790s, Catholics had come to believe that the separation of church and state and the protections afforded by the first amendment had opened a small but significant space into which they might expand the institutions and enterprises of Catholic life. Catholics understood they would have to tread lightly. Significant legal restrictions continued to constrain members of the faith at the state and local levels. And popular Protestant antagonism persisted, though it less frequently erupted into overt brutality in the early national
period. From the perspective of Carroll and his flock, it appeared that “a new political and social order was being born [and] a new religious environment was taking shape.”

In this moment of promise, American Catholics deployed the culture of print to further their project of crafting a meaningful religious and social identity. Historian Michael S. Carter has deftly traced the emergence of the “Catholic presence in the public sphere through the medium of print” in the early national period. He achieves this objective by way of a case study of the remarkable career of Philadelphia printer, philanthropist, and steadfast Catholic Mathew Carey. Carter focuses primarily on the apologetic aspect of Carey’s work. He emphasizes that Carey’s efforts were part of a campaign “to define the public face of the Church in America as sympathetic to the dominant values of the founding generation, and to dispute Whig historical views of Catholicism’s role in history, especially the history of England and then Britain.”

But Mathew Carey’s remarkable career as a Catholic printer extended far beyond apologetics. Carey, along with a growing and increasingly assertive cadre of Catholic printers, partnered with clergy both to shape and to satisfy the demands of an increasingly sophisticated Catholic reading public. Carter describes how Carey himself had arranged for the production of the first Catholic Douai Bible in America. And Carey and his fellows reprinted important catechetical texts. Over time, they came to provide Catholic readers with a vast array of prescriptive literature as well. Specialized devotional guides provided instruction for worshipping either at home or in the parish. Sodality and confraternity manuals, classic hagiographic texts, and devotional novels appealed to various constituencies within the Catholic community. And laypeople longing to feel connected to their co-religionists throughout the American mission could participate in a virtual faith community via the printed word. They could obtain inexpensive reprints of sermons by rising stars among the clergy or pamphlets describing landmark achievements in the growth of the American Church.

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The fortuitous convergence of an energetic Catholic community and a prosperous aggregation of publishers made Philadelphia the logical hub of American production of Catholic spiritual texts. A search of Wilfrid Parsons's exhaustive bibliography, *Early Catholic Americana*, indicates that, through the first half of the nineteenth century, more than sixty Philadelphia-based publishers had printed one or more devotional books intended for a Catholic audience. And by mid-century, Philadelphia was home to two printers exclusively dedicated to producing books for a Catholic clientele. Thus, any examination of the intersection between religion and print culture in the early national United States must devote particular attention to Philadelphia's flourishing trade in Catholic texts.\(^{17}\)

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When Bishop Carroll convened his 1791 Synod, he arrived at the proceedings armed with a document envisioned and executed by Mathew Carey. Carroll had pledged to circulate Carey's plan for the creation of an "Institution for Printing Roman Catholic Books" and to encourage his clergymen to publicize the project among the laypeople they served. Carey clearly envisioned an organization that would be based in Philadelphia and overseen by the managers of his own extensive printing operation. The broadside Carey had prepared for the Synod indicates that he had attempted to launch such an operation two years before without success. Yet he remained undeterred by that earlier disappointment. He explained that "[t]he opportunity afforded by the present meeting is so favourable, that I avail myself of it," and he went on to outline the primary reasons why the clergy should join him in this endeavor. Carey declared that "[w]ithout religious books, it is impossible to awaken or preserve a religious spirit among the people, especially in this country, where pastors are so few, and the flock scattered at such vast distances from each other." Carey recognized that printed materials could be instrumental in furthering every aspect of Carroll's agenda. And though he was ahead of the curve with this

insight, a handful of American clergy saw the potential of his vision and embraced the project of nurturing American Catholic presses.\textsuperscript{18}

This proposal was only the latest of many campaigns instigated by Carey to encourage the nascent American Catholic hierarchy in their efforts at institution-building. Carey signed his name at the top of nearly every subscription list for the establishment of Philadelphia’s Catholic parishes; he swiftly put his press to work when hostile Protestants slurped the faith; and he planned and patronized numerous benevolent and devotional organizations. His service to his church—and the considerable number of Philadelphia Catholics who supported him in his efforts—indicate the extent to which laymen and laywomen longed for the institutions through which they could bind themselves to a visible and coherent community of co-religionists. In his publishing initiative, as in all of the Catholic causes he championed, Carey demonstrated his willingness to defer to the doctrinal proficiency of ordained ministers in the execution of his plans. As his circular made clear, his books would enlighten those members of the faith deprived of priestly services and supplement the instruction of those who were not. He was careful to establish that he had no intention of trespassing on “business that more properly falls within the sphere of others.” He only aimed to serve his co-religionists by collaborating with the clergymen who directed them in their spiritual progress.\textsuperscript{19}

Printers such as Mathew Carey removed a considerable impediment to the spiritual advancement of their fellow Catholics. Though Carey’s two attempts at launching his Institution for Printing Roman Catholic Books failed, the fatal flaw in his plan was financial, not conceptual. In his proposal, Carey anticipated the objection that “the charity of the Roman Catholics has been so frequently and so heavily laid under contribution that the necessary sum cannot be raised.” He boldly predicted that the donations to establish a fund for printing “ten or twelve essential Catholic books on religion” could easily be made in his home city alone, “were the proper measures

\textsuperscript{18}Mathew Carey, \textit{Reverend Sir, etc.} (Philadelphia: Printed by Mathew Carey, 1791).
\textsuperscript{19}The most recent analyses of Carey’s career are James N. Green, \textit{Mathew Carey, Publisher and Patriot} (Philadelphia: The Library Company of Philadelphia); and Michael Carter, \textit{Mathew Carey and the Public Emergence of Catholicism in the Early Republic} (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 2006).
pursued.” Once the first few texts became available, he believed the revenue from these early sales could finance the printing of subsequent works. Unfortunately for Carey, the number of elite and middle class Catholics remained small in early national Philadelphia. And their charity had, indeed, been laid under heavy contribution, rendering his financing scheme impractical. But many privileged Catholics, however unwilling to bear responsibility for stocking their co-religionists' libraries, hoped to gather modest religious collections of their own. Soon, a volume-by-volume market in Catholic books emerged in early national northeastern cities that proliferated into the nineteenth century.

That American Catholics came to rely so heavily on a culture of print perhaps requires some explanation. Historians of religious publishing generally neglect Catholics, choosing instead to focus on Protestant reading habits that emphasized the centrality of the individual’s encounter with the unmediated Word. David Paul Nord, for instance, argues that “the Protestant Reformation produced a proliferation of ministers and a flood of print that has never subsided even into our own day.” He describes the manner in which “[t]he Bible was imagined [by Protestants] to be a plain text, its meaning transparent and open to the direct perception of ordinary readers. But this belief simply drove the leaders of reform, the religious elites, to step up their efforts to explain to ordinary people what the Bible so plainly meant.” Nineteenth-century Protestants, celebrating their embrace of sola scriptura, often made a distinction between their text-based devotional practices and the supposedly non-textual practices of Catholics. Nord cites Congregationalist Richard Baxter's boast that “[w]e do not as the Papist priests, teach our people to see with our eyes, and no matter for their own... but we help to clear their own eye-sight.” Protestants believed they had removed a pernicious, Romish impediment to the divine when they placed the Bible directly in the hands of laypeople.20

But Catholics clearly believed that a communicant’s use of religious texts could inspire spiritual reflection and enrich parish-based religious exercises. Richard Challoner’s The Catholic

Christian Instructed is a case in point. By examining both the text and its history of publication, it is possible to uncover Catholic attitudes toward reading that shaped the devotional life of the American faithful. The first American edition of Catholick Christian was produced in Philadelphia in 1786. And like so many Catholic devotional works, it made its American debut through the tireless efforts of a zealous clergyman. The Reverend Robert Molyneux, the first pastor of St. Mary’s Church, struggled for at least twelve years before he succeeded in bringing the book to press. In 1774, he initially contracted with printer Robert Bell to publish an American edition that he had prepared. Though a subscription circular made the rounds among Catholics in Philadelphia, Concord, Pottsgrove, and Baltimore, Bell never published the work, suggesting that too few Catholics had the interest or the funds to make the purchase.  

No documentation reveals how Molyneux proceeded after this disappointment. But a letter he sent to Archbishop Carroll in Baltimore on December 27, 1785, demonstrates that he persevered. In the letter, Molyneux informed the Archbishop that he could provide him with copies of the book for 5 shillings each (an increase from the 4 shillings advertised in Bell’s circular) and asked Carroll whether and how many he wished to purchase. The letter also indicates that Molyneux had arranged for the publication of “a spelling primer for children with the Catholic Cathechism annexed. It is a cheap abridgement which I had printed some years ago by Bell,” which he offered to Carroll as well. By 1785, Molyneux’s association with Bell had ended, and he had arranged for The Catholick Christian to be printed by Christopher Talbot. That he offered Carroll residual stock from his partnership with Bell suggests that Molyneux had printed the catechism at his own expense and must, therefore, have borne the financial loss of a speculative printing. Whether he took a similar risk with the Talbot edition is unclear. No subscription list or documentation related to its printing survives.

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21The subscription circular appears as front matter in a 1774 edition of A Manual of Catholic Prayers, also published by Robert Bell. Wilfrid Parsons speculates that Molyneux also arranged for publication of this work, presumably because Molyneux is known to have arranged for the publication of the The Catholick Christian Instructed. However, no corroborating evidence exists to confirm or refute this supposition.

Molyneux’s solicitation of Carroll was typical. Catholic clergymen from northeastern cities regularly arranged for the local production of reprinted European devotional works. They then would distribute them throughout the United States through Catholic booksellers (in urban areas) and itinerant priests (in underserved rural areas where few parishes existed). The links between Baltimore (where Carroll occupied his seat as Metropolitan) and Philadelphia (the epicenter of Catholic publishing in the United States) were especially strong. Philadelphia-based publisher Thomas Lloyd, for instance, relied on the archbishop to solicit subscriptions for his reprint of a London edition of *The Unerring Authority of the Catholic Church in Matters of Faith* in Baltimore and the surrounding area. Carroll wrote to him in January of 1789 to explain that, “notwithstanding my request to have the names of the subscribers returned by Christmas, many neglected it. My occupations here [in Baltimore] have prevented my seeing many persons in other parts of the State, who would, I know, have added their names to the list; but tho’ I cannot now authorise you to put them down as subscribers, I expect to be able to do so in a short time.”

When viewed within the context of the early American book trade, Molyneux’s and Carroll’s exertions on behalf of Catholic publishers seem to closely parallel the activities of many Protestant preachers. As historian Rosalind Remer has observed, preachers were uniquely suited to book peddling. They were “literate and cultured men, interested in having access to books for their own use and for the edification of their congregations and communities.” They traveled regularly, which put them in touch with significant numbers of prospective customers. And they enjoyed the high esteem of their adherents who trusted their recommendations for quality reading materials. For these reasons, publishers of the colonial and early national periods commonly employed ministers as book agents in rural and underserved areas. But, whereas Protestant clergymen sold books to supplement modest incomes, Catholic priests acted in the absence of a profit motive. Their indifference to financial emolument had the ironic effect of inhibiting the expansion of American Catholic presses. Catholic clergy routinely commented on the laity’s unwillingness to sign subscription lists when they knew their priests were likely to furnish them

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with spiritual texts for free. Carroll expressed this very frustration in a letter to Mathew Carey in 1790 in the midst of helping Carey to procure subscriptions for an ambitious edition of the Catholic Douai Bible. He wrote, “In many parts of Maryland [where Carroll circulated a subscription list], they have been so long used to receive, as presents from their Clergy, the Religious books, they wanted, that they have no idea of purchasing any.” The proliferation of a Catholic book trade would require many Catholic readers to embrace a new sense of responsibility for procuring texts for themselves.\(^{24}\)

For other Catholics, availing themselves of printed materials represented a significant innovation in their experience of their faith. Molyneux’s selections of the Challoner text and children’s catechism and Loyd’s Carroll-endorsed volume supported the first order of business that concerned American Catholics in the era of consolidation—basic instruction in the tenets of the faith. Both clergy and laypeople understood that the underserved American Catholic community lacked sufficient knowledge of its own doctrines. They saw the emergent culture of print as a crucial means of alleviating the problem. In his broadside to the First Synod, Carey reminded the clergy of what they already knew. “For want of proper books,” he wrote, “numbers of Roman Catholics are utterly unacquainted with the most essential and fundamental principles of their religion.” He detailed the regrettable consequences of this omission: some Catholics failed to observe their faith at all, while, perhaps more alarmingly, “many embraced other religious persuasions, whose books they had an opportunity of perusing.” Thus, Catholic texts served a crucial dual purpose. While they enriched the sacramental life of the American Catholic community, they inoculated members of the faith against contamination from religious pluralism and anti-Catholic prejudice so evident in the United States.\(^{25}\)

Molyneux of course knew that Challoner had written *The Catholick Christian* in 1737 while serving as Vicar Apostolic of London. Challoner had taken up his pen with the related goals


\(^{25}\)Carey.
of educating his persecuted flock and responding to anti-Catholic affronts to the faith. Anglican outrage against his work made it necessary for the Vicar General to seek refuge briefly in Douai, France. Molyneux alluded to these circumstances and suggested a parallel in the American experience. In the brief introduction to his edition, Molyneux explained that Challoner’s text “was first published in England, in order to explain the doctrine and ceremonies of the Catholick Church, and to vindicate the same from the misrepresentations of its adversaries in that kingdom.” He expressed hope that the book might prove useful to an American readership as well. When making his selection, clearly he believed that invoking the mistreatment of Catholics at the hands of European oppressors would strengthen American Catholics’ associations with one another by uniting them against the long-standing Protestant threat that had coalesced against them in this locale.  

Challoner also met Molyneux’s requirements because the author so regularly invoked Biblical passages and, thus, countered the Protestant claim that Catholic clergy kept the laity ignorant of the Word. In fact, Challoner asserted, Protestants bore greater guilt for perverting the true Word of Christ. When defending the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, for instance, the Vicar General wrote, “We take the Words of Christ according to their plain, obvious, and natural Meaning, agreeably to that general Rule acknowledged by our Adversaries, that in interpreting Scripture the literal Sense of the words is not to be forsaken, and a figurative one followed without Necessity.” It was not that Catholics remained aloof from the Word. Instead, they relied on spiritual intercessors to help them understand what they encountered in the text. Protestants perceived tension between the celebration of self-reliance in Biblical interpretation and the endless books of instruction detailing how they should interact with the Bible. Catholics experienced no such contradiction. Expertise imparted in devotional manuals assisted Catholics in unraveling the imponderable mystery of Christ’s divinity.  

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27 Ibid., p. 30.
Ideally, Catholic books like Challoner’s would not supplant or even operate parallel to church-based worship. Instead, devotional texts drew the faithful into their parish communities by instructing them to meditate on the mystery of Christ’s sacrifice in a specifically Catholic manner. In particular, manuals focused Catholic attention on the re-enactment of the passion by the priest through the ritual of the Mass. Challoner and others emphasized communion as the Catholic’s most pressing devotional obligation, and they recommended that nearly all private acts of piety be undertaken as preparation for or thanksgiving after this most important sacrament. Challoner stressed the utility of appropriate texts to assist the Catholic in such meditations and he offered a list of additional works designed to place Catholics in the appropriate frame of mind. Manuals that prepared Catholics for confession made it possible for them to receive the sacrament with clear consciences. Devotional books that guided pious reflection after the Mass assisted communicants in sustaining their elevated spiritual states. Post-communion reflection ought not to be neglected because, he warned, “the snares of the enemy” were most commonly set against the faithful after reception of the sacrament in order to “rob [the soul] of her treasure which she has received.”

Devotional books not only aided the faithful when preparing to encounter the parish community, but also structured their experience of the Mass inside the Church. Challoner explained that communicants’ contemplation of Christ’s passion during the Mass required them “to put their souls in the like dispositions of adoration, thanksgiving, love, and repentance for their sins, with which a good Christian would have assisted at the sacrifice of the cross, had he been present there.” A Catholic congregant, Challoner advised, should follow the priest as closely as possible throughout the Mass, offering the prayers and devotions appropriate to each action and meditation of the clergyman as outlined in his own and other Mass-specific devotional guides. He

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proceeded to list each component of the Mass and describe “such prayers as are adapted to what the priest is then doing.”

Protestants frequently criticized the Catholic practice of conducting the Mass in Latin rather than in the mother tongue of the congregants. Challoner argued in reply that the use of Catholic texts during the Mass allowed the laity to follow the proceedings and comprehend the symbolic importance of the sacrifice. Moreover, the specific meditations outlined for each portion of the Mass required a degree of concentration of Catholics unmatched in Protestant services. “Hence,” he declared, “it is visible to any unprejudiced eye, that there is far more devotion amongst Catholicks at Mass than there is at Protestants’ Common Prayers.” Texts guided Catholic laypeople as they prayed in tandem with their clergymen. Through the prescribed deployment of textual practices, they played a crucial role in the liturgical drama by re-enacting the experience of the aggrieved faithful present at the crucifixion.

The laity’s performance of clergy-prescribed textual practices signaled their acquiescence to the hierarchy’s consolidation campaign. As scholar Joseph Chinnici observes, “the structural development of pre-Civil War Catholicism was part of a spiritual sensibility” on the part of laypeople without which the clerical project of organization would have failed. But Chinnici and other historians of Catholicism generally confine their inquiries to the structural demands placed on the laity by the hierarchy, such as the Second Plenary Council’s “Promotion of Uniformity in Discipline.” In fact, the faithful did more than acquiesce—they were instrumental in urging consolidation onward. Laypeople not only accepted the parish-based devotional emphasis outlined in the standard religious texts, they often served as the driving forces behind associations and devotional societies that aimed to achieve similar ends. Confraternities, in

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29 Ibid., p. 88, 101-106.
particular, assisted Catholics in applying their spiritual lessons to every aspect of life. In the process, these institutions bound laypeople to their parish co-religionists ever more closely.\textsuperscript{31}

Unsurprisingly, a prominent Catholic printer spearheaded confraternity formation in Philadelphia. Augustine Fagan quite appropriately became a member of St. Augustine’s Church and a charter member of its confraternity dedicated to the Virgin Mary. His profession made him a natural choice for codifying the organization’s rules and printing its membership guide. The handbook, \textit{The Spiritual Mirror of the Confraternity of St. Augustine and St. Monica, Under the Invocation and Patronage of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of Consolation}, reveals that laypeople entertained an even broader vision of parish cohesion than the clergy articulated for them. They called for a vigorous role for the laity in both the temporal and sacramental life of the parish that, by mid-century, would result in bitter disputes with clergy over the proper margins of lay authority.

Of course, at the outset of their project in 1812, the members of the confraternity anticipated no such crisis. They imagined themselves the architects of an idyllic faith community. In the era of the primitive Church, Christ’s Gospel message had “united people of different countries, humours, manners and interests so closely in the bands of fraternal love, that they regarded each other as brethren and sisters, and lived in such perfect harmony that one heart seemed to enliven all their bodies, and one soul to preside over all their actions.” By binding themselves to one another and investing themselves with broad authority to police members’ conduct, the laypeople aimed at nothing less than the reconstitution of the primitive church in Philadelphia. Membership required the successful outcome of a “previous investigation of [the candidate’s] conduct, which must be virtuous, regular, and free from censure.” Once admitted, the member was, “exhorted to show good example, not only to his brethren, but to the faithful in general, by a constant and pious attention to all religious duties, and by a virtuous and uniform

\textsuperscript{31}Chinnici, p. 235.
conduct in private life.” Through a system of rankings, members subjected one another to vigilant observance of conduct.\textsuperscript{32}

Philadelphia’s \textit{Spiritual Mirror} is typical of the texts generated by other confraternities in northeastern cities. Baltimore’s Male Confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary also published a rule book in 1812. And though the laymen generated a mere 17-page pamphlet (compared to the 107 pages that guided Philadelphia’s confraternity), their abbreviated list of regulations addressed concerns nearly identical to those taken up by their co-religionists to the north. They, too, established a system for electing prefects and counselors to oversee the spiritual and temporal welfare of members. Additionally, a number of lay “visitors” appointed by the counselors would call on the twelve to fifteen Catholics in their care monthly to dispense advice, mediate disputes between members when necessary, and make inquiries for “the general good of the institution.”\textsuperscript{33}

Confraternities expected candidates for membership already to have mastered the fundamentals of Catholic doctrine and practice. But many sincere and committed Catholics had failed to learn those fundamentals through no fault of their own; they lacked access to Catholic institutions and clerical expertise that would have initiated them into the particularities of the faith. Laypeople worked just as zealously as clergymen to rectify such deficiencies in Catholic education. They served as the driving forces behind the establishment of Sunday schools to instruct both children and adults in the tenets of the faith. Naturally, the success of such educational initiatives depended on the production of catechisms. So once again, the nation’s most prominent Catholic printer took charge. The untiring Mathew Carey was instrumental in founding the Roman Catholic Sunday School Society in Philadelphia in 1816.

The earliest incarnation of Carey’s organization aimed to serve “the children of poor Roman Catholics, who are obliged to toil unremittingly on the days of labour, [and thus] are debarred of the advantages of an education.” One can discern in the organization’s constitution

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\textsuperscript{32} The Spiritual Mirror of the Confraternity of St. Augustine and St. Monica, Under the Invocation and Patronage of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of Consolation (Philadelphia: Printed for the Confraternity by A. Fagan, 1812), p. v, 11, 49.
\textsuperscript{33} Rules of the Male Confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Established in Baltimore, April 1812 (Baltimore: Bernard Dornin, 1812).
\end{flushright}
an early attempt at social control and the managers’ aim to force disadvantaged Catholics to accept mainstream tenets of respectability. The board of managers clearly anticipated trouble from the children they sought to instruct. They devised a system of rotating visits among the board members to “admonish such children as do not conform to the regulations of the society.” Lest the children fail to heed the managers’ reproaches, the constitution prescribed that in “cases of contumacy [we] shall expel them.” The children would be learning more than the fundamentals of the Catholic faith; they would become ambassadors for that faith in a hostile Protestant society. Thus, proper behavior was essential to the success of the Society’s mission.34

Though previous historians of the Diocese of Philadelphia assumed the Society offered children the rudiments of a secular education, the 1785 letter written by Molyneux to Archbishop Carroll mentioned above suggests a broader mandate for American Catholics’ catechetical societies. Molyneux described a “Spelling Primer with a Cath[olic] Cathechism annexed” that he had hired Robert Bell to publish some years before and that he continued to peddle to fellow clergymen in the region. This letter indicates that the goals of secular and religious education had already merged in the Catholic mind to serve the project of community-building. Teaching destitute children to read improved the social prospects of a class of Catholics who otherwise might have remained illiterate. But that these children learned the fundamentals of reading using Butler’s catechism clearly points to the managers’ religious motivations.35

Of course, the circulation of catechisms predated the advent of a society specifically dedicated to that purpose. Itinerant priests had long carried catechetical works with them and distributed them to the faithful. Indeed, by 1793, Archbishop Carroll personally had overseen the adaptation of A Short Abridgement of Christian Doctrine for use within his jurisdiction. In a mere twenty pages, Carroll managed to outline the basic doctrines of Roman Catholicism in the familiar

34 Constitution of the Roman Catholic Sunday School Society of Philadelphia, 1816. Transcribed in ACHR, October, 1890 (Vol. 7; No. 4).
35 Martin J. Griffin asserted that “Bible study was not the object of the organization” and he assumed it aimed to “impart secular instruction on Sunday mornings.” Most historians have taken him at his word. See RACHS 1905 (Vol. 1, No. 1). Wilfrid J. Parsons quotes from Molyneux’s letter in Early Catholic Americana: A List of Books and Other Works by Catholic Authors in the United States, 1729-1830 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), p. 16.
question-and-answer Sulpician format commonly used in European catechetical works. Passages that warned Catholics of the dire consequences of apostatizing and minutely prescribed the parameters of parish-based Catholic rituals reinforced his consolidating mission.36

But as a Catholic book market took shape, a number of competing catechetical works appeared that appealed to specific niche markets within the community. A text adapted by sometime-Philadelphia priest William Hogan is a case in point. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, Hogan had overseen a considerable expansion of Philadelphia’s Sunday schools. In his quest to find a text that would meet the needs of his pupils, he explained that he had “examined, with some degree of attention, the various Catholic Catechisms published in this country, for the instruction of youth, and observing the prolixity of the Answers in some, and the extreme conciseness of Others, have judged it best to republish the Catechism of the Rev. Mr. Butler, for their instruction.” Of course, Molyneux and Carroll both had drawn from Butler for their catechisms, but it seems Hogan found their revisions unsatisfactory. He altered the original Butler text to a length of thirty-four pages, thus expanding on Molyneux’s and Carroll’s editions, while maintaining the slim, pocket-sized format favored by his fellow clergymen.37

The proliferation of Catholic books and the expansion of a Catholic system of education occurred in tandem. Energetic priests such as Hogan responded to the demands of laypeople for more and better social and spiritual services. Fruitful collaborations between clergy and congregants resulted in the establishment of free schools for Catholic adults so that, by the 1820s, three separate systems of education served various constituencies within the community. Like the schools founded for children, these adult institutions aimed to uplift and educate poor Catholics to improve their social and economic prospects. Also like the children’s schools, spiritual and secular goals remained inextricably linked.38

36A Short Abridgement of Christian Doctrine, &c. (Georgetown: 1793).
37The Most Rev. Dr. James Butler’s Catechism. Revised and Corrected by the Rev. William Hogan, Pastor of St. Mary’s Church, Philadelphia (Philadelphia, 1821).
Catholics viewed adult schools not only as opportunities to enrich the sacramental life of the faithful, but also as a means of molding defenders of the faith. While children’s texts enjoined young readers to remain true to the Church and to resist Protestant detractors, the catechetical works printed for adults more directly addressed the need for Catholic apologists to answer critics of the faith. Lay elites had long served as impassioned defenders of Catholicism against Protestant slurs. And they generally favored the medium of print for promulgating their attempts at vindication. As early as 1827 the indefatigable Mathew Carey had spearheaded the establishment of a Society for the Defence of the Catholic Religion From Calumny and Abuse. The founding members—one hundred and seventy-two laymen and seven clergy—announced their purpose in their constitution: “The object of the Society shall be to publish and distribute, gratuitously, or otherwise, as the case may require, such books and pamphlets as may be calculated to refute the calumnious accusations alleged against Catholics.” But Carey and the cadre of Catholic printers among whom he worked aimed to mobilize a more extensive company of advocates.

The work of the Reverend John Jacob Hornyold proved especially useful in this regard. He crafted his famous text, *The Real Principles of Catholics; or, A Catechism of General Instruction for Grown Persons*, to equip Catholics to refute Protestant detractors. A number of Catholic publishers produced American editions in various states of abridgement throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. The text made its first appearance in Philadelphia by way of Bernard Dornin’s press in 1819. But by 1837, Eugene Cummiskey had acquired the plates as well as the endorsement of the Bishop. For more than three decades, the clergy used Hornyold to train the faithful in “a DEFENCE or vindication of the Roman Catholics” through a text whose author characterized it as “a most solemn declaration of their abhorrence of the… [false] tenets laid at their door.” In addition to positive statements of Catholic doctrine, Hornyold listed the transgressions that would result in a Catholic incurring the dreaded condemnation, “Cursed is he.” All such offenses referred to the crimes Protestants imagined Catholics free to commit.
Hornyold made clear that idolatry, goddess-worship, and hiding the Word from the people all would land the transgressing Catholic in hell.\textsuperscript{39}

While youth-oriented catechisms served children of all ranks within the community, it seems that adult catechisms more typically targeted the disadvantaged. John Mannock’s often-reprinted but unfortunately-titled \textit{Poor Man’s Catechism} first became available to Philadelphians in 1815. The text provided the rudiments of Catholic doctrine, but also advised the faithful to gracefully accept their lot in life. St. Paul’s exhortation to seek “the things that are above, not those that are below” neatly encapsulates Mannock’s recurring message. Whether its multiple printings were subsidized by benefactors is unclear. But more than three decades later, Eugene Cummiskey continued to offer the volume at a cost of seventy-five cents.\textsuperscript{40}

With devout Catholics like Philadelphia’s confraternity members choosing “not to let a day pass without employing at least one quarter of an hour in reading some good book,” it should come as no surprise that, by the second decade of the century, the city’s Catholics had generated some “steady sellers.” Challoner remained a favorite throughout the first half of the century. His \textit{Catholick Christian} went through multiple printings in Philadelphia, Baltimore and New York throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. Catholics clearly embraced his pocket guide of daily meditations, called \textit{Think Well On’t: Or, Reflections on the Great Truths of the Christian Religion for Every Day of the Month}. It went through multiple American printings between 1800 and 1895. The works of Bishop George Hay became Philadelphia favorites as well. In 1800, Carey first arranged for the publication of Hay’s \textit{Pious Christian Instructed in the Nature and Practice of the Principle Exercises of Piety Used in the Catholic Church}. The manual covered ground similar to Challoner’s \textit{Catholick Christian}. Catholics also created a market for apologetic

\textsuperscript{39}\textbf{John Jacob Hornyold, \textit{The Real Principles of Catholics; or, A Catechism of General Instruction for Grown Persons; Explaining the Principal Points of the Doctrine and Ceremonies of the Catholic Church}} (Philadelphia: Bernard Dornin, 1819); also, \textit{The Real Principles of Catholics; or, A Catechism of General Instruction for Grown Persons; Explaining the Principal Points of Doctrine and Ceremonies of the Catholic Church}. By the Right Rev. Dr. Horyold. (Philadelphia: Published by Eugene Cummiskey, 1837).

\textsuperscript{40}\textbf{John Mannock, O.S.B. \textit{The Poor Man’s Catechism; or, the Christian Doctrine Explained. With Short Admonitions}} (Baltimore: Published by Bernard Dornin, 1815), p. 336; see also Advertisement for “Eugene Cummiskey’s Old Established Catholic Book Ware-House, for the Publication and Sale of Standard Catholic Books,” dated 1837 and appearing as back-matter in several of his publications.
works outside the catechetical tradition in response to the antagonism of Protestants. The work of John Milner was especially favored. His famous *The End of Religious Controversy* appeared in Philadelphia in 1820 and remained in print at least through 1860. Milner offered more specific and theoretical refutations of Protestant critiques that appealed to well-catechized Catholics assumed by publishers to be of the middle and upper classes.\(^{41}\)

By the 1820s, Catholic book sales had risen to a level at which a number of publishers in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New York City could specialize in Catholic devotional works. Few could cater exclusively to a Catholic clientele. Most continued to publish additional, non-religious titles to make ends meet. But two nineteenth-century publishers who managed to make their livings solely from the sale of Catholic books suggest the high demand laypeople placed on the growing religious press. Bernard Dornin was the first to do so, and his career as a Catholic publisher carried him to several of the principal locales for Catholic worship in the nineteenth-century United States. Upon his emigration from Dublin around 1804, Dornin settled in New York City, where he issued a variety of works such as *The Pious Guide to Prayer and Devotion* and *Pieces of Irish History*. But he only managed to specialize in Catholic books after relocating to Baltimore in 1809. There, he forged alliances with prominent clergy and received commissions to publish items such as *Instructions on the Erection of Four New Catholic Episcopal Sees in the United States and the Consecration of the First Bishops* and *Rules of the Male Confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Established in Baltimore*. In Baltimore, he was able first to establish a “Roman Catholick Library” and, eventually, a “Roman Catholick Bookstore” that, he proudly pointed out, was “within a few yards of the Arch-Bishop’s [residence].” In 1817 he relocated to another hub of Catholic printing when he established a Catholic bookstore in Philadelphia.\(^{42}\)

\(^{41}\) *Spiritual Mirror*, p. 50; I have borrowed the phrase “steady sellers” from David Hall. Despite a handful of inaccuracies and omissions, any survey of Catholic devotional publications must begin with Wilfrid Parsons, S.J. *Early Catholic Americana: A List of Books and Other Works by Catholic Authors in the United States, 1729-1830* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939).

\(^{42}\) Dornin made this notation in the front matter to his edition of St. Francis of Sales’ *An Introduction to a Devout Life* (Baltimore: Barnard Dornin, 1816).
The other publisher who replicated Dornin’s remarkable success as a specialist in Catholic materials was Eugene Cummiskey, who launched his printing operation in Philadelphia in 1819. It is likely that Cummiskey rose to prominence because of his especially close ties to the Philadelphia clergy. His brother, James Cummiskey, served as a priest in the city and became a close confidante and reliable associate of the second bishop of the diocese, Henry Conwell. This fortuitous association made it possible for Eugene not only to secure the Bishop’s approbation of his publications, but to enlist Conwell and other Philadelphia clergy as salesmen. Conwell himself wrote of his efforts to obtain subscribers for Cummiskey’s religious publications. The Bishop’s joking references to Father James Cummiskey as the “Reverend Peddler” indicate that James worked vigorously on his brother’s behalf as well. Records fail to explain whether Eugene printed books under orders from the Philadelphia clergy or enjoyed wide latitude in his selection of titles. But we can assume from the arrangements described above and from the ever-present statements of clerical endorsement on Eugene’s title pages that a great deal of cooperation between the parties took place. By the 1830s Eugene’s business had flourished to the point that he could boast of a “Catholic Book Ware-House” stocked with at least seventy titles.43

Cummisky of course satisfied his lay customers’ demands for the established “steady sellers” and he stocked his shop at 130 South Sixth Street with the expected titles from prominent European clergy such as Richard Challoner and George Hay. He also became the first Catholic publisher to market the Catholic Bible successfully. Mathew Carey had attempted to manufacture one as early as 1789, and he successfully sold more than five hundred copies, mostly to clergy and wealthy and middle class patrons by subscription. But Carey barely broke even due to the expense of production and the small number of Catholics who could afford the considerable cost.

Carey incurred considerable additional expenses when Protestant binders purposely arranged the pages out of order to diminish his stock.\textsuperscript{44}

But by the 1830s, Cummiskey could offer a number of Bibles at various price points to satisfy Catholics across the socio-economic spectrum. His most expensive, “Haydock’s grand folio bible, bound,” retailed for a staggering thirty dollars, and undoubtedly occupied pride of place only in the most privileged Catholic homes. The only other text that approached this price was an impressive compendium of all twelve volumes of Butler’s \textit{Lives of the Saints}, costing twelve dollars. In addition to Haydock, Cummiskey offered five alternative editions of the “Deway Bible,” in various sizes and bindings. A quarto edition that included ten engravings cost five dollars, while at the opposite end of the price continuum, a pocket-sized edition cost only fifty cents.\textsuperscript{45}

Cummiskey also expanded the universe of Catholic books available to his co-religionists with his introduction of the “Catholic Family Library.” This eleven-volume series included often-reprinted devotional guides and instructional manuals. But it also featured new forms of prescriptive literature that served the consolidating mission of the American clergy. Biographies of saints offered Catholic readers templates for appropriately pious conduct and emphasized their obligations to their parish communities. Devotional novels, meanwhile, more gently instructed Catholics in right living and the practice of piety even as they entertained readers easily diverted by less edifying fiction.

\textsuperscript{44}James Green describes Carey’s struggle to bring the Douai to print in his unpublished manuscript, “The Rise of Book Publishing in the United States, 1785-1840.” Green reports that, ironically, Carey managed to corner the market in King James Bibles through his pioneering efforts at stereotyping the plates. Whereas Green emphasizes the difficulties Carey was forced to surmount, Michael Carter instead celebrates Carey’s publication of the first American-edition Douai Bible as a “triumph,” and argues that, “for Catholics—barely one percent of the population—to have supported the printing of a deluxe edition of a ‘papist’ Bible was a remarkable feat.” In light of the considerable difficulty Carey had in obtaining the requisite 400 subscribers necessary to moving forward with publication, Carter’s celebratory tone is clearly exaggerated. Many subscribers were clergymen ordering in bulk on behalf of their parishes. And, as Carter’s own research indicates, only 59 lay Philadelphia residents were among Carey’s subscribers, most of whom were “artisans or traders.” Though Carter takes these professions as evidence of broad-based support for the endeavor, it is important to note that, in the skewed socio-economic structures of early national Catholic communities, these men would have represented the elite of Philadelphia’s Catholic population. See Michael Carter, “Under the Benign Sun of Toleration”: Mathew Carey, the Douai Bible, and Catholic Print Culture, 1789-1791,” \textit{Journal of the Early Republic} Vol. 27, No. 1 (2007), pp. 437-469. \textsuperscript{45}Advertisement for “Eugene Cummiskey’s Old Established Catholic Book Ware-House, for the Publication and Sale of Standard Catholic Books,” dated 1837 and appearing as back-matter in several of his publications.
Cummiskey patterned his collection on the popular Evangelical Family Library (later published as the Christian Library). This bundle of more than forty-five texts assembled by the American Tract Society featured a mix of devotional, prescriptive, and biographical works. The Evangelical collection promulgated anti-Catholic themes, most prominently with its edition of William Nevin’s *Practical Thoughts on Popery*. Cummiskey left no document indicating whether he assembled his collection as a refutation of the American Tract Society’s anthology or merely seized an opportunity to replicate a clever marketing strategy. But regardless of the motive that inspired him, his Catholic patrons could consume the works he selected to demonstrate their acceptance of mainstream American values in a Catholic idiom.

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Innovations in printing and marketing books, such as those featured in the Family Library, ushered American Catholics into a new, gender-specific devotional order in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century even as they reinforced the Church-centered spirituality expounded by the American hierarchy. This is not to say that earlier steady sellers posited a Catholic cosmology devoid of gendered meaning. Chaloner’s *Catholick Christian*, which remained in print through mid-century, clearly presumed a readership of both men and women. Yet Chaloner addressed the imagined reader as if he or she possessed a masculine body containing a feminine soul. Chaloner called for these feminized souls to submit themselves to the authority of Christ and display meekness and humility before God. Upon reception of communion, for instance, he counseled all souls, regardless of gender, to imitate the Magdalen. He advised, “let the soul cast herself at the feet of her Lord… wash [Christ’s feet] in spirit with her tears; or if she dares presume so high, let her embrace him with the spouse of Canticles, and say, *I have found him whom my soul loves; I will hold him, and will not let him go*. Let her, like the royal prophet, invite all heaven and earth to join her in praising her Lord; and let her excite all her powers to welcome him.” At the same time, Chaloner imagined the physical body at war with the
forces of evil in the world. He exhorted Catholics “to fight manfully the battles of his Lord,” though the advice applied both to men and women.\textsuperscript{46}

Of course frequent reprintings kept laypeople at mid-century in contact with this and similar expositions of the earlier gendered Catholic cosmology. But laypersons now placed their Challoner and Hay volumes alongside titles such as \textit{Pious Biography for Young Men}. An examination of the text reveals a great deal about changes in the gendered nature of Catholic devotionalism. The slim volume, apparently intended to be carried by its owner at all times, contains brief biographies of thirteen prominent Catholic men, about half of them saints. Each sketch is followed by several pages of reflection, exhorting the layman to emulate the profiled person’s example. Hagiographic works of the previous decades had encouraged laymen to identify with saints, both male and female, and especially with the Virgin Mary. But by the late 1820s, laymen more often were encouraged to identify with male intercessors whose life stories held particular lessons for Catholic masculinity. The tales most commonly highlighted the exemplars’ discipline in observing the faith and mastery over their passions.\textsuperscript{47}

The story of Antony Mary Ubaldini, for instance, begins with a narration of the future Jesuit’s exhibits of restraint from earliest childhood. “From his tenderest years,” the author wrote, “he exhibited symptoms of the eminent sanctity to which he afterwards attained. No sooner did he know how to love, than he fixed his heart wholly and entirely on Him who alone is worthy of our love. He was a stranger to the frivolous amusements which occupy the minds of children.” This remarkable focus remained evident throughout his youth and young adulthood. When Ubaldini and his father traveled to Rome, the young man “expressed no desire to see the curiosities of Rome; his only request was to enter without delay the college of the Jesuits; for the means of sanctifying his soul, were the only objects of his solicitude and ambition.” Ubaldini’s self-discipline made him a natural leader to check the lapses of even his fellow seminarians. He “would

\textsuperscript{46}Challoner, 72, 24.  
\textsuperscript{47}Pious Biography for Young Men: Or, The Virtuous Scholars. Translated from Les Ecoliers Vertueux of M. L’Abbe Carron. (Philadelphia: Published by Eugene Cummiskey, 1828). An advertisement promotes the companion volume for young women, though no copy has been located to date.
associate only with the most virtuous of his fellow-students.” Ubaldini “endeavoured, by every means in his power, to procure the same advantage for those youths who came to college after him. He became, as it were, their guide, and director, on their entering into that new state of life, by the prudent and pleasing advice which he gave them, and much more by his example.” Ubaldini thus represented the apex of Catholic masculine self-mastery.48

Yet, Ubaldini’s life story contained many references to the feminized devotional posture familiar to Catholics from the works of Challoner and other earlier pietistic writers. When his father nearly drowned in an accident on their voyage to Rome, Ubaldini found “all his attempts [to save him] vain,” which led the son to supplicate himself to the Virgin on his father’s behalf. “[H]e prostrated himself before the mother of God, and obtained, through her intercession, the deliverance of his parent, at a time when all seemed to be lost.” Ubaldini exhibited the hallmarks of feminized submission in other devotional contexts as well. “Seldom,” it was said, “was he seen retiring from the table of the Lord without tears streaming from his eyes.” Moreover, Ubaldini so embraced opportunities to “exhibit a pattern of obedience,” that he went so far as to “swallow [medicines prescribed to him in his last illness] slowly, that he might receive more merit for his obedience.” The postures of entreaty and mortification so long-celebrated in the lives of Catholic divines like Ubaldini did not accord so easily with the more assertive and robust exhibitions of faith emphasized in the contemporary context. This tension continued to vex laymen as they struggled to reconcile the contradictory elements of Catholic masculinity and demonstrate their manhood to Protestants who derided Catholics for perceived gender disorder.49

Catholic women also were encouraged to consume devotional texts in new, gender-specific formats by mid-century. In addition to the long-standing lessons in exemplary living contained in the biographies of saints, they could seek instruction in fictional tales patterned on sentimental novels. Cummiskey offered Philadelphia women a number of options, but in his

48 Ibid., pp. 135-154.
“Catholic Family Library” gave top billing to *Alton Park: Or, Conversations on Religious and Moral Subjects, Chiefly Designed for the Amusement and Instruction of Young Ladies*. The book follows a narrative path similar to many works of its kind. A pious Catholic couple in possession of a vast English estate oversees the management of their holdings and the religious instruction of their children with such wisdom, piety, and Christian charity that all who come into contact with them are transformed by the encounter. Though Lady Alton must contend with the character flaws of her three daughters and the Protestant orphan taken in by the family, her maternal fondness and careful instruction prepare the daughters for reception of the sacraments and persuade the orphan to convert.\(^50\)

Such stories clearly invoke what Barbara Welter terms the “cult of true womanhood.” Lady Alton perfectly embodies the high standards of “piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity” idealized by nineteenth-century Protestants. Moreover, the format of the sentimental novel made it possible for the author of *Alton Park* to diminish Protestant distrust of Catholics’ capacity to conform to mainstream standards for respectability, even as he or she expressed that adherence in a specifically Catholic idiom. In particular, *Alton Park* celebrates the Catholic ideal of the “household of faith” that became increasingly important to Catholic devotional life throughout the first half of the nineteenth century.\(^51\)

In her analysis of mid-nineteenth century American Catholic devotions, Ann Taves describes “an affectively oriented and sectarian, as opposed to ecumenical, form of piety intended to heighten the fervor of the laity and strengthen lay attachment to the institutional church.” Unlike Chinnici, who concentrates on clergymen’s deployment of Christocentric practices, Taves emphasizes the broader “devotional cosmos” that “portrayed the Catholic’s world as a ‘household of faith’ in which human beings and their supernatural ‘relatives’ could converse through prayer in an intimate and friendly manner.” Though Protestants also used the

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\(^{50}\) *Alton Park: Or, Conversations on Religious and Moral Subjects, Chiefly Designed for the Amusement and Instruction of Young Ladies* (Philadelphia: Published by Eugene Cummiskey, 1833).

phrase “household of faith” in this period, they generally did so in reference to the (sometimes contested) spiritual authority of male heads of households. Catholics, in contrast, invoked the metaphor to remind the faithful of the duty and deference owed to their religious family. The Church became the locus of domestic sentiment and domestic authority.

Devotional novels such as *Alton Park* reinforced Catholics’ conflation of the realms of worship and domesticity. Tales of wealthy Catholics residing on vast estates always featured churches over which well-bred laypersons and their virtuous priest jointly presided. Moreover, authors depicted priests moving in and out of Catholics’ homes to instruct children and confess adults. Such fluid boundaries elided the distinction between the residence and the church. Evidence suggests that fluidity characterized Catholics’ conception of the geography of their communities off the page as well. Recall the *Spiritual Mirror* that codified the rules for membership in the Confraternity of St. Augustine’s Parish. The guide stressed the primacy of the parish and the permeability of boundaries between home and church. Its authors described God as “the great master of the family” and insisted that members attend Mass and receive communion because these rituals were deemed obligatory “fatherly invitations.” Moreover, the mundane duties of daily life ought to be approached as opportunities to emulate the saints. The sanctification of extra-parish activities, however seemingly insignificant, allowed members to use “their daily labour and temporal employments [as] the means of perfection.” Members should aspire most tenaciously to emulate the member of the Holy Family corresponding to his or her sex. After all, “…the Blessed Virgin was taken up with the care of her poor cottage, and Christ himself worked with St. Joseph, &c.” High-ranking confraternity members were vested with the authority to enter the residences of those in their charge. They assessed members’ practices of domestic piety and, on occasion, intervened in private disputes. The quality of Catholic community life depended on the devoutness to be found in its constituent households. To ensure

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the appropriate level of devotion, distinctions among separate domiciles had to be effaced in favor of a common spiritual home to be found in the faith community.\textsuperscript{53}

Even as laypersons took the lead in ushering these households of faith into existence, they maintained that they relied on the spiritual direction of clergymen to interpret their devotional universe. Yet the careers of Mathew Carey and Eugene Cummiskey illustrate the extent to which the faithful shaped the development of the American Church through the market in Catholic books and the founding of spiritual and social organizations. Laypersons did more than initiate the establishment of a Catholic print culture in the United States to support their church-based practices. They also influenced the gendering of their religious cosmos through their embrace of inventive textual forms such as the devotional novel and a more gender-specific hagiography. In the process, they assisted the clergy in locating both spiritual and domestic authority, articulated a specifically Catholic vision of appropriately gendered behavior, and responded to the disapproval of Protestant detractors.

Clergymen throughout the American hierarchy appreciated and encouraged such efforts. But they also feared that too much reliance on the faithful might encourage some members of the Catholic community to exceed the appropriate limits of lay authority. Clergymen were forced to strike a delicate balance. On the one hand, they had no choice but to solicit the assistance of middle- and upper-class Catholics—and Catholic printers in particular—to expand the reach of Catholic print culture. Such printed materials would nurture the growth of a more visible and coherent Catholic community in the United States. On the other hand, clergymen saw that too much reliance on lay initiative could result in expectations for unprecedented privileges of self-government among the faithful. Thus, the most promising means of drawing the laity into the protective circle of an emergent American Church might ultimately lead to intra-parish disputes that could tear the nascent Catholic community apart. The peculiar tension between clerical authority and lay privileges unfolded amid more rancor and hostility in Philadelphia than

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Spiritual Mirror}, pp. 24, 32, 44.
anywhere else in the American Church. The following chapters will explore the complicated
dynamic between priests and parishioners borne of that conflict.
CHAPTER TWO—

THE CONSOLIDATION MOVEMENT AND CONFLICTS BETWEEN CLERGY AND LAITY IN EARLY NATIONAL PHILADELPHIA

The 1822 edition of the popular Laity’s Directory to the Church Service made oblique reference to unspecified troubles burdening the Catholics of Philadelphia. Appended almost as an afterthought to a glowing report of the expansion of St. Joseph’s Chapel, the settlement of Sisters of Charity into the See, and the growth of the Catholic community to an estimated one-fifth of the city’s population, was a lamentation. Co-religionists throughout the United States would immediately have understood the reference: “Heaven grant that peace, good-will and harmony, may once more prevail among them; and that the same efforts be used to continue the work of God which were employed in [Catholicity’s] first establishment” in that locale. Philadelphia Catholics, like their co-religionists in New York, Baltimore, Norfolk, Charleston, New Orleans, and Buffalo, heatedly debated the future of trusteeism. But, unlike their brethren who more expeditiously overcame such disagreements, Philadelphia Catholics tenaciously clung to their conflicting views of the matter. The Diocese soon found itself divided into bitter—sometimes violent—factions that anguished the spiritual community and scandalized hostile Protestants.  

Trusteeism referred to the method by which most American Catholic parishes were organized and administered. With the exception of a handful of parishes that had been founded and funded by specific religious orders (such as the Jesuits’ St. Joseph’s Chapel), nearly all congregations in the American mission required official acts of incorporation from their state legislatures to usher them into existence. These legal instruments necessitated lay initiative and sustained lay involvement in the temporal affairs of the congregation. The act of incorporation for St. Mary’s Parish (on Fourth Street, near Spruce) was typical. The act provided that three pastors “being, duly appointed” and eight elected laymen of the congregation constituted the parish Board

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of Trustees. So long as one pastor and seven laymen assembled, their body was empowered to “make, ordain, and establish such rules, orders and regulations, for the management of temporal business, the government of their schools, and disposing of the estate of the said corporation, as to them shall appear proper.” It was the laymen—and not the clergy—who could raise and manage funds, determine the clergymen’s salaries, and oversee the management of the social service organizations that grew up around the parish.\(^{55}\)

In the early years of American Catholic institution building, the statutory imperative for lay leadership suited the clergy’s purposes quite well. Without an American clerical hierarchy in place to direct the progress of the mission, lay initiative remained the only viable means of encouraging Catholic community formation. But, as Carroll and his fellow clergymen sought to impose hierarchy and system on their spiritual subjects, they wrested long-standing privileges away from the laypeople who had been the founders and stewards of the nation’s oldest and most venerable Catholic institutions. Carroll and his fellows most forcefully pressed for the unambiguous right to appoint pastors. From the perspective of the clergy, pastoral appointments were sacred commissions well within their purview. The incipient hierarchy also began to claim greater authority over the disposition of parish monies and the activities of Catholic associations. They argued that these ancillary powers so directly impacted the spiritual welfare of the community that they could not appropriately be classified as temporal concerns.\(^{56}\)

Such clerical incursions into well-established lay prerogatives excited the territorialism of prominent laymen who had grown used to exercising authority among their co-religionists. Lay trustees repeatedly professed their allegiance to the expanding American hierarchy and claimed to readily accede to its spiritual prerogatives. But they fiercely contested the clergy’s over-broad notions of what constituted a spiritual concern. They insisted that both law and custom dictated

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\(^{55}\) An Act to Incorporate the Members of the Religious Society of Roman Catholics, belonging to the Congregation of St. Mary’s Church, In the City of Philadelphia. Enacted on September 13, 1788 and published in pamphlet form. Only two general histories of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia have been written. They are: Joseph L.J. Kirlin, Catholicity in Philadelphia From the Earliest Missionaries Down to the Present Time (Philadelphia: J.J. McVey, 1909); and James Francis Connelly, ed., The History of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia (Philadelphia: Archdiocese of Philadelphia, 1976).

\(^{56}\) The most comprehensive survey of trusteeism in the United States is Patrick W. Carey, People, Priests, and Prelates: Ecclesiastical Democracy and the Tensions of Trusteeism (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987).
their retention of authority over matters not pertaining to Catholic doctrine and ritual. They further asserted that their unparalleled knowledge of the community's needs and the energy they had expended on its behalf entitled them to continued participation in its oversight. From the perspective of lay trustees and the sizeable coalition that emerged in support of them, clerical usurpations felt like repudiations of their exertions on behalf of the faith they all aimed to nurture and promote. Thus the hierarchy’s attempts to stymie lay initiative had the ironic effect of undermining clerical authority and, in some cases, of impeding the progress of consolidation. The Catholic community flourished only when priests and congregants worked collaboratively.

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Carroll could not have been surprised by the difficulties he faced in implementing his vision. Well before he outlined his plans for the American Church at the 1791 Synod, he had already experienced the difficulties of managing a determined and independent laity. Since the 1780s he had been embroiled in a battle with Philadelphia’s German Catholics who would soon organize themselves as the congregation of Holy Trinity Church. Insisting that he, as the highest ranking Church official in the United States, retained the right to appoint pastors, Carroll rejected the German Catholics’ selection of Father John Goetz in favor of his own appointee. But, as James F. Connelly observes, these German Catholics “were extremely sensitive about their cultural identity and independence and therefore wanted a separate church and a pastor who spoke their language.” Indeed, the Germans were innovators in establishing the first “national,” or ethnic parish in the United States and seeking to keep themselves somewhat aloof from co-religionists of other backgrounds. While the creation of national parishes would become commonplace in the 1890s and beyond in response rising numbers of Catholics arriving from Italy.
and Eastern Europe, the phenomenon remained relatively rare for most of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{57}

The ethnic barrier between themselves and their pastor was a principal concern to the Germans. But their list of grievances indicates that they had generated a much broader set of criteria for judging pastoral fitness than Carroll seemed willing to acknowledge. Congregants pointedly criticized the appointee’s underwhelming talent as a preacher and orator, claiming that he mumbled uninspiring sermons, which he read directly from a sheet of paper. They wanted more than access to the sacraments and regular preaching from an indifferent and underwhelming priest. They demanded a dynamic and nurturing spiritual environment that would inspire them to persevere in their faith. They believed they were justified in refusing to accept Carroll’s pastor and moving forward with their own selection.

The Germans’ tenacious preservation of their autonomy, of course, worked against Carroll’s consolidating mission. But their zeal to build institutions in support of the Catholic community suited his purposes quite well. Carroll found himself in the untenable position of having to squelch their exercise of authority even as he relied on their leadership to establish a viable congregation. He betrayed his ambivalence toward his German Catholic constituency in a letter of March 1788, when he replied to an appeal from their representatives. On the one hand, he praised the Germans’ intention to found Holy Trinity, saying “it has my hearty approbation.” On the other hand, he feared the laymen might view the founding of the parish as an opportunity to make an end-run around his selection of their pastor. Carroll had recently rejected the Germans’ latest pastoral candidate and confessed, “If your letter had not given me assurances to the contrary, I should have felt a suspicion, that your design arose from some resentment, at my refusing to appoint Mr. Heilbron, agreeably to your recommendation.” Carroll reminded his subjects of the indissoluble link between the institutional and the spiritual. He urged them, “[a]bove all things, be mindful of charity, and brotherly love; avoid contentions, never assume the

\textsuperscript{57}Connelly, p. 70.
exercise of that spiritual power, which can only be communicated to the ministers of Christ.” Such a usurpation of clerical authority “would be hurtful to Religion” in any nation. But in the especially delicate American case, “it would totally destroy it.”

Even as Carroll worked with the Germans in establishing Holy Trinity, he continued to endure their resistance to his interference in the selection of pastors. When he could finally take no more of their stubbornness, Carroll cut off relations with them, refusing to acknowledge the Holy Trinity “dissidents” until they conceded his right to make appointments. The resulting standoff stretched from 1797 until 1802. Yet Carroll understood the extent to which the unsettled condition of the American Church left him reliant on the approbation of the laypeople over whom he sought to exert his will. He must have had this in mind when he paid a visit to his disgruntled subjects in an ill-conceived attempt to persuade them to capitulate. A nineteenth-century Church historian described the events of 1801: “no sooner had [Carroll] arrived there than the disaffected, respecting neither his virtues nor his rank, summoned him into court, where the prelate had to endure the mortification of listening to their counsel declaiming against the church and her laws, doctrines, and government,—against the Pope and the Council of Trent.” Seeing no other recourse in such unpleasant circumstances, Carroll did the only thing he could: “the prelate withdrew.”

Of course, the Germans founded a church not to act as spiritual free agents, but to avail themselves of the ministrations of an able priest. The schism worked against their purposes as well. And so, on January 2, 1802, after more than five years of languishing on the fringe of Philadelphia Catholic life, and in response to the exertions of Carroll’s clerical representative in Pennsylvania, the Holy Trinity trustees signed a document recognizing the authority of the Bishop of Baltimore over them. Nonetheless, they continued to complain vigorously when appointees failed to meet their exacting standards. And they continued to hector Carroll with their desire for

priests fluent in German. Indeed, some of their former combativeness resurfaced in 1812, when they threatened to drag the unilingual Reverend Patrick Kenny out of the church if he dared to preach to them in English. Holy Trinity (and the careworn Bishop Carroll) only enjoyed peace upon the appointment of the gifted Reverend Francis Roloff, a dynamic orator and fluent speaker of his congregants’ mother tongue.60

Carroll was not indifferent to the opinions of his subjects. And he agreed that well-trained, well-loved clergy were crucial to the proliferation of the faith in the United States. But he also believed that the success of the American mission depended on a definite organizational structure and that the clergy ought to oversee its institution. He worked within a much broader set of constraints than those facing trustees. He faced a shortage of priests throughout the nation and had to consider the geographic dispersion of clergy relative to the density of Catholics’ settlement patterns when making clerical appointments. Parish-based recruitment campaigns threatened to exacerbate the uneven distribution of priests by concentrating them in the wealthiest (mostly urban) parishes along the east coast. Moreover, lay-dominated hiring practices made it easier for “irregular” clergy and, in some cases, priestly impostors, to secure appointments in otherwise reputable parishes.

Such concerns weighed heavily on Carroll’s mind at the 1791 Synod, where he made obvious his preoccupation with regularizing matters of church discipline and practice. As Peter Guilday observed, Carroll had little to say in the way of “specific declarations on matters of faith.” Instead, he devoted himself to prescribing the manner of instituting long-standing Church doctrines and exhorting the faithful to adhere to the Synod’s directions for pious conduct. Carroll also crafted minute instructions for the clergy and announced his intention to establish a Catholic

60“Bishop Carroll and the Holy Trinity Trustees,” p. 3; and Connelly, p. 70.
seminary on American soil. Thus he could train priests who understood the specific challenges facing the American mission and closely oversee its transition to a more regular configuration.\textsuperscript{61}

The precarious state of the American Church had convinced Carroll that the institutional and spiritual health of American Catholics was one and the same. But convincing the laity to capitulate to his conflation of those categories required a considerable alteration in their worldview. Carroll realized that the American social context and American Catholics’ modest numerical strength made it necessary for him to proceed with caution. After the 1791 Synod, Carroll reported to his superior in Rome that, not only had he and his fellows made “no innovations in [their] decrees,” they also had made very few pronouncements overall. They deliberately had chosen to proceed incrementally. “When I see that these statutes are duly carried into execution,” he explained, “the others will follow.” Carroll had already explained the importance of “arousing the zeal of all, but of the laity in particular.” It would have been imprudent to force too many changes and wrest too many privileges away from the laity too swiftly.\textsuperscript{62}

By 1810, the American Catholic population had risen to a level that warranted the creation of additional Sees. This numerical growth presented Carroll with an opportunity to foster the elaboration of the Church hierarchy by linking the spiritual and the institutional in the minds of the faithful. At Carroll’s urging, the Pope created the Dioceses of Philadelphia (which included all of Pennsylvania and a considerable portion of western New Jersey), New York, Boston, and Bardstown. Baltimore would serve as the seat of the Church in the United States, known as the Metropolitan. Catholics in the newly-minted Sees celebrated their impending ascent to diocesan status. And as Carroll moved forward with plans for consecrating the new Sees, he acted in a manner that would parlay lay enthusiasm for Catholic spiritual progress into loyalty to the administrative structures he would institute to support religiosity in those locales.


\textsuperscript{62}Guilday, p. 71.
Carroll began by inviting the laity to participate directly in the construction of the new Sees. The elaborate rituals for investing bishops symbolically bound the faithful to their new spiritual leaders. But, of course, most Catholics could not travel to Baltimore to attend the investitures in person. So Carroll provided the means for their virtual participation via the printed word. He arranged for the publication of Instructions on the Erection of Four New Catholic Episcopal Sees in the United States, and the Consecration of their First Bishops, which described the rites and prayers that ushered the structures into existence. The pamphlet, printed in both French and English, allowed Catholics geographically removed from the ceremonies to feel included in the rituals that forged their religious community.63

The pamphlet’s unnamed author (presumably a high-ranking clergyman working at Carroll’s direction) exhorted American Catholics to rejoice and reflect on the gift of Christ’s Church. He wrote, “In these days of grace it ought to be the delight of every pious mind to consider with attention the sacred titles of our faith and the motives for that respect, love and obedience which we are willing to promise to our new Pastors.” The author recounted the founding of the Church and the legacy of the Apostles to “transmit from one to the other, the means of salvation, established for every age and nation.” By linking the establishment of the new American Church hierarchy to the spiritual goals Christ set at the creation of the primitive Church, the author underscored the connection between the layperson’s spiritual welfare and his or her duty to submit to the newly-appointed clerical authorities.64

The publication of the sermon delivered by Philadelphia’s Reverend William Vincent Harold at the consecration of John Cheverus as Bishop of Boston did similar work. Harold celebrated the newly-appointed Bishop in the most effusive, glowing terms. He enthused, “[w]e are this day to receive, as a gracious pledge of his paternal regard, a Pastor to feed the flock of Christ; a Bishop to rule the Church of God; one who comes recommended to the important trust,

63 Instructions on the Erection of Four New Catholic Episcopal Sees in the United States, and the Consecration of their First Bishops, Celebrated in Baltimore on the 23d October, 1st and 4th November (Baltimore: Printed for Bernard Dornin, 1810).
64 Ibid., pp. 8-9, 11.
by distinguished talent, by faithful, indefatigable exertion, by the hallowed test of a venerable life.”
Like the author of the Instructions, Harold linked the present-day consecrations to the traditions of
the primitive Church. “From meetings similar to this, the light of the Gospel has been carried to
the nations that sat in darkness,” he told his listeners. “From meetings similar to this, virtue and
civilization have gone forth, to bless and improve mankind.” According to Harold, the Catholic
Church could foster civility and virtue among its steadfast adherents. The laity’s faithful devotion
to its visible expression in the increasingly elaborate American hierarchy would secure to
Catholics the blessings of an afterlife with Christ.

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Carroll had provided his clergymen with a framework for consolidation at the 1790 Synod. And Carroll’s authorial emissaries had prepared the faithful for participation in an increasingly
unified and hierarchical Church. But the most arduous work of shepherding American Catholics
into the new institutional era fell to local priests who interacted with laypeople each day. It should
come as no surprise that clashes of style and personality impeded the implementation of
hierarchy in some locales. Some clergymen generated substantial interpersonal conflict with
members of their flocks when they tried to draw rigid lines of authority between themselves and
the laypeople on whom they relied so heavily. Shifting alliances emerged among lay and clerical
competitors for power in Catholic communities throughout the United States. Philadelphia
illustrates the way that personalities and agendas clashed in the course of implementing Carroll’s
vision. In particular, William Vincent Harold’s term of service at St. Mary’s Church provides a
useful illustration of the complexities of parish politics and the difficulties of executing the
objectives outlined at the Synod.

Harold had used his remarkable oratorical skill to establish himself as a rising star among
the American Catholic clergy. As mentioned previously, Harold delivered the sermon at the
consecration of Bishop Cheverus of Boston. And his eloquence had earned him a coveted appointment as pastor of St. Mary’s, with his uncle, the Reverend James Harold, serving as his second. When Carroll announced he would appoint Michael Egan as the first bishop of the newly-created Diocese of Philadelphia, W.V. Harold had no trouble securing an appointment as Egan’s Vicar General. It could not have been long before Harold observed what prominent Philadelphia layman Mathew Carey dared to put in print—that Egan “was never destined for the perplexing cares attendant on a mitre, particularly in the turbulent times in which he was placed.” Indeed, that unfortunate man “was of an amiable, mild, easy, tranquil turn of mind” that did not suit his circumstances. The ambitious, quick-tempered, and forceful Harold sought to direct the progress of institution-building in Philadelphia from behind the hapless Egan’s mitre, and he entertained the possibility of one day succeeding Egan in his post.65

Harold could be charming when he wished to be and he won the adoration of many congregants for his clerical zeal and organizational talents. But those with the misfortune to run afoul of his expectations encountered a side of him they would have preferred not to know. Several of Harold’s own lay trustees incurred his wrath in a dispute over money that came to a head in 1812. Harold believed the lay trustees dithered in their repayment of expenses incurred by Bishop Egan and other Philadelphia clergymen when they traveled to Baltimore to participate in the creation of the new American Sees. He penned a scathing letter to the congregation protesting this state of affairs. And he distributed copies of the blistering missive in the pews of the parish under the signature of Bishop Egan as well as himself and his uncle.

In the letter, Harold inadvertently revealed the difficulty he experienced when placing demands on the laypeople who wielded the power of the parish purse. He expressed his expectation for the deference owed to him by virtue of his place in the Church hierarchy when he accused the trustees of “[f]orgetting the respect due to our character.” And he indicated that the honor of his post at the apex of the parish chain of command trickled down to the laypeople he

represented. He demanded to know, “Are our rights to be violated, our feelings tortured, and your character dishonoured [sic], by the caprice or the malice of these individuals? We cannot be mistaken, when we express our conviction, that you will reprove those men, who, by injuring your clergy, have insulted yourselves.” Yet he had no choice but to assume the awkward pose of a supplicant reliant on the intervention of those he clearly viewed as underlings. He lamented that “your clergy have been reduced to the mortification of soliciting the board” for reimbursement. And he called for a meeting of pew holders the following day so he might persuade the congregation to intervene with the trustees on his behalf.  

Harold may have longed for the reverence due his rank, but he realized he had to descend temporarily from his exalted station and campaign among the laity to prevail over his opponents on the board of trustees. According to Mathew Carey, Harold’s politicking paid off. Carey reported that the clergy, “having mustered their friends with considerable industry... were far more numerous than their opponents.” Carey reported that, though Egan attended, Harold “was master of ceremonies there. His word was law—and [Carey’s] resolution [to appoint a sub-committee to negotiate for peace] was accordingly rejected by a large majority.” A sharp division of opinion quickly became apparent. While many had been moved to feel sympathy for their apparently destitute and overworked clergymen, those who considered matters from the trustees’ perspective felt the sting of Harold’s ingratitude. The discussion degenerated into a contentious shouting match and, as one stunned trustee later reported, “in one instance a blow with the fist.”

Though the trustees could not assemble an adequate defense of their actions in time for the initial meeting of pew holders, over the next few weeks they produced a series of open letters describing the financial burdens of the parish. In particular, they emphasized the extent to which the rapid expansion of both the membership and the infrastructure of St. Mary’s had drained the parish coffers. They always intended to repay the clergymen for their travel expenses, but they

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66 Sundry Documents, Submitted to the Consideration of the Pewholders of St. Mary’s Church, By the Trustees of that Church (Philadelphia: Printed by Lydia R. Bailey, 1812), pp. 1-4.  
67 Rejoinder to the Reply, p. 21; and Sundry Documents, p. 5.
thought it prudent to pay the workmen building an addition to the church before they distributed funds to the clergymen. Moreover, they asserted, Philadelphia’s priests enjoyed salaries either commensurate with or better than those of other American clergymen and lived under the restrictions of their vows of poverty. So Egan and the Harolds could not have been rendered penniless by the delay in repayment of travel expenses.  

The trustees protested against more than the substance of the charges Harold had leveled against them. They also complained of the manner in which Harold treated them. They bitterly reported an incident prior to the present controversy when Harold declared that the church belonged to the clergy and demanded that he and his uncle receive all of its income as salary. The trustees protested that the community “would be deprived of all chance of surplus funds to pay for repairs, to purchase a new grave yard, or defray any contingent expenses that may arise.” They reported having asked Harold “how were funds to be raised for those objects, [and] he very cavalierly replied, ‘by putting your hands in your pockets.’” They claimed such ill treatment at Harold’s hands was not unusual and reported “many instances accompanied with the greatest tyranny, rudeness, and overbearing conduct.”

As the controversy dragged on, poor Bishop Egan found himself increasingly overwhelmed. On November 7 he wrote to Carroll, “The unhappy differences between the Trustees of St. Mary’s and their clergy, along with many other domestic sources of trouble have so affected my nerves that I can scarcely hold pen to paper or put the chalice to my mouth at the awful Sacrifice of the Mass without the assistance of a priest.” At the start of the new year he resolved to put the ugly business behind him and in January of 1813, he read a statement from the altar explaining that he and the trustees had settled their differences. The unfortunate bishop could not foresee that his troubles had only just begun.

68 Sundry Documents, pp. 5-18.
69 Ibid., p. 5, 17.
Harold bitterly resented Egan’s willingness to compromise with laymen and he made no secret of his contempt for his pliant superior. Rather than accede to Egan’s desire for peace, Harold “lived together [with Egan] on very ill terms.” And he undertook an extensive campaign to influence the upcoming election of trustees so laypeople favorable to his views would come to power. Indeed, Harold exhibited such remarkable determination to achieve his object that, “domiciliary visits were paid to the chief members of the congregation, in some cases four or five times to the same individual. In these visits nothing was left undone to keep alive the flame” of discord. Even more alarming to the trustees and their contingent, Harold engineered a reinterpretation of the rules governing pew rents. Whereas shared pews formerly could represent no more than two votes in trustee elections, Harold decided to recognize each partial pew holder individually, thus making each pew worth as many as five votes. Many of Harold’s supporters occupied Philadelphia’s lower socio-economic stations, so his maneuver guaranteed additional votes to his favored candidates for trustee posts. Carey caustically observed that Harold, “notwithstanding his present high claims, as a supporter of order and system, [has] been one of the fathers of an innovation, liable to very great abuses, and which has introduced a total change in the mode of electing trustees.” Unsurprisingly, St. Mary’s more privileged Catholics were as disgusted as Carey.

The poisoned atmosphere persisted. “The jarring and discord,” Carey wrote, “were carried to such an extent, that an explosion finally took place, and the Messrs. Harolds determined to offer to resign their stations, which was accordingly announced on the 21st of Feb. 1813, from the pulpit, in a most unprecedented manner, by the uncle, while the nephew was sitting before the altar.” According to Carey, the Harolds were bluffing, and he claimed they “were quite thunderstruck” when Egan accepted the joint letter of resignation. They had hoped Egan would induce them to stay by offering them greater authority in governing the church. Though they traveled to Baltimore to demand redress from the Archbishop, Egan’s reports of their insubordination and abusive treatment of him had preceded them. Carroll encouraged Egan to

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71 Rejoinder to the Reply, pp. 22-23.
consider reinstating the Harolds because of the popularity they enjoyed among the congregation. But when Egan refused, Carroll declined to overrule him.\textsuperscript{72}

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Egan never had to endure the Harolds in his clerical charge again. But he did face a pro-Harold board of trustees after the 1813 elections as a consequence of the Harolds' reinterpretation of the charter and vigorous door-to-door politicking. And those laymen continually badgered Egan for William Harold's reinstatement. When Egan died on July 14, 1814, his associate clergyman, Patrick Kenney wrote to Carroll that, "he had been the first victim of Episcopal rights there cannot be the least doubt…. For his end has been premature." Egan's recently-appointed Vicar General, Louis DeBarth, obviously agreed with Kenny's assessment. He implored Carroll, "I write upon my knees. Do not, Most Revd. Father, drive me into Despair, Death would not be so frightful to me as Philadelphia, where I would soon follow my Bishop.” But Carroll needed a representative in Philadelphia to fill the void left by Egan until he could confer with Rome in the selection of a permanent successor. DeBarth's order to serve as interim bishop remained in force.\textsuperscript{73}

DeBarth seems to have concluded that he had little to gain through active leadership of the troubled diocese. It is clear that he aimed to ruffle as few feathers as possible and to remain aloof from decision-making to the extent that he could. All the while, he anxiously awaited a successor to relieve him. But in one matter in particular, a firmer hand could have spared the diocese decades of grief and mortification. A new arrival was about to escalate Philadelphia's trustee crisis to hitherto-unimagined heights of malignancy, captivate the nation's attention with his incendiary pamphlets and the responses those publications provoked, and require the Vatican, the Pennsylvania legislature, and the court system to interfere.

\textsuperscript{72}Ibid., p. 24; and RACHS Vol. 10 (1893), p. 113.
\textsuperscript{73}RACHS Vol. 10 (1893), p. 171, 177.
The source of the impending notoriety was the Reverend William Hogan, an Irish priest who had arrived in the Diocese of New York in 1819 and, armed with a letter of introduction from his Limerick superior, addressed himself to Bishop Connelly of that See. Detecting nothing amiss and, like all American bishops of the era, suffering a shortage of clergy, Connelly dispatched Hogan to Albany. There, the youthful and energetic priest won accolades from a congregation that grew to love him. In March of 1820, apparently en route to Baltimore for his cousin’s ordination, Hogan presented himself to Vicar General (and acting bishop) Louis DeBarth, and offered his services to the understaffed and overwhelmed head of the Diocese of Philadelphia. DeBarth, like Connelly of New York, had no reason to be concerned by Hogan’s application for appointment. As historian I.J. Griffin observed, DeBarth’s own appointment departed from custom as a consequence of the unsettled state of the American Church and the desperate need to get clergy in the pulpits. Moreover, Hogan’s maneuvering made it more likely that DeBarth would acquiesce to the newcomer’s presence in Philadelphia. After an apparently failed attempt to acquire a proper exeat from New York, Hogan returned to Philadelphia and installed himself at St. Mary’s Church, on Fourth Street near Spruce, while DeBarth ministered to the rural population from the Catholic outpost at Conewago. The Vicar General’s absence gave Hogan two months to endear himself to parishioners before DeBarth returned to make a judgment regarding his status. Given Hogan’s instant popularity with the congregation and DeBarth’s self-professed incapacity to make binding decisions because of his interim status, the Vicar General decided he would leave it to his successor to sort things out.74

Relief for the beleaguered DeBarth finally arrived in the person of the Right Reverend Henry Conwell in November of 1820. Prior to his appointment, Conwell had served as Vicar

74For an overview of the Rev. Hogan’s ignominious career, see Francis E. Tourscher, O.S.A., The Hogan Schism and Trustee Troubles in St. Mary’s Church, 1820-1829. (Philadelphia: The Peter Reilly Company, 1930); on Hogan’s record during his Albany mission, see the New-York Columbian, Vol. XI, Issue 3017, in which is reprinted a public statement of gratitude to Hogan originally published in the May 2 edition of the Albany Daily Advertiser. It reads, in part, “...we sincerely regret the loss your congregation will inevitably sustain, in the absence of a gentleman whose conduct as a clergyman, during his residence here, entitles him to the respect and confidence of all his acquaintance,” and is signed by DeWitt Clinton, John Taylor, John V.N. Yates, Archibald McIntyre, Wm. B. Lacey, P. S. Van Rensselaer, Wm. James, F.D. Bloodgood, and Charles R. Webster. The paper also published Hogan’s statement of thanks to “His Excellency Governor Clinton, and other respectable citizens of Albany,” for the “remembrance” that “will be ever gratifying to my feelings.” See also, RACHS, Volume 23 (1913) pp. 24-26.
General under the Archbishop of Armagh, Ireland. After his superior’s death and a subsequent reorganization of the regional Church hierarchy, Conwell had been offered the choice between the dioceses of Madras, Spain, or Philadelphia. He unwisely chose the latter. According to a nineteenth-century biographer, he cut an imposing figure. It was reported that, “[t]he Bishop’s personal appearance was not unpleasing. When he arrived he was over seventy, tall, straight, muscular, and, when occasion required, not deficient in dignity.” But even this ardent admirer could not help but note that Conwell possessed an “uncertain temper,” which did little to endear him to the troubled congregation he had been sent to unite.75

Conwell faced a multiplicity of challenges in his new assignment. The widely dispersed and generally underserved Catholic population of Philadelphia and its surrounding rural townships had languished under years of DeBarth’s benign neglect so that administrative matters required considerable attention. The diocese seemed to suffer a perpetual shortage of funds adequate to provide for the clergy’s subsistence and to meet the laity’s demands for more and greater clerical services. Relations among the various ethnic populations within the Catholic community became increasingly complex as greater numbers of Irish immigrants, generally of a lower socio-economic station than their assimilated co-religionists, settled into the See. And, of course, the vexing problem of parish authority that had reemerged in the nasty disputes of 1812 remained to be resolved.

Conwell also faced the dilemma of what to do with William Hogan. The Bishop required little time to ruminate over his options. From his perspective, Hogan demonstrated the necessity for disciplinary action within days of the Bishop’s arrival. According to Mathew Carey (writing, as he often did, under the pseudonym “a Catholic Layman”), at Conwell’s first appearance at the altar “Mr. Hogan preached a sermon in St. Mary’s Church, in which he made a very severe and acrimonious attack on the quondam Vicar-General, then sitting before the altar.” Carey declined to report the specific insults Hogan hurled at his superior, but whatever Hogan’s grievances,

75Father Jordan’s Woodstock Letters of January, 1874, as quoted in Martin I.J. Griffin, Life of Bishop Conwell, ACHR, pp. 165-166.
Carey makes clear that all those who heard his remarks were appalled. The following Sunday, Hogan misused the pulpit again when he “made a most extraordinary digression in the midst of his sermon.” This time, he publicly announced that he would not comply with Conwell’s privately delivered directive that Hogan abandon his private residence and return to the clergymen’s common lodgings. Moreover, Hogan asserted that he would no longer preach on a weekly basis. Because three able clergymen now served the parish, he would only preside at Mass every third week. According to Carey, “there were various other matters introduced, all highly indecorous and utterly improper for the time and place, and disapproved by the majority of the congregation.” Hogan’s provocative behavior, along with negative reports provided by DeBarth and other Philadelphia clergymen, convinced Conwell that he could justly inflict the strongest disciplinary measures within his power. On December 12, 1820, Conwell assembled the clergymen of the city, summoned Hogan before him, and withdrew Hogan’s faculties. From this point forward, Hogan could not lawfully say Mass or administer sacraments within the diocese. For all intents and purposes, he had been stripped of his collar.\(^76\)

It is unclear whether Conwell anticipated popular support for the extreme measure he adopted or merely disregarded the sentiments of the congregation. The universal condemnation Hogan suffered in the aftermath of his outbursts may have caused the newly-arrived Bishop to misread the wishes of his flock. Even Hogan’s most outspoken supporters agreed that some form of punishment was warranted. But Philadelphia Catholics warmly debated the severity of the penalty and, even more problematic for the Bishop, the specific charges necessitated by Hogan’s conduct. A schism quickly emerged. Hoganites led by the lay trustees and Bishopites represented by the clergy battled ferociously both within the city’s parishes and through the medium of the public press.

If Conwell did anticipate popular support for his suspension of Hogan he could not have labored under this assumption for long. Lay trustee John T. Sullivan visited the Bishop on December 15 and implored Conwell to reverse the suspension. Conwell brusquely refused his request. Undeterred, the lay members of the Board of Trustees called a meeting of the congregation and arranged for a subcommittee to draft a memorial in praise of Hogan. The resulting document, said to have been “signed by 250 of the most respectable of the congregation,” praised Hogan’s service to St. Mary’s Church. The laymen claimed that, prior to Hogan’s arrival, “the fire of faith burnt feebly in the bosom of Catholics; defection was manifesting itself; coldness and indifference to public worship had appeared; the Catholic children were not instructed in the principles of their religion; the shivering orphan and child of want, unprotected by the limited means of our orphan asylum, appealed to our charity, and secured a scanty pittance.” They contrasted this bleak situation with the dramatic transformation that Hogan had affected. Hogan, they said, “fed the fire of faith with the oil of religion,” and under his care, “defection was changed into enthusiastic attachment; coldness and indifference were converted into ardour and interest for the religion; the children of the congregation were clothed; the gospel was preached in the refuge of poverty, the Alms House.” Based on this impressive record of service, they “solicit[ed] his restoration to his former situation” and expressed hope that Conwell would accede to their wishes rather than risk “the lamentable effects that will follow a refusal.”

Conwell swiftly responded to what he contemptuously described as a document “purporting to be a memorial of St. Mary’s Congregation.” He issued a letter succinctly conveying his disapproval of the laymen’s appeal, his disgust with “speculating adventurers among the clergy” who took advantage of the unsettled state of the American Church, the “anarchy [that] prevailed” among American Catholics, and his expectation for the deference owed to him as

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77 Memorial and supporting documents reproduced in William Hogan’s An Address to the Congregation of St. Mary’s Church, Philadelphia. The pamphlet includes no publication information, though it is clear it was published some time between December 22, 1820 and February 1, 1821.

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patriarch of the diocese. Throughout his letter, Conwell referred to his congregants as his “dear Children in Christ,” and described himself as their “Spiritual Father in God.” He infantilized his subjects when he asked that parishioners “[e]xcuse this simple style; it is plain and intelligible, which the language of a father to his children ought to be.” He clearly intended these rhetorical gestures of paternalism to justify his claims to unquestioned patriarchal authority. He declared that, “I would have a very poor opinion of myself indeed, and would certainly consider myself very unworthy of being ranked among the successors of the apostles of Jesus Christ as a christian [sic] Bishop, if such threats could have the least influence on my conduct.” He lamented that the memorialists had “taken a wrong view of the subject under consideration,” but expressed confidence that after “impartial and dispassionate observation, they will be unanimously of my opinion.”

In the early stages of the controversy, the laymen working for Hogan’s reinstatement employed respectful and measured appeals and attempted to persuade, rather than demand, that Conwell accommodate them. At a meeting of congregants held on December 22, 1820, shortly after their receipt of Conwell’s letter, Hogan’s supporters adopted two resolutions. The first endorsed the committee’s efforts “to bring about a reconciliation between the Right Revd. Dr. Conwell and the Revd. Mr. Hogan.” The second resolved to supply Hogan with copies of their testimonials of support so he might use them to defend his character.

Meanwhile, Mathew Carey, again under the thin disguise of “a Catholic Layman,” issued at his own expense an Address to the Right Rev. Bishop of Pennsylvania and the Members of St. Mary’s Congregation. As before, Carey adopted the pose of impartial mediator and he urged both parties to concede they had erred, thereby damaging “the cause of religion and morality.” Carey acknowledged that even “the warmest advocates” of Hogan agreed the priest “fell into a considerable impropriety.” But, Carey asserted, Hogan’s professed willingness to apologize should have been sufficient to allay the Bishop’s fears that Hogan might “set episcopal authority

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78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
at defiance." He appealed to Conwell to accept Hogan’s admission of guilt and reinstate him so that the “peace and harmony of one of the largest congregations in the city of Philadelphia” might not be “offered up as a sacrifice for such considerations.” His co-religionists clearly agreed with his assessment. On December 27, John T. Sullivan again called on the Bishop on behalf of the congregation and requested that he reconsider his hard-line position. Again, Conwell refused.80

Hogan quickly recognized the futility of intra-parish appeals for pardon and he made the momentous decision to take his case to an even wider public than his parish constituents. In a series of three pamphlets issued in the first two weeks of February, 1821, Hogan claimed to address himself to the congregation of St. Mary’s Church. But he slyly cast his fellow clergymen as stock Catholic villains and claimed to be engaged in “the exposing of perfidy and the unmasking of clerical hypocrisy” in a melodrama that followed standard plotlines of anti-Catholic propaganda. By shrewdly exploiting Protestants’ assumptions about Catholic clerical absolutism and Catholics’ sensitivity to their neighbors’ prejudices, Hogan hoped to make all Philadelphians party to the dispute and thereby convince Conwell to cave to popular pressure for his reinstatement.81

To fully appreciate the cynicism of Hogan’s maneuver, it is necessary to recover the fear and hostility many Protestants felt for Catholics by examining the popular literature that inflamed such sentiments. One of America’s earliest steady sellers was The French Convert: Being a True Relation of the Happy Conversion of a Noble French Lady From the Errors and Superstitions of Popery, which first appeared in London in 1696 and underwent frequent reprintings in both England and America for two centuries. According to book historian Thomas S. Kidd, by the final decade of the nineteenth century, The French Convert had been reprinted in America at least twenty-one times and in England at least twenty-five times. Kidd notes that, while the book made its American debut by way of a major Boston publishing house in 1708, many reprints were

80A Catholic Layman, Address to the Right Rev. the Bishop of Pennsylvania and the Members of St. Mary’s Congregation. December 21, 1821.

81William Hogan, An Address to the Congregation of St. Mary’s Church, Philadelphia.
issued by obscure presses in out-of-the-way locales such as Burlington, Buffalo, and Walpole. Benjamin Franklin was the first Philadelphia publisher to issue the work in 1751. He clearly enjoyed brisk sales. He and other Philadelphia printers came out with editions in 1768, 1791, and 1801.  

Like many publications of its ilk, *The French Convert* claims to deliver a true and impartial narrative of a virtuous woman’s persecution and eventual deliverance from the depraved machinations of an unholy and lecherous priest. In this case, the besieged heroine is one Deidamia, the modest, gentle, and principled wife of honorable Count Alanson. When the Count is forced to leave his beloved wife to serve as a military officer, he entrusts Deidamia to the care of the family’s Catholic chaplain, the unscrupulous Franciscan friar Antonio, as well as the steward of his estate, Fronovius. In her grief over the separation from her husband, Deidamia takes long, somber walks through the gardens of her estate, where she comes upon the gardener, Bernard, reading from the Bible and praying directly to the Lord, ignoring the intercessory authority of the Catholic saints. Deidamia, a deeply devoted Catholic, is scandalized by what she witnesses, and she orders Bernard to cease his heretical practices at once or risk her exposure of his wicked pursuits. But Bernard so calmly and decisively assures her of his commitment to his Huguenot faith and his willingness to endure any affliction for the sake of Christ that Deidamia finds herself compelled to learn more about his beliefs.

The following chapter digresses into a dialogue between Bernard and Deidamia during which various Catholic practices such as transubstantiation, the use of relics and rosaries, the speciousness of indulgences, and the sexual incontinence of priests are thoroughly repudiated. Deidamia begins reading the Bible in secret and comes to so thoroughly delight in her direct communion with God that she regrets the errors of her former faith and embraces Protestantism. Though Deidamia and Bernard have been discreet in their religious dialogue, Deidamia has been

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the object of Antonio’s and Fronovius’s close surveillance. Both men have long entertained lustful designs on Deidamia and view her husband’s absence as their opportunity to debauch the virtuous woman. When Deidamia rebukes both men for frank and vulgar attempts on her chastity, Antonio and Fronovius collude to leverage their knowledge of Deidamia’s conversion against her to avenge their impugned masculinity.

Antonio convinces Deidamia’s devout parents that she must be sent to a nunnery where she can be convinced to repent of her recent acquiescence to Protestantism. Her distraught parents consent, not realizing that they have, in fact, agreed to deliver their daughter into the hands of lecherous assassins. Antonio and Fronovius hire a pair of criminals to kidnap Deidamia, drag her into the woods, and murder her. (An abbess in Antonio’s employ will claim Deidamia briefly stayed at her convent before escaping into the unknown.) At first, Deidamia pleads for her life and appeals to her Lord for deliverance. But when she hears her kidnappers arguing over which of them will rape her first, she begs to be murdered straight away, rather than endure such a violation. Her purity only inflames their lust further, and they duel for the right to defile her. One would-be assassin dies as a consequence of his injuries, and the other is so severely wounded that he loses consciousness, presenting Deidamia with the opportunity for escape. The once proud and noble woman is forced to survive on tree fruits and seek shelter in a cave for more than two months before she happens upon the cottage of an elderly Huguenot couple who live deep in the forest away from Catholic persecution. They shelter Deidamia for two years before a distraught Count Alanson finally locates his missing wife.

Alanson and Deidamia’s parents are so moved by her maintenance of her virtue and so inspired by her dedication to Protestantism that they convert themselves, and the entire family flees France so they might practice the true and honorable religion in peace. Meanwhile, the workings of Providence have done more than deliver Deidamia back into the arms of her beloved. God also has visited terrible fates on her tormentors. Fronovius is ultimately hanged for the rape
of another innocent woman. And Antonio loses his sanity over the loss of the object of his lust and bashes his own brains out.

However extreme and aspersive such a tale might appear to the modern reader, the anti-Catholic tropes of perverse religious practices, sexual deviance, and violence featured in *The French Convert* were so commonplace as to seem credible to readers of the colonial and early national periods. Propagandists routinely cloaked their indictments of Catholic doctrine in prurient tales that cast Catholic priests as imperious, hypocritical, debauched, and utterly destructive of domestic and social harmony. And, as literary historian Jenny Franchot points out, anti-Catholic propagandists disseminated such misrepresentations through a wide range of genres, including “histories, domestic novels, pulp fiction, poetry, correspondence, and canonical literary narrative.” The pervasiveness of anti-Catholic attacks manufactured an artificial sense of unity among Protestants of various denominations. Franchot pegs the resilience of the form to its utility as “an ideological construct homogenizing key ethnic, class, and regional distinctions among American Catholics as well as among American Protestants.”

Such was certainly true of religiously plural Philadelphia, the locus of the early national publishing trade where virulently anti-Catholic agitators found willing audiences for their incendiary wares. Propagandists enjoyed one of their greatest successes with Antonio Gavin’s *Master-Key to Popery*. First published in Europe in 1726, the book went through numerous reprintings on both sides of the Atlantic. In the United States, publishers in New York, Boston, Hartford, Cincinnati, Newport, Hagerstown, Baileyton, Alabama, and Aurora, Missouri printed editions for local markets. In Philadelphia, no fewer than four editions appeared. One of these (which went through numerous reprintings throughout the first half of the nineteenth century)

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appeared through the efforts of a consortium of printer/booksellers, suggesting that multiple bookstores offered it for sale simultaneously.85

*The Master-Key to Popery* (sometimes published under the title *The Great Red Dragon: or, the Master-Key to Popery*) claimed to expose the “means the priests make use of to delude the people” and the unchristian—and in some cases, perverse—devotional practices they imposed on the laity. The “master-key” to which Gavin referred was the Catholic practice of auricular confession, seen by many Protestants to be the most pernicious of all the spiritually reckless doctrines embraced by papists. The practice placed the weak-minded penitent under the complete control of his confessor priest, while absolution led wilier members of the faith to believe they might obtain a free pass to sin whenever they wished. But most alarming of all, it placed vulnerable women at risk of sexual seduction by their confessors.

When Hogan invoked the well-worn stereotype of the deceptive and potentially dangerous priest to describe his adversary, he drew a direct line between Conwell and the nefarious Catholic villain that Protestants routinely encountered in anti-Catholic propaganda. According to Hogan, he had no choice but to defend his character against “the base machinations and unmanly envy of a few individuals.” Though he anticipated the disapproval of some readers who viewed pamphleteering as “incompatible with the professed sanctity of the priesthood,” he explained that the preservation of his clerical status against “foul machinations” and “vile intrigues” justified his publications. His enemies, he claimed, hoped to “tumble me from that eminence of respectability, to which the kindness and indulgence of the Public had raised me; [but] my fall from thence must contribute more to injure the cause of religion, than any expose, which in defence [sic] of my own character, I have been reluctantly obliged to make.” Rather than endorse and assist him in his pious service to the Catholic community, his brother clergymen resented the adulation Hogan received for his efforts. Men who had never managed to get along before somehow overcame long-standing disagreements to unite themselves against him and

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85 Antonio Gavin, *A Master-Key to Popery, In Five Parts* (Philadelphia: Printed for and sold by the booksellers, 1815).
discredit him in the eyes of the newly-arrived bishop and the congregation. He saw no other choice except to resort to the public press.\textsuperscript{86}

Hogan did not leave his readers to wonder at the identity of the conspirators. He listed the Philadelphia clergymen at fault—the Reverends M’Girr, Carr, Hurley, and, of course, the unfortunate Vicar General DeBarth. Hogan exposed each to a rancorous testimonial of his alleged misconduct. Hogan claimed that, upon his arrival in Philadelphia, DeBarth had warned him against the priests among whom he would serve. M’Girr allowed himself to be “led by instinct rather than reason or religion, and [was] always to be found with the lowest and most abandoned portion of society.” Carr was “a systematic drunkard.” And Hurley was “extremely intemperate, and a man who kept no society but that of singers and gamblers,” among other faults the Vicar General had declined to enumerate. Hogan claimed the animosity was mutual. Almost as soon as he had made the acquaintance of these allegedly degenerate clergymen they shared their assessment of the Vicar General. They described DeBarth as “an unreasonable despot, without information,” “a confounded hypocrite and a dishonest man,” and one who “frequently made a great parade of his works of charity” undertaken with funds raised by his brother priests.\textsuperscript{87}

Predictably, Hogan cast himself as the enlightened champion of his embattled religion. He reprinted the glowing testimonials that had been given in meetings of the congregation in December of the previous year. The laymen’s declarations of his “pious and exemplary” conduct and their professions of gratitude for the “benefits derived by [Hogan’s] exertions” contrasted sharply with the descriptions of profligacy and clerical neglect Hogan imputed to his rival clergymen. Hogan also sought to bolster his cause by arraying passages of canon law that, he claimed, proved the illegitimacy of the measures taken by Bishop Conwell against him. Hogan boldly asserted that, not only was he free and clear of transgressing canon law, but Conwell was the one acting in violation of Church doctrine. Conwell’s withdrawal of Hogan’s faculties

\textsuperscript{86}William Hogan, \textit{Continuation of an Address, to the Congregation of St. Mary’s Church, Philadelphia} [the first of two pamphlets to appear under this title]. February 2, 1821, p. 3-4.

\textsuperscript{87}Hogan, \textit{Address}, pp. 6-7.
contravened canon law in such a way that the bishop had managed to bring the “grievous censure” of irregularity down on himself! Conwell was, Hogan claimed, “self-excommunicated.” By Hogan’s measure, the bishop’s behavior was beyond the pale of clerical respectability.\textsuperscript{88}

Hogan treded a fine line between damning the clergymen arrayed against him and damning the faith they all claimed to defend. He sought to resolve this tension by asserting that the present struggle would cleanse Catholicism by exposing the clergymen who sullied it to much-deserved public censure. He flattered the parishioners of St. Mary’s by expressing his confidence that “an enlightened congregation, such as I have the honour to address, know well that the follies of its ministers are not to be charged to the religion they profess, the viciousness of their lives, the unmanliness of their principles.” In fact, he asserted, “[t]he conduct of its ministers in this city, may perhaps throw a momentary gloom over it, but it will again appear in its native lustre. These occasional disturbances only tend to purify our religion, as they often lead to the detection of infamy and hypocrisy which are impeding its advancement and sacrificing its dearest interests at the shrines of vanity and pecuniary emolument.”\textsuperscript{89} Hogan was so convinced of the rightness of his cause that he announced his intention to resume preaching in St. Mary’s Church in defiance of Conwell’s ruling. He reversed this decision only when “friends” convinced him to wait “till time and circumstances render it more prudent.”\textsuperscript{90}

As Philadelphia Catholics argued among themselves, the members of the Pennsylvania state legislature puzzled over the appropriate way to intervene in the escalating crisis. That they should arbitrate in some manner seemed to all parties to be a given. Both the Hoganites and Bishopites had appealed to the legislature for redress of their grievances. The Hoganites had repeatedly requested amendments to St. Mary’s charter that (in their view) would clarify their rights to control church property, appoint pastors, and oversee elections of the members of their

\textsuperscript{88}Hogan, \textit{Address}, p. 21; \textit{Continuation of an Address}, (first of two) p. 29.
\textsuperscript{89}Hogan, \textit{Address}, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{90}William Hogan, \textit{Continuation of an Address to the Congregation of St. Mary’s Church, Philadelphia} (the second of two to be issued under this title), p. 31.
board. The Bishopites, on the other hand, considered the legislature a last resort in their repeated attempts to enforce a strict interpretation of St. Mary’s charter.

Matters came to a head with consideration of the so-called “Catholic Bill” in March of 1823. The deeply divided legislators treaded lightly. They risked committing, as one Senator Wurt pointed out, “a direct infractions of the 17th section of the 9th article of the Constitution, which declares that ‘no law impairing contracts shall be made.’” Moreover, the legislators’ capacities for impartiality and fairness were tested because of the denomination in question. Senator Duncan stated the concerns of many when he announced to the chamber:

We are a Protestant assembly, called on to decide on a question, affecting the religious rights of Roman Catholics. Between us and them there exists so wide a difference in doctrinal points of religion—there is so little fellowship, so little interchange of those acts of Christian love and charity, that it is not an easy matter to feel with them any common sympathy, or to be made to believe that our and their rights are protected by the same constitution, and held by the same tenure.

Though the lay trustees’ request to amend the charter passed by a single vote, the governor, Joseph Hiester, vetoed the measure. Hiester reasoned that alterations to the charter ought not to be made “without the full consent of the congregation, and at a time of great excitement, produced by existing disputes, which embrace not only differences respecting the management of the temporal concerns of the society, but operating in their consequences to subvert or disturb fundamental articles of faith.” A subsequent legislative attempt to override Hiester’s veto failed.91

This close legislative outcome represented only a nominal victory for the Bishopite party. Philadelphia Catholics continued to argue among themselves, and at the April 1 trustee elections each party selected its own slate of candidates. The Hoganites did, however, appear willing to make conciliatory gestures. On June 3, the Hoganite trustees chose a sub-committee to initiate peace talks with Conwell. Their party received an additional incentive to reconcile when they

91 *A Concatenation of Speeches*, pp. 29, 22, 47.
endured a fresh embarrassment from Hogan, who had been involved in a widely-publicized brawl in New York with a Bishopite sympathizer from that city who had heckled him.92

Conwell clearly perceived that he had the upper hand, and on July 17 he issued a stinging rebuke to the Hoganite trustees that put any hope of peace talks to rest. In a letter the Hoganite trustees described as a “death-blow to all the flattering prospects they had entertained of an amicable adjustment of their differences,” Conwell asserted that the Hoganites had “left me but one course to pursue.” He reiterated the stance he had maintained all along: “I am bound by my oath of consecration to resist the invasion of these rights, and to maintain the flock committed to my charge and the authority and the laws thus disregarded.” He insisted that he must act in compliance with canon law and “according to my judgment and conscientious belief.” Conwell once again adopted the pose of the patriarch disciplining errant children, closing his letter under the signature of “your faithful friend and father in God.”93

Even as the party that bore his name labored for peace, Hogan continued to court controversy in the public press. A series of bitter exchanges followed Hogan’s oddly combative response to a plea for Protestant tolerance of Catholics made by Bishop England of Charleston. Hogan pronounced that priestcraft was alive and well in Ireland and had been imported by certain clergymen into the United States. By August of 1823, even the Hoganite trustees had had enough. They accepted Hogan’s resignation and began shopping for a new pastor.94

The state of the Church in Philadelphia had become so notorious among Catholics in both the United States and Europe that the Hoganite trustees had considerable trouble locating a priest willing to enter the fray. So it must have been out of desperation that they selected the

92 The most complete account of Hogan’s New York City street fight is Trial of Thomas A. Powers, on an Indictment for an Assault and Battery, on the person of the Rev. Wm. Hogan, of St. Mary’s Church., Philadelphia (New-York: M. Toohey, printer, 1823). Philadelphians first heard of the altercation through the June 19 edition of the National Gazette.
93 Address of the Trustees of St. Mary’s Church, to their Fellow-Citizens; Containing a Correspondence Between Them and the Right Reverend Bishop Conwell, On a Late Attempt at Reconciliation Between the Parties of the Congregation of the Said Church (Philadelphia: printed by Lydia R. Bailey, 1823).
94 Letters, &c., Viz. From Bishop England On Captain Rock’s Proclamation; From the Rev. W. Hogan, In Reply to the Rev. Bishop; From an Irishman, to the Rev. Mr. Hogan; and from An Irish Catholic to an Irishman: Copied from The Charleston Mercury, the Columbian Observor, and The Democratic Press. (Philadelphia: Printed and Published at No. 11 S. Sixth Street, 1823).
Reverend Angelo Inglesi to represent them. The choice proved to be disastrous. From out of the shadows, the zealous Reverend Harold emerged to incite discord among his former congregants. He distributed a series of letters to his contacts in both Europe and the United States looking for evidence of Inglesi’s checkered past. Harold’s efforts proved effectual and he presented Philadelphians with allegations that Inglesi had failed to exercise the sexual self-discipline expected of Catholic clergy. The matter hinged on conflicting reports as to whether Inglesi, even after ordination as a deacon, “married a Catholic woman, before a Presbyterian minister, dismissed her, and then wished to contract another marriage, &c. &c.” Additionally, reports surfaced that Inglesi had failed to attend confession regularly, and had been barred from various Catholic courts in Europe as a consequence of his many enemies in the European Church hierarchy. Inglesi protested against these charges, terming them “falsehoods.” But damage had been inflicted on an already-discredited coalition.\footnote{An Address to the Public of Philadelphia: Containing, A Vindication of the Character and Conduct of the Reverend Mr. Inglesi, From Charges and Strictures Lately Reported and Published Against Him by the Reverend Mr. Harold. Translated from the French. (Philadelphia: Printed for the author, 1824), p. 23.}

The Hoganites knew they had to act quickly and they sent for the dynamic and vigorous Thadeus J. O’Meally, an old friend of Hogan’s based in Limerick, to represent them in the aftermath of the Inglesi revelations. O’Meally arrived from Ireland on October 12, 1823 and called on Conwell shortly thereafter. He, of course, failed in his bid to present himself to the Bishop as “an instrument of peace.” From that first meeting, Conwell threatened the interloper with excommunication. But the force of that threat as a weapon of compliance had been blunted in Philadelphia by Conwell’s overuse of both the warning and the enactment thereof. As O’Meally explained, “[t]his twice told tale, this repeated threat of excommunication, the last and most awful punishment the church can inflict, and which it never does inflict, but upon incorrigible offenders, thus shouted in my ear at the time, when I had not shewn [sic] even a symptom of an intention to offend; disgusted me not a little.” Conwell had clearly overplayed his hand. On November 20,
1823, Conwell did issue his official proclamation of O’Meally’s excommunication. But the unruffled clergyman continued to say Mass and minister to his Hoganite constituency.\textsuperscript{96}

For their part, the Hoganites had been reinvigorated by the ministrations of O’Meally on their behalf. They warmly embraced him and continued to worship under his pastoral care for three years. And as the schism dragged on, both age and senility were taking a toll on Conwell. In October of 1826, the Hoganites persuaded the elderly and infirm prelate to sign a document affirming their authority to appoint their own pastors. In his assessment of events, Church historian Francis Tourscher surmises that Conwell may have been driven to sign the truce in a fit of despair over rumors that the erstwhile William Harold had returned to take up the Hoganite cause and collude with O’Meally to seize control of both St. Mary’s and St. Joseph’s Churches from the doddering bishop. No indication of such a conspiracy survives, though enough evidence of each man’s opportunism makes Conwell’s alarm at least plausible.\textsuperscript{97}

Throughout the crisis, Archbishop Ambrose Marechal had supported Conwell from his seat as John Carroll’s successor as Metropolitan of the American mission. And though he continued to endorse the principles of the Bishopite party, he could no longer ignore Conwell’s increasingly apparent caducity. He had no choice but to appeal the matter to Rome, especially upon hearing the news that the Hoganites had raised money to dispatch O’Meally to plead their case at the Papal court. In July of 1827, Conwell, the once-proud and unyielding bishop, bore the mortification of reading Rome’s reversal of his 1826 concession agreement at the altar of St. Mary’s. Increasingly unable to uphold the pose of the stern, unwavering patriarch, it seemed only a matter of time before he would be replaced as head of the diocese. In June of 1828 he was called to Rome. His superiors had begun to phase him out.

Conwell’s successor to the Bishop’s mitre would have to grapple with trusteeism as all four of his antecedents to the post had done. The outsized personalities and peculiar resilience of

\textsuperscript{96}The Reverend Thadeus J. O’Meally, \textit{An Address, Explanatory and Vindicatory, to Both Parties of the Congregation of St. Mary’s}. By Thadeus J. O’Meally, Officiating Pastor (Philadelphia: Printed for the author by Wm. Brown, 1824); Conwell’s excommunication of O’Meally printed in \textit{Concatenation of Speeches}, p. 92.

\textsuperscript{97}Tourscher, pp. 152-170.
Philadelphia’s renegade clergymen, especially William Harold and William Hogan, prolonged struggles that other American dioceses had overcome more expeditiously. But the fundamental issues at the core of Philadelphia’s trustee crisis were common to Catholic communities throughout the United States. The city’s clerical leaders aimed to fulfill the mandates of consolidation handed down by their superiors in Baltimore. At the same time, they relied on the exertions of a prominent lay leadership to assist them in expanding the American Catholic community. Laypeople realized the import of their efforts to raise funds, secure charters, administer trustee elections, and serve various parish organizations. They understood that their cooperation was critical to the success of the consolidating mission. As such, they felt entitled to a level of esteem and influence commensurate with their contributions.

Laypeople who demanded wide latitude in selecting pastors and managing parish funds were careful to classify such functions as temporal matters well within their purview. They insisted that they were appropriately deferential to clerical authority and confounded by the clergy’s resentment of their exertions on behalf of the Church. Laymen and laywomen tenaciously defended the sphere of influence they had crafted for themselves. And as they acted in furtherance of this objective, many lay elites aimed to establish a gendered division of labor intended not only to serve the community but also to assist them in allaying Protestant suspicions of Catholics’ purported sexual and social disorder. Upper and middle class Catholics came to realize—well ahead of the clergy who served them—that establishing the community’s respectability in the eyes of their neighbors required carefully calibrated performances of gender. Catholic women found their contributions to the community circumscribed by the assumption that docility and submission were proofs of their piety. And Catholic men found themselves at pains to establish that they were free agents unhampered by emasculating priestly interference in the management of their community and households. Even as elite and upwardly mobile Catholics strove to convince themselves and their Protestant neighbors of the legitimacy of their claims to respectability, they struggled against the subversion of working class and immigrant Catholics who rejected the behaviors prescribed by the dominant (Protestant) society. The manner in which
laypeople negotiated such difficult social and religious terrain in the midst of the trustee crisis is the subject of the chapters that follow.
For the Catholic laymen who engaged in bitter and protracted battles with clergy over the fate of trusteeism, the objectives were clear. They aimed to retain the very specific and tangible prerogatives once ceded to them by clergy and guaranteed in the church charters. They could argue that, by both law and custom, the power of the parish purse, the management and disposition of church property, and consultative privileges in the selection of pastors rightly fell within their purview. Laymen also had assumed formal administrative posts in most of the community's devotional and associational societies that they retained even into the era of consolidation. But laywomen seeking to direct the outcome of the trustee upheavals faced a more difficult burden. No formal authority had ever been vested in them. Though their energy and industry had been critical to the emergence of a visible and coherent spiritual community, the power they wielded had been diffuse and informal. Catholic laywomen found themselves without precedents from which to draw as they strove to make sense of their responsibilities to this progressively more complex and increasingly hierarchical church.

Laywomen's endeavors on behalf of the faith were complicated further by the steady stream of prescriptive literature that enjoined them to behave with becoming meekness and piety. For the most part, this Catholic brand of feminine submission was imagined to require women's continued enshrinement in the home. As historian Joseph Mannard recently observed, by mid-century, Catholic writers such as the Reverend Charles White had developed a decidedly confining domestic ideology that did more than serve the interests of discrete Catholic households. This “Catholic version of domesticity served as means to a larger end—the growth and defense of the Catholic faith and Catholic institutions in America.” Catholic women were told that their capitulation to a spiritualized domesticity would safeguard Catholicity through their pious
care of children and dependents and their praiseworthy example for those both inside and outside of the Catholic community.  

Such directives seemed to preclude laywomen’s participation in the grittier aspects of Catholic social service work. Yet even as Catholic clergy and laymen exhorted their female co-religionists to be submissive and meek, they called upon them to assume considerable devotional and charitable obligations that threatened to subvert these cherished feminine qualities. To understand the pressing need for laywomen’s labor, it is necessary to trace the phenomenal growth of the city’s Catholic population in the first half of the nineteenth century. According to diocesan historian James F. Connelly, “A well-informed estimate of the number of Catholics in Philadelphia in 1808 puts the figure at around 10,000 out of a total population of 47,786.” By 1832, “…the Catholic population of the diocese was estimated at 100,000, of whom one-fourth were in the city of Philadelphia.”

The expansion of the Catholic community owed much to immigration, mostly from Ireland. Though the great flood of famine-era Irish migration was yet to come, from the perspective of Philadelphians, the influx appeared overwhelming. The clergy scrambled to meet the needs of these recent arrivals, but their numbers and resources were severely constrained. Connelly observes that only thirty-eight priests, many “suffering from infirmities or advanced age,” served the entire diocese. Moreover, “[t]he city of Philadelphia, the largest city in the United States with 188,000 population [sic] in 1830, had but five churches and they could seat only one-fifth of its Catholic population.” To make matters worse, much of the city’s Catholic infrastructure was crumbling; the older church buildings required extensive repairs as well as enlargement.

Laywomen mobilized to meet both the spiritual and material needs of their co-religionists. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, Philadelphia’s laywomen had organized

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100 Ibid., 130.
themselves into numerous devotional and catechetical associations that provided spiritual succor to the members themselves as well as to the recipients of their ministrations. They worked within their parishes, often assuming quasi-domestic responsibilities related to the upkeep of church buildings. Laywomen also embraced a variety of philanthropic and humanitarian causes. They organized associations devoted to the care of orphan children, fallen women, the sick and infirm, and the destitute. And, while they always worked in tandem with clergy and laymen’s organizations, in many cases they were the driving forces behind these urgently-needed ventures.

Philadelphia’s laywomen exhibited some degree of ambivalence in the discharge of their duties. On the one hand, they confined themselves primarily to fundraising and support services, only assuming more visible leadership positions when the community’s male principals were unavailable. They seemed resigned to working from behind the scenes while clergy and women religious took a disproportionate share of the credit for their achievements. On the other hand, laywomen clearly understood the significance of their contributions to the well-being of the community and recognized they had a stake in its governance. Throughout the nineteenth century—and particularly in times of upheaval—laywomen attempted to steer clergy and laymen toward outcomes that conformed to their view of community affairs. And while some women strained against the limits of Catholic domestic ideology to achieve this end, others flouted conventions altogether and threatened to subvert the precarious balance of power that had been struck among various constituencies within the community.

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The American Catholic clergy were long used to harnessing the energy and industry of laywomen. Itinerant priests of the colonial era typically installed themselves in private homes of prominent Catholic families at various stages along their peregrinations. The laywomen of these
households took the lead in hosting their guests, providing refreshment and domestic comforts. And the clergy who accepted their hospitality knew they could rely on the fruits of laywomen’s labors even after their departure. Laywomen were exhorted to oversee the catechization of the children and dependents of their households and to set a pious example for their spouses as well. In the absence of the regular attentions of a settled clergy and the institutions that might have inculcated adherence to Catholicity, women were the most crucial transmitters of the faith.

As the clergy struggled to implement Carroll’s directives for imposing hierarchy and to satisfy the laity’s expectations for more comprehensive spiritual and social services, they took as a given that the success of their endeavors would require the exertions of the community’s laywomen. Yet they also feared that drawing women out of the circumscribed sphere of their households and onto the public stage of Catholic associational life might foster an unseemly independence in the fairer sex. As Mary J. Oates argues in *The Catholic Philanthropic Tradition in America*, the clergy aimed to avoid this eventuality by exhorting women religious to assume responsibility for the more arduous aspects of Catholic social service work while relegating laywomen to less visible endeavors such as fundraising. They also aimed to deprive laywomen of opportunities to actively govern the organizations they served. Clergy and laymen typically dominated the boards of Catholic charities.101

The increasingly gendered nature of Catholic devotional texts of the mid-nineteenth century assumes greater significance when viewed in light of this clerical campaign to constrain laywomen’s autonomy and direct their labors. The proliferation of an American Catholic print culture made it possible for Catholics to amass modest private devotional libraries. By mid-century, Catholics who could not afford to purchase books for private use were welcome to borrow titles from the lending libraries maintained by most parishes in the city. Catholic booksellers came to furnish readers with sex-specific prescriptive literature to be read alongside their catechisms and hagiographies. Such texts exhorted the laity to serve their religious

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community and to represent the faith honorably and ably to hostile Protestants in the manner appropriate to their sex.

In many respects, prescriptive literature targeted to Catholic laywomen conformed to the prevailing Protestant injunction to embody “piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.” But it is possible to discern the formulation of a uniquely Catholic domestic ideology at mid-century. While Catholic women were roundly exhorted to demonstrate “virtues promoted in the [Protestant] mainstream,” Mannard notes that Catholic authors chose to communicate those virtues in a European idiom. Catholic publishers promulgated “more aristocratic, Continental models rather than the Northern bourgeois model found in most American Protestant writings” on appropriately feminine behavior. According to Mannard, the European model reinforced women’s subordinate status within male-dominated households in contrast to the more self-directed heroines who were the products of a literature emerging out of the rapidly-industrializing northeastern American milieu. Mannard highlights the Reverend Charles White’s efforts to popularize an English translation of French author Charles Sainte-Foi’s *Mission and Duties of Young Women*. But his argument might reasonably be extended to a number of titles of the era, including *Letters to Ada; Genevieve, a Tale of Antiquity;* and *Amelia; or, The Influence of Virtue*.\(^{102}\)

Philadelphia’s laywomen easily could have obtained any of these titles through local printers such as Eugene Cummiskey and Bernard Dornin. And beginning in 1833, they also could look directly to their bishop for guidance in the pages of the nation’s second Catholic periodical, the *Catholic Herald*. The paper had been founded as a vehicle for disseminating a series of doctrinal debates between Father John Hughes of St. John’s Parish and anti-Catholic Presbyterian minister and publisher John Breckinridge. But the clergy soon realized that the paper could serve much broader objectives. The *Herald* became more than a rapid-response

forum for challenging Protestant slurs against the faith. It became a clerical tool for indoctrinating the faithful in the behaviors and beliefs most suited to the new era in the American mission.

The *Herald* frequently featured short stories and non-fiction essays that specifically targeted a female readership. Such compositions provided models of feminine behavior to which Philadelphia’s laywomen ought to aspire. Like the prescriptive literature aimed at Protestant women, these works counseled laywomen to act with meekness and piety. In contrast to their Protestant variants, they more aggressively counseled women’s resignation to the constraints and possible disappointments of domesticity. *A Short Address to Married Ladies* illustrates this point. Offering advice that would have sounded familiar to a Protestant readership, the author instructed the unhappily married wife to always let her husband “find you reasonable, even, affable, assiduous in your duties, the first of which is to please him” in spite of whatever vices might prevent the husband from fulfilling his obligations to her. But in a strange revision of the Protestant woman’s injunction to practice moral suasion, the author instructed the Catholic wife to “[l]et not your devotion be troublesome to him: on the contrary, make it consist in obviating his wishes, in obliging him, in condescending to him in all that is not sin.” Though the author suggested that wives’ forbearance and virtuous behavior might ultimately reform irreligious and unfaithful spouses, he de-emphasized the potential of women’s domestic piety to transform the wayward men of their households. Unhappy wives should resign themselves to their sorrowful states just as the martyrs resigned themselves to the afflictions imposed on them in profane societies. “The state of an ill-matched wife is a martyrdom, and the most painful perhaps that there is upon earth,” the author observed. “What will you not obtain for your husband by enduring this martyrdom according to the views of God.” In this way, the long-standing Catholic predilection to elevate the experience of suffering to a devotional practice lessened the subversive potential of the prevailing formulation of the true woman ideal.103

103* A Short Address to Married Ladies,” *Catholic Herald, October 24, 1833.*
Of course, Kenrick did not wish matrimonial martyrdom on the laywomen of his diocese. He also printed *A Parent’s Address to his daughter, on the occasion of her marriage*, which he copied from an issue of the *Catholic Miscellany*, so laywomen might avoid precisely this extremity. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the father who penned the essay sought to encourage his daughter’s marital happiness by impressing upon her the enormity of the commitment she had made before God and the sanction she had accepted to submit to her husband’s will. “[N]ever forget,” he warned her, “the solemn engagement that you have vowed to the Supreme Being, by the hand of the minister of religion and in the presence of your friends. You have promised obedience and fidelity to your husband.” He helpfully listed the qualities a proper Catholic wife should cultivate to facilitate smooth interactions with her husband. She should “[b]e wise, modest, virtuous,” “prudent, discreet and reserved with dignity,” as well as “good, sensible, and indulgent.”¹⁰⁴

Married laywomen also shouldered the considerable responsibility of rearing the “sacred deposit” of children with whom Providence might bless them. The author of the *Address* enjoined his newly-married daughter not only to “attend to their mental and physical improvement,” but also to “impress on their tender minds the principles of your religion; accustom them to early acts of virtue and inspire them with the fear and love of God, at least if they have none for their parents.” Here, he articulated a clear conflation of the spiritual and the domestic. But the simple fact that the father—not the mother—of this Catholic bride claimed responsibility for assisting her transition to her husband’s household suggests that Catholic domestic spaces were not strictly coded as feminine domains.¹⁰⁵

Catholics deployed the increasingly common conflation of the spiritual and the domestic to harness laywomen’s maternity for the benefit of their parish communities. And a Catholic mother’s greatest achievement was the sacrifice of her sons to the priesthood. Father Jordan made this clear in his eulogy for Mary O’Connor, whom he praised as “a Catholic in heart and

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¹⁰⁴ *A Parent’s Address to his daughter, on the occasion of her marriage,* *Catholic Herald,* January 17, 1833.
¹⁰⁵ ibid.
mind and soul, a Catholic in thought in word and in deed. This woman of the gracious ways, the quiet virtues, and the unobtrusive life, had a martyr’s faith and courage.” Though Mrs. O’Connor had no other surviving children who could care for her in her declining years or delight her with grandchildren, she happily encouraged her son to follow God’s calling and enter the seminary. The widowed Mrs. O’Connor never pulled her son away from his pastoral duties, “counting it reward sufficient for her offering if only she were permitted to see him every two to three years.” Indeed, she had urged him to leave her alone in her deathbed so that he might return to his clerical post. “You are not my child only,” she said, “but we two belong to God, and he has traced our lives apart.”

Mrs. O’Connor had clearly imbibed Catholic prescriptions for maternal nurture that instructed her, as Father Jordan had sermonized, to “train good citizens, honest statesmen and zealous priests.” She had practiced—not the brand of republican motherhood formulated by Protestants—but a Catholic version of maternal service requiring self-sacrifice that honored her faith community as well as her nation. Here, Father Jordan struggled to reconcile the assimilationist stance that celebrated Catholics’ capacity for democratic citizenship and the separatist stance that called for Catholics to look to their religious community as the primary locus of identity formation. Jordan paid lip service to O’Connor’s facility for training a good citizen. But it was her role as the mother of a priest that resulted in her special status within the community. She was one of only a handful of women whose obituaries appeared in the Herald, which usually reserved that honor for clergymen and generous lay (male) benefactors. Jordan obviously found the spiritual training she offered her son to be more important than the civic training all Catholic mothers conveyed to their children in anonymity.

Though authors could credibly present unselfish Catholic mothers as exemplars of Catholic maternal nurture, they experienced some difficulty when celebrating the motherly virtues of nuns. Catholics had long praised women religious as superior caretakers and styled them the

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106 In Memoriam. Mrs. Mary O’Connor, “Catholic Herald, May 13, 1876.
metaphorical mothers of the communities they served. But in a hostile Protestant culture in which biological mothers typically imparted Christian values to their dependents, Catholics found it difficult to establish the superiority of the convent to the home without arousing Protestant suspicions of Catholic domestic disorder. Joseph Mannard has written of the two-fold strategy deployed by Catholics to resolve this predicament. First, they emphasized that most women would fulfill their divinely-sanctioned roles as wives and mothers because only a small number of women were called to convent life. Second, they placed special emphasis on the "maternity of the spirit" derived from the nun's status as a spiritual 'bride of Christ' and from her works of teaching, nursing, orphan care, and moral reform.  

Philadelphia Catholics deployed both strategies in the pages of the Herald. Kenrick invoked St. Augustine to answer those Protestants who claimed that Catholics condemned women to lives of unnatural celibacy. He reminded critics that Augustine had called for the enshrinement of women's sexuality in the marital relationship even as he argued that virginity was a more virtuous state for the handful of women who would take religious vows. He explained that Catholics applied Augustine's directive just as the Church Fathers had intended. The Herald also celebrated nuns' "maternity of the spirit" described by Mannard. For instance, a May 1841 issue of the paper featured the poem, The Dying Nun, on its first page. The poem contrasted the end-of-life reveries one might expect of a typical Catholic laywoman with the thoughts upon the "stainless brow" of a woman religious. The laywoman had reason to be content with her respectable life and character. But the nun could indulge in a "thrilling gladness" on her deathbed when she thought of the exemplary saints whose piety and service she had emulated throughout her rewarding life. Kenrick's message was clear: Catholics could revere the extraordinary

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sacrifices made by women religious even as they appreciated the less dramatic contributions of laywomen to the community.\textsuperscript{108}

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By the 1830s, Catholics had become adept at deploying the printed word to counter the charges of social and sexual disorder propounded by their Protestant detractors. And fiction in the fashionable sentimental style proved a popular format for challenging aspersions. In addition to the devotional novels aimed at edifying and entertaining members of the faith, Catholic writers also began to produce explicitly apologetic tales aimed at a Protestant readership. Indeed, Willard Thorp estimates that, from 1829 to 1865, “nearly 50 pro-Catholic novels on American themes were published.” The appearance of such works coincided with the rising tide of anti-Catholic agitation, “prompting novelists to write realistically about the vicissitudes and deprivations of American Catholics.” Significantly, these novelists often developed plots that asserted the compatibility of the Catholic faith with elite American values. And they often featured Catholic adherence to customary gender roles as an expedient for making their case.\textsuperscript{109}

The work of the Reverend Charles Pise, a pioneer in American Catholic letters, is a case in point. The American-born, Georgetown-educated Jesuit wrote five Catholic apologetic novels in addition to a massive five-volume \textit{History of the Church from Its Establishment to the Present Century} and a book of devotionals and poems. In his popular \textit{Letters to Ada}, he explicitly linked Catholicism, gender, and respectability. The novel consists of a series of fictional letters from an unnamed Catholic gentleman to his Protestant sister-in-law intended to allay her suspicions of his faith. In addition to addressing commonly-misrepresented aspects of Catholic doctrine, the narrator couches a plea for tolerance in a reminder of the tragic fate of a convert named Jane. He

\textsuperscript{108}Untitled article, \textit{Catholic Herald} (Volume 1, Number 22), May 30, 1833; “Celibacy of the Catholic Clergy,” \textit{Catholic Herald} (Volume 9, Number 14), April 8, 1841; and “The Dying Nun,” \textit{Catholic Herald} (Volume 9, Number 21), May 27, 1841.

reminds Ada that she knew the unfortunate young woman “when she was the glory of her family.” At that time, “she was then a protestant, rigidly devoted to her church, first in all good works, and zealous in her principles.”

But when Jane gathered the courage to deliver a Protestant tract to a Catholic priest, she encountered a man very different from the sinister fiend she anticipated. The kindly priest persuaded Jane to engage him in a series of conversations about the true principles of Catholics and to read a number of Catholic texts. Though Jane’s Protestant friends hoped to counter the priest’s influence over her with persuasive conversations and texts of their own, Jane decided to convert. Jane joyously experienced “the panoply of heaven… extended over her heart,” upon her conversion. Yet she was stung by the “stern reproof, and cold disdain” she encountered upon returning home from her Catholic confirmation ceremony. Ignored by her father, denounced as a disgrace by her mother, and shunned by siblings fearful of her new faith, Jane grew increasingly despondent and sick over the course of several weeks. She bravely chose to hold fast to Catholicism in spite of her family’s rejection. The author explained, “[f]or the sake of her heavenly Father, she could brave the frowns of her earthly parents.” Finally overcome by grief, Jane withdrew to her sickbed and died with prayers for her beloved parents and siblings on her lips.\footnote{Charles Constantine Pise, \textit{Letters to Ada; From her Brother-in-Law} (New-York: Harper & Brothers, 1834), pp. 47-48.}

Pise obviously intended to condemn Protestant bigotry by exposing the “paternal intolerance” Jane endured. Yet his morality tale inadvertently corroborated everything Protestants feared from the rise of Catholicism in the United States. Jane’s series of conversations with the persuasive priest, which he “conducted with becoming mildness, perspicuity, and elegance,” confirmed Protestants’ belief that the Catholic clergy aimed to charm guileless Protestant women into their Romish churches. And Jane’s tragic end also substantiated many Protestants’ fear that a loved one’s conversion to Catholicism could destroy the domestic happiness of once-peaceful families. Moreover, the narrator’s communications with his sister-in-law mirrored the relationship between the priest of his story and Jane. Though he claimed only to want to answer Ada’a\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 53-54.}
questions and allay her suspicions, his persuasiveness and her ingenuousness left her vulnerable to conversion.\(^{112}\)

American Catholics also hoped they might rehabilitate the sullied image of the nun in popular culture through a skillful deployment of the printed word. But, here again, they inadvertently threatened the Protestant feminine ideal from which they borrowed so heavily and risked doing themselves more harm than good. Publisher Nathaniel Peabody found himself ensnared in such a bind when he published a series of letters sent from a young Catholic convert and Sister of Charity to her Boston-based Baptist mother. Sister Mary Ignatia Greene often described her teaching responsibilities at the convent school in language that evoked the “maternity of the spirit” ideal. She referred to her pupils as “my children,” and spoke of caring for them in language that displayed her strong affection for them. She frequently mentioned the benevolent work pursued by her fellow Sisters of Charity, especially those who cared for victims of yellow fever in hospitals throughout the northeast. Though a number of these women had succumbed to the illness themselves, Ignatia speculated on how “happy” the women must have been on their deathbeds, “privileged to assist souls so neglected” by family and friends unwilling to risk contagion. She openly admired them as embodiments of the “maternity of the spirit” ideal, as when she spoke of a “Sister Servant” possessing “a mother’s heart” that earned her the admiration of her fellow Sisters of Charity “wherever she has been on a mission.”\(^{113}\)

Sister Mary Ignatia labored to dispel her mother’s lingering suspicions of convent life. In particular, she addressed Mrs. Greene’s fears that the mother superior aimed to force a wedge between the young nun and her natal family by monitoring the correspondence between mother and daughter. Ignatia declared, “I am sure that I get all [letters] that come to St. Joseph’s [Convent, in Emmittsburg, Maryland]—in fact, even were there any thing in them which would prevent their being given to me,— which there is not.” But her tortured assurance that her mother superior “hardly ever reads them; in fact, I think never would be a much truer expression than

\(^{112}\)Ibid., p. 50.

\(^{113}\)Letters of Sister Mary Ignatia to her Own Mother (Boston: Sold by Nathaniel Peabody, 1853), pp. 14, 44, 76.
hardly ever, for she does not even unfold them," undoubtedly did little to relieve her biological mother’s worries. Indeed, elsewhere in her letters, Ignatia confirmed Mrs. Greene’s suspicion that the mother superior monitored their correspondence when she mentioned having asked her permission to write. On another occasion, Ignatia wrote that the mother superior “sent for me after my last letter, and told me she was much inclined to give it back to me, and make me write it over, for neglecting to give [Mrs. Greene] her love.” Ignatia intended the comment to show her mother that she was “not forgotten in our Valley.” But the anecdote also disclosed the extent of the mother superior’s power over Ignatia that could supersede the bond between Ignatia and her biological parent.114

Even if Mrs. Greene came to look more kindly on her daughter’s spiritual “mother,” she could not ignore the continual threat of geographic separation from her daughter. Ignatia professed her willingness to “make all sacrifices” required of a Sister of Charity, even if that meant relocation to a mission far from her natal family. Mrs. Greene grew alarmed as her daughter waited to hear which members of the community would be transferred to a Paris convent house. Though her daughter had, in fact, requested a transfer to the French mission, Ignatia’s disappointment at not being chosen filled her mother with relief. Alas, Mrs. Greene’s reprieve was short-lived. Two years later, Ignatia received orders to relocate to a convent outpost in San Francisco. And because instructions called for a swift relocation, Ignatia could not satisfy her mother’s request that she visit her biological family in New England before venturing westward. Ignatia admitted to being saddened by the prospect of putting greater distance between them. Yet she told Mrs. Greene, “I feel more for you than for myself,” since selection for the mission was a “great honor” for which Ignatia felt “truly grateful.” Ignatia realized that her mother viewed her daughter’s religious commitments as destructive of the Greene family’s happiness. She (and her publishers) hoped her letters would soothe wounded feelings and maintain kinship ties. But to Mrs. Greene and many Protestant readers, Ignatia’s commitment to

114Ibid., pp. 15-16, 22.
the Sisters of Charity seemed to supplant what should have been an instinctive and indissoluble connection to her biological family.\textsuperscript{115}

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The hopelessness of pacifying disapproving Protestants led Catholics to turn toward their spiritual community for the emotional and psychological support provided by the practice of their faith. The progress of Catholic community formation became a self-perpetuating force: as greater numbers of Catholics required the construction of more numerous and more visible social structures, Protestant fears increased and fed anti-Catholic sentiments, which in turn led Catholics to forge ever-stronger affective ties to their co-religionists. In consequence, Philadelphia’s Catholic community enjoyed an efflorescence of devotional organizations in the first half of the nineteenth century. Laymen based at St. Augustine’s parish had established a confraternity in the city as early as 1812. But their modest association paled in comparison to what the succeeding generation of Catholics would establish. By the eighteen-forties, most parishes could claim to be home to five or more devotional organizations that served various constituencies within the community.

In Philadelphia, St. Joseph’s Church served as the originating parish for many of the city’s most enthusiastically attended devotional organizations, thanks in large part to the tireless efforts of the parish’s Jesuit pastor, Father F.J. Barbelin. Once Barbelin and his eager group of associates had presided over the creation of a new sodality, the bishop happily commended the Jesuits’ efforts and recommended that other parishes follow suit. From there, close cooperation between parish priests and leading laypeople promoted the growth of the association throughout the diocese. Thus, energy and commitment on the part of all constituencies party to the creation of a new sodality proved critical to its success. The propagation of spiritual societies cannot

\textsuperscript{115}Ibid., pp. 53, 76-77.
strictly be seen as a product of the consolidation movement. Rather, the organizations emerged out of the mutually constitutive forces of institutionalization, lay aspirations for spiritual networks, and a separatist impulse borne of Protestants’ vilification of the faith.

By 1857, the alchemy of these elements had made it possible for Barbelin to boast in a letter to his sister of more than fifteen lay spiritual organizations (as well as six benevolent societies) within his parish alone. According to custom, most of the organizations were sex- and age-specific, creating opportunities for Catholics of similar circumstances to worship together in relatively egalitarian settings. Barbelin wrote of a Young Ladies’ Sodality dedicated to the Blessed Virgin and patronized by St. Rose, as well as separate sodalities dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary for men, young men, and young girls. When he listed the “2 congregations in honor of the Holy Angels; 3 congregations in honor of St. Aloysius and 3 in honor of the Child Jesus,” he most certainly referred to separate organizations of various constituencies dedicated to the same spiritual pursuits. Scattered evidence suggests that these organizations often reached over parish boundaries to form networks of similarly-circumstanced Catholics, as when the sodalists of St. Patrick’s parish dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary invited their counterparts at St. Joseph’s to their annual picnic or when obituaries indicated that the deceased had been a member of the sodalities of a parish different from the one at which he or she attended Mass and took the sacraments. About half of the marriage banns that survive for St. Joseph’s parish indicate the betrothed couple belonged to separate parishes within the city, suggesting that social and spiritual links stretched beyond individuals’ parishes into the broader Catholic community.116

Both the purposes and structures of such organizations most assuredly empowered Catholic laywomen. Take, for instance, the sense of shared sacred purpose that bound the women of the city’s multiple rosary bands. Its female membership gathered regularly for collective devotions to the Blessed Virgin as well as to plead for Mary’s intervention on behalf of particular

116Letter of F.J. Barbelin to Marie Barbelin, August 27, 1857; Father Barbelin’s book of pulpit announcements, kept from 1848-1853, held in the archive of Old St. Joseph’s Church, Willing’s Alley, Philadelphia; and membership books for Confraternity of the Blessed Virgin of Mt. Carmel (Scapular) kept from 1837-1855 and the Bona Mors Association kept for 1841, both held in the archive of Old St. Joseph’s Church, Willings Alley, Philadelphia.
individuals or causes. Additionally, the women divided up responsibility for reciting the rosary—assigning various members each to deliver a decade from the privacy of her home. The women might pool their spiritual resources for an important common cause. Or they might divide up responsibility by assigning each member a specific person or purpose on which to meditate. Like all Catholic societies of the era, they acted under the guidance of a clergyman. But they enjoyed wide latitude in governing themselves, selecting lay “Heads of Various Rosary Bands” to oversee the administration of their pious endeavors.\textsuperscript{117}

The women sometimes met for common prayer on parish grounds and sometimes fulfilled their spiritual obligations to the group in the seclusion of their own homes. They thereby elided the distinction between domestic and parish spaces. Thus, Catholic women undertook home-based devotions in service to parish communities as well as to their individual families. This approach encouraged laywomen to think of their church-based associates as part of an extended network of kin. Catholics also fostered this sentiment among laywomen by domesticating their experience of the parish itself. The popularity and success of the Sanctuary Society, founded in 1837 and going strong more than a decade and a half later, is a case in point. Its members contributed annual dues of fifty cents and volunteered their time for the “care and adornment of the altars” of their parishes. Feast days merited special ministrations, and observers often remarked on the elaborate floral displays mounted by Sanctuary Society members on such occasions. By fulfilling a decidedly domestic obligation within the boundaries of the parish, Sanctuary Society members enjoyed a special and exalted place in the community. In 1853, Father Barbelin announced from the pulpit that its members “should deem it a great advantage” to be part of the Society and promised that, “living or dead, they have a share in the prayers offered & Holy Sacrifices offered for the Benefactors of this church.” Clearly, laywomen felt the responsibility to serve as caretakers and adorners of parish spaces more keenly than laymen.

\textsuperscript{117}Father Barbelin’s book of pulpit announcements, kept from 1848-1853, held in the archive of Old St. Joseph’s Church, Willing’s Alley, Philadelphia; Note that a “decade” of the rosary refers to a set of ten beads on which a Catholic recites the “Hail Mary” prayer and one larger bead on which a Catholic recites the “Our Father” prayer. Each decade stands for a particular “mystery” of the Catholic faith (meaning doctrinal knowledge divinely revealed). Most rosary beads call for meditation on five mysteries of the faith, though some call for meditation on all fifteen mysteries.
Consider that the Young Ladies’ Sodality assumed responsibility for raising the funds to construct a more elaborate and striking altar for the recently-expanded St. Joseph’s parish in 1848 and laywomen volunteered their services to dress the new structure’s windows with blinds. No laymen’s organization undertook similar work.\(^{118}\)

Affective ties among co-religionists increased in tandem with the expansion of devotional organizations. Philadelphia Catholics felt increasingly obliged to guarantee the health and welfare of their fellows as community ties grew stronger. Though benevolent societies were significantly less popular than devotional organizations in the first half of the nineteenth century, a number of groups dedicated to social service concerns had emerged by the eighteen-forties. Philadelphia Catholics could boast of a Ladies’ Benevolent Society for the Relief of the Poor of the City and Districts; Dorcas and Benevolent Societies for the Relief of the Poor; a St. Vincent of Paul Society; a Ladies’ Clothing Society; an Emigrants’ Society; a Magdalen Society (to shelter and rehabilitate fallen women); St. Ann’s Widow’s Asylum; St. John’s Orphan Asylum (for boys); St. Joseph’s Orphanage (for girls); a Hospital Beneficial Society; and a Temperance Beneficial Society.

Additionally, Catholics formed clubs that championed educational endeavors and provided refined entertainments to community members. Such groups displayed cultivated Catholics’ adherence to mainstream standards of respectability and aimed to promote intellectual and social improvement among less refined co-religionists. Societies for the circulation of good books allowed Catholics of limited means to improve their minds, while their more learned co-religionists flocked to the edifying seminars and discussions hosted by the Catholic Philopatrian Society. The St. Cecilia Musical Association encouraged the performance of sacred music. Adult schools met in church basements three evenings each week to educate unlettered Catholics in the rudiments of reading, writing and figuring. A “Sunday School” provided a similar service for the Catholic children of uneducated parents (not to be confused with the Christian Doctrine

\(^{118}\)Father Barbelin’s book of pulpit announcements, kept from 1848-1853, held in the archive of Old St. Joseph’s Church, Willing’s Alley, Philadelphia; and Trial of William Hogan., pp. 74-75.
Society, which instructed children in the tenets of the faith). Organizations also raised funds to support the establishment of a seminary (St. Charles Borromeo, founded in 1838) and a college (St. John’s, which, after surmounting considerable difficulties, was finally launched in 1870).

As the quasi-domestic nature of many of these benevolent societies suggests, laywomen were crucial to founding and maintaining them. And like American Catholic women elsewhere, they appeased anxious clergy and laymen by narrowing the scope of their activities primarily to fundraising. Philadelphia laywomen most often raised money by hosting “fancy fairs” or “orphan fairs” that served the dual purpose of facilitating their patronage of Catholic charitable endeavors and demonstrating their respectability to the broader Philadelphia community. A fair held in late May of 1833 to support the labors of the Sisters of Charity was typical. In the pages of the Herald, laywomen tempted fair-goers with the promise of a “small gallery display” that featured a “quality Italian painting once owned by Napoleon’s uncle, a cardinal.” The sale of tickets to the modest exhibit, along with proceeds from the sale of donated “fancy articles” earned an impressive $1943. Additionally, laywomen solicited priests to deliver frequent charity sermons that they zealously attended and supported. The clergy recognized the importance of laywomen to the success of these events; they often selected topics that promised to secure the interest of a female audience, such as the duties of a wife to her husband or the special virtues of mothers.119

Laywomen clearly aimed to conform to clerical expectations for deference and subordination. But, by mid-century, the needs of the burgeoning Catholic community had become so considerable that laywomen’s relegation to supporting roles was obviously untenable. The clergy had no choice but to encourage laywomen’s occasional encroachments into territory intended for their male counterparts. The ambivalence under the surface of Bishop Kenrick’s praise of the Ladies’ Catholic Hospital Society speaks to this dilemma. His remarks suggest that he respected and encouraged the laywomen’s efforts, even as he sought to downplay the scope of their activities. In a Herald article reporting on the Society’s progress and pleading for

119Catholic Herald, Volume 1, Number 25 (June 20, 1833) and Volume 1, Number 25 (June 27, 1833).
additional volunteers, the Bishop editorialized, “...in commencing a work of such magnitude as an Hospital, the co-operation of the fairer sex must be considered almost an essential element for its future success; for without woman, self-sacrificing and devoted woman, the fire of charity would soon be quenched.” The bishop’s remarks obscure what an examination of the Society’s minutes reveals. The laywomen did more than co-operate; they appear to have been the driving force behind the establishment of what came to be known as St. Joseph’s Hospital.\textsuperscript{120}

Though the Society’s president, a Mrs. Pleasanton, opened her meetings with formulaic remarks directed to the “beloved pastor of St. Joseph’s, who is always foremost in works of charity and piety,” it seems the priest did little more than chaperone. The laywomen had elected a slate of officers, including two vice-presidents, a treasurer, and secretaries and lady managers from each of eleven parishes. They formulated a constitution that stated their objectives and the rules by which they planned to fulfill them. And they outlined an ambitious agenda for themselves. The laywomen organized fundraisers and collected the annual dues (of one dollar) from members, as well as solicited donations from Catholic communities throughout the country. They set out to find a building and remodel and furnish it for use as a hospital. And, most importantly, they recruited women religious to carry out the arduous work of tending the sick. As the Herald article explained, “under the care of Heaven’s favorite daughters, the Sisters of a religious order, [we] must be certain of success.”\textsuperscript{121}

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No impartial observer could justifiably have questioned the zeal of Philadelphia’s laywomen. The sheer number of organizations they founded and the frequency with which they met in support of their causes demonstrates the sincerity of feeling behind their endeavors. Yet, many clearly internalized the Catholic injunction to subordinate their own efforts to the supposedly

\textsuperscript{120} Catholic Herald, January 18, 1849.  
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
superior exertions of women religious. Philadelphia Catholics clearly believed that nuns embodied the superlative approach to the practice of feminine nurture and they repeatedly recruited women religious to the city to assume responsibility for their most labor-intensive social service endeavors. As early as 1786, the indefatigable priest Ferdinand Farmer had sought to establish women religious in Philadelphia. He wrote to then-Archbishop Carroll that he had consulted with prominent (and wealthy) layman Thomas Fitzsimmons on the matter, presumably to secure his financial patronage of a convent house. Farmer's bid failed. Fitzsimmons had proved unwilling to support a convent within the city proper, pressing Farmer instead to establish a community of women religious “in the country.” But the letters that passed between the men expose not only the extent to which the Catholic community depended on lay patronage, but also the extent to which both the clergy and laity assumed the advancement of the diocese to depend on the labors of nuns.¹²²

The community most assiduously aimed to employ nuns in the care of vulnerable Catholic children. The efforts of an ad hoc committee of laymen to organize the means for supporting Catholic orphans in the wake of the 1797 yellow fever epidemic were typical. The committee first aimed to place the children with Catholic families and thereby shield them from the baleful influence of Protestant foster parents unwilling to respect their charges’ religious inheritance. But by 1806, it had become clear that a more permanent institution was required. A consortium of prominent laymen created St. Joseph’s Orphan Asylum. They acquired a residence next to Holy Trinity parish and secured the services of a trusted lay “matron” to look after the children. But both the lay overseers and the clergymen with whom they consulted on the undertaking saw the lay caretaker as a temporary expedient.¹²³

The task of wooing women religious to the institution fell to Father Hurley, then of St. Augustine’s parish. Naturally, he looked locally. With the approbation of then-Bishop Egan and Metropolitan John Carroll, he requested that Mother Elizabeth Seton send three of her Sisters of

¹²²Letter of Ferdinand Farmer to John Carroll, June 22, 1786; ACHR (Volume 7, Number 2), April, 1911.
¹²³ACHR Vol. 14, No. 1 (June, 1897), pp. 9-12.
Charity from their Emmittsburg, Maryland, convent to superintend the Orphan House. On October 6, 1814, Sister Rose White, Sister Susan Clossey, and Sister Theresa Conroy finally arrived to relieve the lay matron. The arrangement that emerged between the women religious and the lay managers was typical of Catholic charitable enterprises of the time. The male managers initially dispensed six hundred dollars to the women religious, who appear to have enjoyed wide latitude in the management of the asylum. And while the organization relied on the more substantial contributions of a handful of privileged benefactors, it fell to laywomen to raise the greater part of the monies needed to keep the institution running.\textsuperscript{124}

Little progress of any kind had taken place under the sluggish administrations of Bishop Egan and Vicar General Louis DeBarth. Indeed, the arrival of the Sisters of Charity at such an unsettled period in Philadelphia Catholicism must be viewed as a noteworthy achievement. So it should come as no surprise that, when Henry Conwell arrived in Philadelphia to put the turbulent diocese to rights, he moved quickly to establish a convent within his orbit. As early as October of 1821, he had identified, “3 young ladies in Philadelphia, each of whom has an independent fortune of 10,000.00, making 30,000.00 who would be very anxious to enter into a religious State, for the purpose of educating their own sex and saving souls in Philadelphia.” Conwell intended his upcoming visit to confer with the Bishop of Quebec a prime opportunity to procure two Ursulines to relocate to Philadelphia the following summer to establish a convent house and train the three Philadelphia ladies as their novitiates.\textsuperscript{125}

Clearly, Conwell hoped to organize a Philadelphia convent on the European model that relied on the “dowries” of its sisters to sustain itself. But he must have realized quite swiftly that his “3 Philadelphia ladies” were unusual for their capacity to support their own spiritual endeavor. In January of 1822, he reported to the Bishop of Quebec that the “Trustees have involved us into great [legal] expenses” from civil suits pertaining to the schism at St. Mary’s parish. His recognition that a Philadelphia-based convent would not be self-sustaining, coupled with the

\textsuperscript{124}Ibid., pp. 9-12.
\textsuperscript{125}Letter of Henry Conwell to Joseph Plessis, October 25, 1821; ACHR (Volume 7, Number 2), April, 1911.
financial burden of the crisis, forced him to postpone his plan. Though Conwell took comfort in the first round of decisions the Pennsylvania courts had returned in his favor, he acknowledged disappointment that establishing Ursulines in Philadelphia would require years rather than months. In the end, the three young ladies traveled to Quebec to receive their religious instruction and Conwell turned his attention to bringing the schismatics to heel.126

Even when the Catholic community could celebrate the settlement of nuns in Philadelphia, they could not assume the struggle to place Catholic children in the virtuous and tender care of women religious was at an end. The clergyman who eventually came to serve the city’s three Sisters of Charity as their spiritual director objected to them looking after male orphans. The original orphan asylum had continued to expand throughout the first two decades of the century, and by 1836 it had become necessary to establish two separate asylums, one for girls and one for boys. In deference to the Sisters’ spiritual director, the nuns continued to oversee St. Joseph’s Orphan Asylum for girls, while pious laywomen were recruited to relieve them of their duties at St. John’s Orphan Asylum for boys. The Catholic gender convention that militated against women religious overseeing the activities of Catholic boys also interfered with the development of parochial schools. Though Conwell’s successor, Francis Kenrick, oversaw the establishment of several girls’ schools under the direction of women religious, his on-going difficulty in attracting male orders to educate the city’s Catholic boys vexed him throughout his time as bishop.127

Philadelphia Catholics’ ability to expand their social service networks in the eighteen-forties owed much to Bishop Kenrick’s successful efforts at bringing women religious to the city. He first prevailed on the French-based Sisters of St. Joseph, whose labors at a Catholic mission in St. Louis had impressed his brother (and fellow clergyman) Peter, to assist with Philadelphia’s Catholic orphans. It seems the spiritual director who served them did not share the

126Letter of Henry Conwell to Joseph Plessis, January 6, 1822; ACHR (Volume 7, Number 2), April, 1911; see also, extract from the “History of the Ursulines of Quebec,” taken from a manuscript in the Order’s private archive and printed in ACHR (Volume 6, Number 3), July, 1889.
apprehensions expressed by the director of the Sisters of Charity. In 1847, the order took over management of St. John’s Orphan Asylum for boys. The order continued to assist Philadelphia laywomen in their benevolent work. They were the order to which the lady managers of the Hospital Beneficial Society had turned when they commenced a search for nurses. And the order also came to preside over St. Ann’s Widows’ Asylum and accepted teaching duties within the diocese. Additionally, Kenrick persuaded Visitation nuns, Sisters of Notre Dame, and Sisters of the Good Shepherd to operate girls’ schools in the city.\(^{128}\)

Kenrick’s successes may have been considerable, but they failed to surpass the significant burdens facing the less fortunate members of his flock. The bishop would have had to deploy a small army of women religious to meet the requirements of benevolence to be found in Philadelphia. Even with the infusion of new orders, laywomen were called upon to roll up their sleeves and assist Catholic unfortunates. Yet laywomen’s preference to remain sheltered within the safe zones of their parishes and leave the more interventionist aspects of benevolence to women religious or laymen’s organizations seems to have persisted well into the nineteenth century. The Roman Catholic Ladies’ Benevolent Society of the City and County of Philadelphia, founded in 1832, revealed this disposition in their second annual report. Working in concert with the Female Hospital Society and the Union Benevolent Society, the members sought to address the most acute sufferings of poor Catholics. They provided staples such as bread and fuel, recruited doctors to visit the sick, and aimed whenever possible to arrange for destitute children to attend school. In only their second year of existence, the laywomen could boast of assisting hundreds of families.\(^ {129}\)

Yet the laywomen felt disinclined to celebrate their achievements. Not only had they been forced to rely on sizeable contributions from the male-run Hibernian Society and the Gentlemen’s Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, but they also lamented that they lacked the

\(^{128}\textit{Ibid.},\ pp. 191-192.\)
womanpower necessary to the success of their endeavor. The enormity of their task had required them to organize themselves into discreet regions—six city districts and six county districts—and to deploy a lady manager for each who would be supported in her work by a party of local women sent door-to-door. But too few women possessed the gumption to venture into the bleakest regions of the city to evaluate the validity of destitute Catholics' claims for relief. The Society's officers informed readers that, “We are aware of the arduous duties which the managers had to perform, more particularly when no visiting committee could be found to assist in ascertaining the ‘condition’ of the numerous applications—as... is so highly necessary before relief can be afforded in order that the most indigent and deserving may have the preference.” It is tempting to assume that there is nothing peculiarly Catholic in the laywomen’s reluctance to descend into the muck of Philadelphia’s meanest streets. But when viewed in comparison to their Protestant counterparts, and when interpreted within the framework of the American Church’s mid-century consolidation movement, it appears that elite and middle-class Catholic women capitulated—perhaps too readily—to the clerical expectation for humility and deference.\textsuperscript{130}

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Even as laywomen declined to make decisive inroads into traditionally male Catholic preserves, they created a sphere of influence from within the confines of the community from which to informally direct its progress. In particular, they became the self-appointed transmitters of vital information on community affairs. Laywomen’s intelligence networks managed to direct Catholic community formation as the women’s chatter came to shape popular opinion on unfolding events. Laywomen’s networks were particularly powerful in times of crisis, when competing factions deployed their female adherents to politick in support of a particular outcome.

\textsuperscript{130}ibid.
Philadelphia's laywomen realized that the outcome of the trustee crisis would recalibrate the balance of power between clergy and laity. As the community split into warring factions, laywomen on both sides of the conflict aimed to effect an outcome that conformed to their interpretation of events. They seem to have taken for granted that their special insight into community affairs and their considerable contributions to its welfare entitled them to participate in the resolution of the conflict. Indeed, as the crisis escalated, one laywoman in particular came to occupy the center of controversy. The polarizing Many Connell galvanized women on both sides of the conflict.

The schismatic Reverend William Hogan had cast himself as the embattled champion of true religion valiantly defending Philadelphia Catholicity against the sinister forces of clerical hypocrisy exemplified by his bishop and fellow priests. Before long, the tables had turned, and Hogan found his own virtue to be the subject of heated debate. He faced accusations of sexual impropriety, possibly engineered against him by his opponents within the Catholic community. Connell, his servant and former supporter-turned-Bishopite, swore a complaint against him for attempted rape and assault. The ensuing scandal dragged the beleaguered community through the mortification of a criminal trial that held the city—and, indeed, the nation—in thrall. The detailed trial transcript that chronicles this remarkable turn of events reveals a great deal about the informal but powerful role that laywomen played both before and during the crisis.

Hogan’s journey through the criminal courts began with a dispute that erupted at his home on Willings Alley on the evening of October 6, 1821. According to Connell, Hogan had asked her to call on him on that date to assist him with various errands in preparation for an upcoming move to a house on Spruce Street. Once at the residence on Willings Alley, she pursued her work in the presence of Hogan, fellow disgraced priest A.O. Hannon, and a male servant too drunk to be a reliable witness to the contested events that followed. Connell testified that Hogan had grabbed her and “said I was a very nice woman, (smiling) and he wanted to kiss me badly. Not in that [sic] words, but in a more indelicate manner which it is not necessary to
state. It was something more indecent.” Connell said that she labored to free herself from his grip
and the ensuing struggle enraged Hogan and prompted him to beat her and stab her in the arm
with a sword. Connell said that, after the assault, Hogan placed her in the charge of A.O. Hannon
while he left the house. During the several hours of her confinement, Hannon forced her to drink a
quantity of wine that made her drunk. And when his efforts to persuade Connell to regain her
composure failed, Hannon assaulted her as well. Unfortunately for Connell, when the watchman
responded to reports of a scuffle, Connell’s erratic behavior and apparent intoxication convinced
him that she had been the aggressor, attacking a flustered and perplexed Hogan. 131

Clearly, Connell’s role at the center of community affairs was not without precedent. She
seems to have been one of a number of female intermediaries between the clergy and the laity
prior to the schism. Testimony indicated that, long before the alleged assault, she had been a
vital source of intelligence and assistance to Hogan. Sometimes Connell would approach Hogan
for money to address a specific need or to assist a particular person. At other times, he entrusted
her with funds that he ordered her to dispense as she saw fit. Connell became so comfortable in
her role as his charitable advisor that, at one point, she took it upon herself to criticize him for
failing to distinguish between the deserving and undeserving poor. 132

Connell also had been an active agent in laywomen’s communication networks by which
she and her co-religionists policed the boundaries of the community. Again, the trial testimony
sheds light on the process in action. Bridget Connelly testified about the manner in which she
learned that Connell had been playing both sides of the controversy. She explained that she had
witnessed Mary Connell with “three or four women about her; and she was telling about her
getting, the day before, a woman; she said she had got a woman of bad character, to go into the
bishop’s house, to swear anything the bishop would ask her to swear, against the character of
Mr. Hogan.” Shortly thereafter, Connell pursued Connelly as she left the church to ask whether

131 A Compendious Trial of the Rev. William Hogan, Pastor of the Roman Catholic Church of St. Mary’s, on an Indictment
for an Assault and Battery on the Person of Mary Connell. By a Listener. (Philadelphia, 1822); and The Trial of the Rev.
William Hogan, Pastor of St. Mary’s Church, for an Assault and Battery on Mary Connell. By Joseph A. Dowling,
Stenographer. (Philadelphia: Published by R. Desilver), 1822.
132 Trial of the Rev. William Hogan, p. 35.
she had heard the rumors of Connell’s defection to St. Joseph’s. Of course Connelly knew; the network had already been activated.\textsuperscript{133}

Connell hoped to convince Connelly of the inaccuracy of the defection rumors. Connell claimed merely to have exploited the network in an effort “to know what both sides said.” She said her efforts had been fruitful. Not only had she uncovered many Catholics’ true loyalties, but she also learned of the nefarious tactics employed by the opposing camp. The Reverends Mr. Cummiskey and Mr. Cooper were offering “a good lump of money” for information damaging to Hogan’s character. Connelly did not keep this tantalizing bit of information to herself. Catharine Scott testified that she learned of the bribery allegation from Mrs. Connelly. And though she could not remember who else had been present when Connell shared the news, she had been convinced that Connell was “a bad woman” from the “great many” people who spoke of Connell’s duplicity.\textsuperscript{134}

As Connelly’s testimony suggests, the parish served as the primary locus for activating the network of laywomen. Each of the exchanges described above took place on St. Mary’s grounds. Other women testified that they had been drawn into discussions about the controversy while at the graveyard for funeral services. But laywomen also extended the threads of their network beyond the confines of the church, carrying their disputes and allegations into public streets and private residences. In the process, they blurred the lines between parish and home and between public and private. Consider the scrutiny to which Mary Connell hoped Mary Ann O’Neil would put the mysterious “lady in black.” At the height of the crisis, Connell claimed to have seen a young woman frequently enter Hogan’s private house when his housekeeper was out. By this time, Connell’s reputation among her co-religionists had been tarnished, and she understood that she would have to secure the corroboration of a laywoman in good standing. So she tried to induce O’Neil to join her in spying on Hogan’s house at the hour she expected his servant to be gone. O’Neil refused to join her in this enterprise, and whisked past Connell on

\textsuperscript{133}\textit{ibid.}, pp. 80-81.
\textsuperscript{134}\textit{ibid.}, pp. 80-81; 83-85.
Willings Alley (where Hogan resided), heading to the corner of Walnut and Third streets, where she entered a bookshop. Connell followed her there a short time later and informed her that she had knocked at Hogan’s door and found the housekeeper to be at home, thus thwarting her mission. But she persisted in urging O’Neil to spy on Hogan, volunteering information on the hours the housekeeper usually worked and the times when she could expect the shadowy “lady in black” to make another appearance. O’Neil professed to be horrified by Connell’s directive and told her that she had “so favourable an opinion of Mr. Hogan, that [she] could not think of watching his house or himself.”

Connell persisted in seeking to make O’Neil a witness to Hogan’s transgressions. On another occasion, Connell approached O’Neil in the street and persuaded her to join in an unannounced visit to Hogan’s home. Connell used an inquiry about Hogan’s recent publication of Butler’s catechism as the pretext for her visit. But she soon changed the topic of conversation to the rumor that Bishopite priest John Cummiskey had betrayed one Pat Nagle by revealing what the young man had said in the confessional. Hogan refused to take the bait and declined to fuel the rumor mill by speaking ill of a fellow clergyman, even if he was a Bishopite. He insisted that Connell must be mistaken, provoking an angry outburst in response. Though Connell ultimately failed to achieve her objective, she had chosen her tactic wisely. By this time, Connell’s activities as a double agent in the trustee crisis had been well-established and she had lost all credibility among her fellow laywomen. She required the sponsorship of a well-regarded Hoganite to validate the claims she made against the still-popular priest and to restore her to the community of women.

Connell herself became the object of a laywoman’s spying mission on the eventful night of October 6. Mrs. Sarah Marnell, who resided directly next door to St. Mary’s Church, had observed a throng of women in Willings Alley, and she approached them and heard that they “talked a good deal about” Mary Connell and described Connell as “being in [an] indecent way.”

\[135\] Ibid., p. 82; 86-87.  
\[136\] Ibid., pp. 86-87.
So Marnell went to the home of Mrs. M’Gann (with whom Connell then boarded) to learn what she could of Connell’s whereabouts and activities. Later that night, Marnell saw a female figure near the church gate who looked very much like Connell. She approached the woman and “looked under her bonnet” to confirm her suspicion. Though Marnell then walked in the direction of her own home so her purpose might not be discovered, she resumed her pursuit when the disheveled woman (whose face had been in shadow) turned down Spruce Street. This “astonished” Marnell because “it was not the direction in which [Connell] boarded; and it was getting the hour that she ought to go to her lodging-house, in the [disheveled] state in which she was.” Marnell continued to follow the woman at a safe distance for at least four more blocks, at one point managing to see under the bonnet again in the light of gas lamps in a store window. By this time, the watchman “halloooed ten” and Marnell returned home to tell her husband what she had seen.137

As these reconnaissance missions suggest, Philadelphia’s laywomen believed themselves duty-bound to investigate and pass judgment on one another’s activities. And they did so, for the most part, on their own terms. Men connected to the case focused most intently on Connell’s fiery temper, social indiscretions, and sexual improprieties. Laywomen critiqued Connell on these matters as well. But they often seemed more concerned with Connell’s contributions to the Catholic community than their male counterparts. They judged her failures in this regard more harshly than any of her other perceived misdeeds. Female defense witnesses (for the most part successfully) cast Connell as a disaffected Hoganite-turned-Bishopite who falsely accused Hogan at Conwell’s behest. In their view, Connell had chosen to defect not for legitimate ideological reasons, but for selfish personal motives. Of course, the Protestant men presiding over the proceedings and the legal formulas that structured the women’s encounter with the court impeded their ability to express and assert their independent judgments. Yet, the army of female witnesses prevailed in getting their views into the record. As scholar Kathleen Kennedy has observed of the trial, female witnesses interrupted the male court officers who questioned them and insisted that

137 Ibid., pp. 144-145.
information the men dismissed as “female tittle-tattle” truly mattered to the proceedings. In the end, Hogan owed his eventual acquittal to Catholic women whose testimony established the extent to which Connell had flouted the community’s standards of feminine decency.\(^\text{138}\)

The testimony of Bridget Gartland proved especially injurious to the prosecution. Gartland had been keeping close watch over Connell for some time and she told the court that Connell “took a dislike to [Hogan] a long time before” the events of October 6. She claimed that Connell left St. Mary’s congregation for St. Joseph’s months earlier, when she took issue with “not getting the blinds to do.” Mrs. Ashley initially had hired Connell to craft a new set of blinds for the church during its renovation. But when other members of the parish volunteered their services without expectation of payment, the Ashley family decided the indebted congregation could not refuse such a generous offer. Connell responded to the lost assignment with anger, and she did not confine her resentment to the Ashleys. Connell lashed out at Hoganite trustee John Leamy as well, refusing to show up for a scheduled appointment to sew for his wife and reacting angrily when he visited her residence to reschedule. Connell told him that “she would not go, nor would not work for no catholic belonging to St. Mary’s church.” Gartland claimed to have been present for this bitter exchange. Upon Leamy’s departure, Gartland expressed her disapproval of Connell’s behavior, only to be brushed off. Connell, Gartland claimed, told her “him, and all the rest of the trustees might go to Hell, for they were all alike, and might go to Hell, and Hogan along with them, as he was as bad as any of them.”\(^\text{139}\)

Gartland interpreted this last jab at Hogan as a reference to the priest’s recent rebuke of “any person coming to his house, bearing tales,” which he had delivered from the altar after a recent Mass. Hogan had been driven to exasperation by congregants seeking to enlist him as a mediator in extra-parish disputes. Though Hogan did not name specific persons or events into which he had been drawn unwillingly, Connell believed he counted her among those whom he


\(^{139}\)Trial of William Hogan, pp. 74-75.
wished “would not make themselves busy in that way.” According to Gartland, Connell announced, “that was all the thanks Mr. Hogan gave to any body, for doing any thing for him; for her part she would do no more for him.” Gartland did not accept Connell’s belief that she should be rewarded with financial gain and priestly solicitude for her contributions to the Catholic community. And most laywomen who testified concurred with Gartland’s disapproval. Their distaste for Connell’s way of thinking suggests the extent to which Catholic laywomen internalized the expectation that their service to the community should be reward enough. Connell’s failure to practice self-sacrifice for the good of the parish resulted in her expulsion from the community of women. As a number of observers noted, Connell had to rely on former employers—many of them Protestants, none of them intimate friends—as character witnesses on her behalf.¹⁴⁰

Piety and personal conduct conferred authority among the women of the Catholic community and may have meant more to them than class or other markers of status. Philadelphia laywomen seem to have acted in a manner similar to the eighteenth-century confreresses of New Orleans, of whom Emily Clark notes that “social boundaries were permeable.” Interestingly, the majority of Clark’s historical subjects were of French extraction, in contrast to the greater part of Philadelphia’s Catholics who hailed from Ireland. It might be posited, however tentatively, that relationships among American Catholic women were distinctive for their social fluidity, regardless of the ethnic sensibility of the particular parish in which they resided.¹⁴¹

Certainly class and ethnicity mattered to Philadelphia Catholics. Elizabeth Walsh testified that Connell complained bitterly that Hogan had recently been “much taken up with the rich individuals of the congregation that he forgot his more humble friends.” And historian Dale Light has noted that the laymen who most forcefully argued for greater authority during the schism were “men on the make.” These were upwardly mobile members of an emergent middle class

¹⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 74-75.
who embraced republicanism with a fervor unmatched by their economically disadvantaged, and often émigré, co-religionists. Perhaps these circumstances suggest that many Catholic women could allow a degree of social fluidity to permeate their dealings with one another because, ultimately, their place in the community would be determined by the status of their male relatives. In Connell’s case, her absent husband (he remained in Ireland after literally missing the boat to the United States) and modest, variable income left her especially sensitive to slights on socio-economic grounds. She possessed no male kin from whom she and her young daughter could derive status.¹⁴²

The pecking order that materialized among Catholic laywomen had at least something to do with the status of the women’s male relatives. Mrs. Ashley possessed the authority to determine who should be appointed to make the blinds for the soon-to-be-renovated church. While her husband, in his capacity as trustee, possessed the authority to collect pew rents from his fellow laymen, he left it to his wife to appropriate those funds for what might be considered the domestic management of the parish. Philadelphia Catholics would have been hard-pressed to ignore this pecking order; they could read the status of their fellow-parishioners in the seating arrangements at High Mass each Sunday. During this service, parishioners with the resources to pay pew rents mapped their status onto the church, with the most prominent among them having paid the highest sums for the front-most pews. Sextons’ records almost always credit a male head-of-household as paying on behalf of his dependents. Only a handful of prosperous widows and an occasional unmarried businesswoman could claim the elevated status of pewholder. Less prosperous congregants confined themselves to the gallery at High Mass, or attended one of a number of additional Sunday services at which open seating prevailed.¹⁴³

Whether in spite, or because, of such arrangements, Catholic women could rank religiosity and service to the community more highly than socio-economic standing. At certain

¹⁴³ Trial of William Hogan, p. 111-112.
times, Catholics performed this sentiment for one another by remapping themselves onto the pews of their parishes. Special events in the annals of various church organizations merited coveted seating on the floor of the church. For example, at the feast of St. Stanislas Koska the best pews in St. Joseph’s parish were reserved for members of the sodality dedicated to his honor. Non-members found themselves relegated to the periphery of the floor or to the gallery for the day. And at the end of each Sunday School term, the children enjoyed privileged seating on the floor during High Mass. At this special service, the priest praised them for their religious progress and presented the most accomplished among them with medals and crowns. One can only imagine the pleasure they took in watching their parents and elders shunted to the gallery while they occupied places of honor in the heart of the church.  

The potential for social leveling contained in such practices spread beyond the confines of the church itself. Clearly, cross-class socializing took place between the prominent Mrs. Ashley and Mary Connell. Connell testified that, prior to her falling out with the Hoganite forces, she and Mrs. Ashley conferred on matters of both business and friendship. She claimed to have been a frequent visitor to the Ashley residence, sometimes having been summoned for her services as a mantua-maker, and sometimes having been invited to spend the day as a guest. Clearly, Connell believed that she had been highly regarded among her co-religionists prior to the events that pitted her against them in court. And she recognized that her former status derived from her contributions to the Catholic community. It is telling that Connell claimed to have cried out during her assault, “Is that the way you treat me, Mr. Hogan for all my exertions? I have walked the streets of Philadelphia at all times to procure you votes, and to procure money to make your vestments.” Thus, in what (if true) amounted to her moment of greatest desperation, she staked

\[144\]Father Barbelin’s book of pulpit announcements, kept from 1848-1853, held in the archive of Old St. Joseph’s Church, Willing’s Alley, Philadelphia. See, for example, entries for 16th Sunday after Pentecost and 22nd Sunday after Pentecost, 1848.
her claim to protection not on her physical vulnerability as a woman or her social status as a lady, but on the services she had rendered her parish as a Catholic.\textsuperscript{145}

Connell naturally would have expected Hogan to honor the sentiments of the community of women as he had done in the past. And esteem for the contributions of laywomen seems to have been a fairly generalized sentiment among the men of the congregation. Prior to the alleged assault, Connell had been identified by a number of prominent male parishioners as a valuable ally and significant strategist in the altercation with the bishop. No one contested her claim that, when she campaigned for Hoganite partisans in the trustee elections, she did so at John Leamy’s behest. In addition to her Leamy-inspired electioneering, Connell claimed also to have agreed to John Ashley’s cunning plan for her to speak ill of Hogan among her co-religionists in order “to see who would or would not be favourable [sic] to him.”\textsuperscript{146}

Only one layman among the witnesses at Hogan’s trial spoke unfavorably of Connell’s active participation in the schism, explaining that he “considered it did not become a female, to become so officious in business that did not belong to a woman to meddle with.” But his assessment of Connell had been tainted by many negative encounters with her in Ireland prior to their emigration, as well as on the ship that carried them both from Cork to Philadelphia. The man claimed that Connell’s “character was not calculated for the domestic welfare of her family, and that [she] was not good in other respects. You may draw your own conclusions.” And on board the ship bound for the United States, Connell had gained a reputation for being “litigious, and inclined to create disturbances, notwithstanding the efforts of twelve men that were appointed by the captain to keep her down.” Thus, he already had come to believe that Connell violated the tenets of feminine delicacy long before the trustee crisis landed them in opposing camps.\textsuperscript{147}

This layman’s remarks notwithstanding, it seems most Philadelphia Catholics accepted, and even encouraged, women’s politicking in community affairs—so long as female partisanship

\textsuperscript{145} Trial of William Hogan, pp. 24-26.  
\textsuperscript{146} ibid.  
\textsuperscript{147} ibid., pp. 25, 40; 106-107.
was expressed within the ideological framework of the True Catholic Woman. Indeed, over the course of the crisis, a handful of laywomen boldly asserted themselves in the realm of print. An assembly of laywomen who sympathized with Hogan took it upon themselves to craft a series of resolutions protesting their pastor’s ill-treatment at the hands of the bishop. They denounced both Conwell’s abuse of Hogan and his ill treatment of their deputation as failures of masculine duty. Additionally, the two women who identified themselves as “Mary” and produced pro-Hogan pamphlets appropriated the language of sentiment and feminine virtue to urge Conwell’s forgiveness of Hogan and to defend their own capacities to judge Hogan’s moral fitness as their pastor. These laywomen clearly perceived that they could most efficiently direct the outcome of the crisis by casting their arguments in terms that fit the parameters of the Catholic feminine ideal.  

While the petition and two pamphlets reveal the strategy deployed by only a handful of laywomen, it is possible to surmise that far more women expressed their views within the safe havens of their individual households. Evidence suggests that many women exercised a forceful brand of moral suasion over husbands or fathers entitled to vote in the selection of trustees. Mathew Carey revealed as much when, writing as “a Catholic Layman,” he reported that the schism had created discord within families. He lamented, “It has entered (almost) every family. It has entered (almost) every heart. Friendship and charity and domestic peace have perished as it advanced.” His telling phrase, “discord within families,” indicates that laywomen did not always adhere to the tenets of meekness and deference expected of them. They clashed with husbands and fathers and openly expressed their dissatisfaction with the virtual representation offered by their pew-holding (and, thus, vote-casting) male relatives.

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148 The Address of the Ladies of St. Mary’s Congregation, presented at a meeting, in Washington Hall, on Wednesday evening, February 14, 1821; also, Mary, Hoganism Defended; Or, the Detractor Detected (Philadelphia: Printed for the Author, 1821); and Letter to Henry, Bishop of Philadelphia.  
Some impassioned laywomen tested the boundaries of feminine delicacy in their interactions with one another as well. The testimony of Catharine Lanagan and Elizabeth Walsh exposes the depth of some laywomen’s vitriol and the lengths to which they went to shape the outcome of the schism. It also exposes the sometimes-stark line between ideological epitome and on-the-ground reality. Lanagan responded to Connell with considerable anger after the latter woman’s duplicity had been exposed. Though the staunch Hoganite initially denied it, Lanagan eventually admitted that she had followed Connell through the streets, shaking her fist at her. On cross-examination, Elizabeth Walsh also faced questions about whether she had “followed [Connell] in the street, in a crowd, abusing her.” It is impossible to know whether Walsh was sincere in her claim that she had not seen Connell in recent months and, thus, could not have accosted her when Connell said she had done so. But she could not conceal her churning resentment of Connell from the court, declaring, “I would never wish to see her face.” Lanagan and (perhaps) Walsh obviously counted themselves among the female standard-bearers for the Catholic community and assumed responsibility for policing its boundaries. Yet the manner in which they chose to carry out their obligations to the community deviated considerably from the model outlined in Catholic prescriptive literature.150

The women in the Bishop’s camp did not lack for passion either. On cross examination, prosecution witness Mary M’Gann tersely informed a defense attorney that she belonged to “the side of truth” when he asked where she stood in the church dispute. And she had not been shy about expressing that view outside of court. M’Gann testified that she had repeatedly tried to persuade Connell to switch her allegiance on the grounds that “Mr. Hogan was acting in the church; and it was not right.” Alicia Matthews responded to questions about her loyalties with similar pluck. When asked whether she was “attached to the Bishop’s congregation,” she replied,

150 Trial of William Hogan, p. 109, 112-113; Connell testified that she had been repeatedly abused by Bridget Connelly as well, though Connelly did not address the accusations in her testimony. Connell also claimed that her eleven-year-old daughter had been “struck,” but she did not say by whom. In the words of her attorney, Connell had “been repeatedly mobbed since [the Hogan] investigation has commenced. [p. 178]"
"I am attached to the Roman Catholic religion." It took a bit of cajoling for the examining attorney to determine that she identified as a Bishopite and belonged to St. Joseph’s parish.\textsuperscript{151}

Laywomen’s aggressive—and sometimes volatile—brand of partisanship clearly departed from the clergy-sanctioned mode of feminine delicacy propounded in Catholic prescriptive literature. And their participation in a very public controversy concerning the sexual continence of a disgraced priest embarrassed and appalled all constituencies within the community. That laywomen found themselves in the midst of such a scandal indicated that Catholic men, both lay and clerical, had failed to safeguard the innocence and virtue of their female dependents. The trustee crisis had spun out of control. What began as a controversy over the fate of parish government had developed into a very public crisis of Catholic masculinity. The manner in which laymen sought to manage this debacle is the subject of the chapter that follows.

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., p. 55, 158.
CHAPTER FOUR—

TRUSTEEISM AND CATHOLIC MASCULINITY IN CRISIS

Readers of religious books surely noticed that the ideal Catholic man was a priest. Authors of Catholic biographies, novels, and devotionals most often celebrated men who sacrificed the comforts of home and family to serve the Church. And while these authors conceded that most men would marry and preside over Catholic households, they asserted that laymen might still aspire to emulate their heroes among the clergy. Male readers could seek to mimic the pious example set by Jesuit paragon Antony Mary Ubaldini in Pious Biography for Young Men. Though most would never enter the seminary, thoughtful and attentive readers could engage in prayer and devotional exercises with similar solemnity. Laymen could oversee the spiritual welfare of their households by employing Ubaldini’s tactic of “checking the lapses” in dependents’ piety. Or principled Catholic men might seek to represent the faith with the same fluency and restraint exhibited by the kindly priest in Letters to Ada. Their decorum and proficiency with Catholic doctrine might encourage a formerly-hostile Protestant to view Catholics more sympathetically. ¹⁵²

But laymen seeking to reconcile the literary ideal with their on-the-ground reality faced an intractable dilemma. They could not submit to the supposed superiority of clerical masculinity while simultaneously mounting an effective defense of the handful of prerogatives left to them. A compelling justification of trusteeism relied on the community’s acknowledgement of a legitimate alternative to the clerical masculine ideal articulated and embodied by laymen. It became necessary for the champions of trusteeism to demonstrate that their status as heads of households, their long tradition of service in the administration of the diocese, and their expertise in the doctrines of the faith entitled them to positions of authority within the community.

¹⁵²Pious Biography for Young Men: Or, The Virtuous Scholars. Translated from Les Ecoliers Vertueux of M. L’Abbe Carron. (Philadelphia: Published by Eugene Cummiskey, 1828); Alton Park: Or, Conversations on Religious and Moral Subjects, Chiefly Designed for the Amusement and Instruction of Young Ladies (Philadelphia: Published by Eugene Cummiskey, 1833).
Laymen’s resistance to the clergy-propounded masculine ideal was complicated by their jaundiced view of what they interpreted as significant lapses in priestly solicitude. Some clergymen, such as the unyielding and egocentric William Harold, had managed to alienate a sizeable proportion of their adherents. Several had demanded what laypeople considered extravagant sums from the coffers of cash-strapped parishes. A few priests also were judged to have betrayed their spiritual subjects by offering fewer Masses than needed, missing sick calls to house-bound parishioners, or carousing in a manner unbecoming men of the cloth. These derelicts of clerical duty detracted from the dignity of the priesthood and diminished the laity’s willingness to invest them with unwavering authority.

It might also be argued that laymen suffered Protestants’ religiously motivated sleights to their masculinity more acutely than their clergy. Whereas the clergy were widely assumed to be the ultimate masters of their religious domains, Catholic laymen were assumed to be their dupes. Protestants reacted with bafflement and alarm to Catholics’ apparent over-reliance on their clergy. In particular, they questioned the wisdom of investing priests with the authority to undermine both domestic and civic harmony through their malevolent use of the confessional. Scholar Jenny Franchot summarized Protestants’ complex of fears neatly: “In the confessional, according to the nativist Protestant imagination, women were seduced and men suborned by priests who as confessors could discover the workings of home, marketplace, and polling booth and manipulate all invisibly.” How could Catholic men look to their clergymen for cues to appropriately masculine behavior when their priests wielded the power to pervert marital sexuality, subvert nationalistic loyalties, and unleash domestic and political chaos?\(^{153}\)

The infamy visited upon Catholicity by William Hogan’s questionable exploits made these concerns peculiarly salient to the laymen of Philadelphia. Hogan had insulted the newly-arrived Bishop Conwell at his very first appearance before Philadelphia’s Catholics. On that occasion,

Hogan strayed from his sermon and “made a very severe and acrimonious attack on the quondam Vicar-General [DeBarth], then sitting before the altar.” Hogan departed from the conventions of sermonizing the following week as well. He announced his rejection of Conwell’s privately-communicated directive to move back into the clergymen’s shared residence. And he broadcast his intention only to preach every third Sunday now that clerical reinforcements had arrived to relieve him. Conwell failed in his attempts to rein in the recalcitrant Hogan away from the public eye. By December 12, 1820 he believed himself justified in withdrawing Hogan’s faculties. Conwell’s ruling shocked the faithful and instigated a bitter schism that divided Philadelphia Catholics into warring Hoganite and Bishopite camps.\(^\text{154}\)

Hogan responded to Conwell’s ruling with defiance and argued his case in the court of public opinion. In early February of 1821 Hogan issued two pamphlets dedicated to “the exposing of perfidy and the unmasking of clerical hypocrisy” that caused a sensation among both Catholic and Protestant Philadelphians. Hogan’s missives were cynical attempts to play on longstanding stereotypes of Catholic rapaciousness for political, economic, and sexual power. He accused his fellow Philadelphia clergymen of engaging in “foul machinations” and “vile intrigues.” Meanwhile, he cast himself as the victim of the “unmanly envy of a few individuals.”\(^\text{155}\)

Hogan’s choice of words was significant. His taunting of his “unmanly” brethren suggests the extent to which masculinity, respectability, and credibility were linked in the minds of Hogan and his intended audience. The Bishop’s authority and privileges of masculinity hung in the balance as well. He could hardly allow Hogan’s literary salvos to pass unnoticed. Conwell was motivated, at least in part, by wounded masculine pride on February 11, 1821, when he took to the pulpit to rationalize his actions. He aimed to shift responsibility for the crisis onto Hogan,\(^\text{154}\)\(^\text{155}\)

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\(^\text{154}\) Pastoral Charges Delivered by the Right Rev. Bishop Henry. In St. Mary’s Church on the 2\(^{nd}\) of Nov. 1820, & 11\(^{th}\) of Feb. 1821. In Presence of Two Thousand Persons, p. 3; see also Mathew Carey, writing as “A Catholic Layman” in his Address to the Right Reverend the Bishop of Pennsylvania, and the Congregation of St. Mary’s in this City (Philadelphia: Printed by H.C. Carey & I. Lea, 1822), pp. 1-11.

\(^\text{155}\) William Hogan, An Address to the Congregation of St. Mary’s Church, Philadelphia [the pamphlet includes no publication information, though it is clear it was published some time between December 22, 1820 and February 1, 1821]; and Continuation of an Address, to the Congregation of St. Mary’s Church, Philadelphia [the first of two pamphlets to appear under this title]. February 2, 1821.
claiming that the apostate priest had driven him to the “painful necessity of separating that unfortunate man from his flock.” But Conwell exacerbated rather than mitigated the controversy when he delivered this, his Second Pastoral Charge. For, on that fateful February day, Conwell chose to attack Hogan for more than insubordination. He also attacked Hogan for sexual impropriety. Conwell thus inadvertently maligned the domestic authority of all Catholic men who had entrusted their female dependents to Hogan’s care. Instantly, William Hogan and his heatedly debated exploits became the conduit through which all parties to the predicament sought to establish claims to gender-based authority.

Hogan’s missives and Conwell’s pastoral reveal conflicting applications of Catholic masculinity as well as differing opinions of who was empowered to ascribe masculine virtue to men in the community. Hogan articulated a view of masculinity arbitrated by the broad and relatively egalitarian community of men among whom he lived and worked. Of course, while most of those men based their claims of masculine privilege on their status as male heads of households, Hogan lacked a nuclear family on which to stake such a claim. To fit the mold, Hogan cast himself as a figurative father of the whole of Philadelphia’s Catholic community, and especially its children. He made abundant use of the testimonials of his good character and community service supplied by his parishioner-allies. Such testimonials celebrated Hogan’s zeal in establishing the city’s network of Catholic Sunday schools and his tireless efforts on behalf of the city’s Catholic orphans. Hogan portrayed himself as a paternalist.

In contrast to this view, Conwell emphasized the importance of knowledge and expertise when judging a man’s status within the Catholic community. He believed his fellow luminaries within the Church hierarchy had already delivered a verdict on his elevated standing. And he believed the laity should have fallen in line with those leading lights’ superior judgment. Conwell conducted himself as a patriarch. Additionally, Conwell stressed the importance of self-mastery in the realization of Catholic masculinity. He viewed sexual restraint as a crucial element of that self-discipline, especially for priests who had taken vows of chastity. In his pastoral charge, Conwell
only aimed to demonstrate his contention that Hogan had failed as a man and as a priest. But the unintended consequences unleashed by Conwell's pastoral suggest the fragility of Catholic masculinity in the antebellum United States. It is, therefore, necessary to take a closer look at the effusion of printed materials produced in the midst of the schism. The pamphlet authors revealed the extent to which Catholic men struggled to reconcile masculine assertiveness with religious acquiescence.

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At the outset of Conwell's pastoral, he asserted that his suspension of Hogan constituted a “light punishment” intended for a “medicinal” purpose. He emphasized that he had withdrawn Hogan’s faculties only in the Diocese of Philadelphia. He had hoped that Hogan might “go immediately and not disturb my flock,” but included no provision barring him from conducting his priestly offices elsewhere. It had been Hogan—not Conwell—who had escalated matters to the point of a public altercation. Conwell professed to have had no intention of enumerating Hogan’s transgressions openly. And so it was with reluctance—and at Hogan’s behest—that he stood before the congregation to make his case.156

First, Conwell described his paternal expectation for obedience from his spiritual son. Hogan, he claimed, failed to adhere to “the doctrine of every Theologian, which cannot be denied[,] that every inferior should be subject to every superior,” when Hogan had publicly denounced Louis DeBarth and also refused Conwell’s order that he move out of a private residence and into the rectory. Second, Conwell accused Hogan of failing to perform the devotional exercises requisite of priests so that he might be spiritually prepared to administer the sacraments. Third, and most inflammatory, Conwell alluded to certain allegations with which he was familiar, “but they are so scandalous that I am delicate and ashamed to mention them.” They

156Pastoral Charges of the Right Rev. Henry, 5.
were “charges so shocking that I would not think it safe for me in my conscience, to allow any of my females, I mean any of my young girls[,] into the same room with this person.”\footnote{Ibid., 6.}

Here, Conwell referred to widespread rumors that Hogan had seduced numerous women of the congregation. It is impossible to determine the veracity of these allegations, though scattered circumstantial evidence seems to support them. But we can be certain that Conwell believed them and, moreover, that his disdain spread beyond the weakest of the weaker sex who presumably succumbed to Hogan’s charms. In a private letter to his Archbishop in April of 1821, Conwell declared “the loss of Hogan’s adherents is an acquisition: men never known to approach the sacraments, despicable ex-Catholics. All the Libertines and bad people of both sexes are for him, and ready to fight in his battles.” The Bishop’s assertions notwithstanding, some of the most respectable and influential members of the congregation joined forces with Hogan. It is revealing, then, that Conwell chose to condemn his detractors not only with affronts to their religiosity, but also with accusations of generally dissolute behavior.\footnote{Letter of Henry Conwell to Ambrose Marechal of April 2, 1821; quoted in Tourscher, The Hogan Schism, 39.}

The laymen, as represented by the trustees, responded to Conwell’s second pastoral swiftly and defiantly. On February 14, just three days after Conwell’s address, the trustees presided over an open meeting of St. Mary’s congregants, at which they claimed to have assembled “at least one thousand persons.” John T. Sullivan, representing the trustees, delivered a three-hour refutation of the pastoral that, according to meeting chairman C.W. Bazeley, earned “the most unanimous plaudits ever witnessed.” Thereafter, the assembled body unanimously adopted five resolutions detailing their disapproval of Conwell’s stance and their demand that Hogan receive an ecclesiastical trial to determine the appropriateness of his suspension. In these matters the assembly clearly applied democratic ideology to their interpretation of Catholic doctrine. The resolution framed Conwell’s claims “as attempts to deprive us of our rights as
citizens of the United States,” and they articulated their demand for Hogan to be properly tried as a measure in accordance “with the laws of the Roman Catholic church and of our country.”

To be sure, St. Mary’s congregants worried that their Protestant neighbors would view Conwell’s ham-fisted treatment of Hogan as evidence of the incompatibility of Catholicism and American freedom. But the laymen’s motives went far beyond a desire to impose an American-style meritocracy on long-standing Church structures. It is telling that their posture of ideologically grounded advocacy gave way to a far more impassioned and heartfelt protest when the trustees sought “[t]o disapprove the insinuations uttered last Sunday by Dr. Conwell, against the ladies of St. Mary’s church, and to establish their characters, which he attempted to blacken.” Indeed the second of the resolutions unanimously embraced by the attendees proclaimed “That as fathers of families, we view with the greatest disapprobation the illiberal and indecent imputations cast by the Right Rev. Doctor Conwell on last Sunday (Feb. 11) upon the characters of our wives and daughters, which the nature of the case did not require or justify.” The laymen employed republican ideology and democratic means of expressing their disapproval. However, they deployed these tools to defend, not their privileges as citizens or even as Catholics, but their status as the heads of respectable families. Work by scholars such as Joanne Freeman and Bruce Dorsey demonstrate the extent to which Americans of the early national period conflated masculinity and political privilege. But the vexing problem of defining and defending one’s manhood also was complicated by an antebellum-era man’s status within his own religious community.

Had Conwell been more politic, he would have perceived this tension and left the women of the congregation out of it. But, because he had impugned their virtue along with Hogan’s, he made it necessary for the men of the congregation to defend Hogan personally, and not merely to

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159 Proceedings at a meeting of the Congregation of St. Mary’s Church, favorable to the restoration of the Rev. William Hogan, held at Washington Hall, Wednesday evening, February 14, 1821, pp. 2, 4, 5.

160 Proceedings at a meeting of the Congregation of St. Mary’s Church, p. 5; For scholarly explications of the intersections between gender conventions and political culture, see Joanne Freeman, Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); and Bruce Dorsey, Reforming Men and Women: Gender and the Antebellum City (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).
uphold the democratic principle that an accused person be allowed to stand trial. By implication, Conwell’s pastoral had called the laymen’s authority as patriarchs and their integrity as paternalists into question. Conventions of masculine honor necessitated not only a firm defense of their female relatives, but also a refutation of the charges made against the clergyman whom they had allowed access to those women. Toward that end, the assembly “Resolved, That being confident in our own minds that the insinuations uttered against the Rev. William Hogan, are utterly void of foundation, and that the accusations have arisen from malice.” Those in attendance “pledge[d]… to support him in the restoration of his rights, at the expense of… [their] lives and property.” Additionally, the trustees called the assembly back to order on February 28, at which point several people closely acquainted with Hogan attested to his good character. One testimonial declared, “...I have found none whose lives were more pure,” after which the plea, “Say you will protect him,” was answered with, “WE WILL.”

Philadelphia’s laywomen raised the stakes on their male defenders when they entered the fray with their own pronouncements on the sorry state of Catholic masculinity. A considerable number of women attended the meeting of February 14, and though it appears they did not speak in the mixed assembly, they did present an Address of their own to the chairman that contained a series of six resolutions they had passed among themselves at a separate meeting. The women opened their address with a formulaic apology to the laymen “for the liberty they take on your time” and promised that the laymen’s patience would be rewarded with their brevity. The women seem to have calculated that a defense of their own virtue necessitated an exculpation of the laymen who ought to have safeguarded their honor. And the most efficient means of securing this outcome was to condemn the priests in the Bishopite camp for having deviated from the norms of clerical masculinity. They identified the Reverend Cummiskey (whose name they repeatedly misspelled as “Cormisky”) as the principal defector from gentlemanly obligation—perhaps because they had been denied an audience with the bishop himself. “To succor the distressed, to protect the orphan, to chastise tyrants, to shield females from insults and rudeness,” they said.

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161 *Proceedings*, p. 9.
“was formerly the business of men of honour.” Rather than adhere to these precepts, Cummiskey chose to act “rudely to females, even those of [his] own congregation.”

The women derided Cummiskey not only for his role in perpetuating “the libel against Mr. Hogan,” but also for his abusive treatment of them when they requested an interview with the Bishop at the rectory. Cummiskey, they claimed, “shut the door against a deputation of respectable and well informed women, who were desirous of seeing the Bishop, fondly hoping, they could prevail upon him to heal the dissensions, that at this moment so agitate the bosoms of his flock.” Not only had Cummiskey “pushed many of these ladies out of doors,” he also “cruelly squeezed one of them behind the door till she almost fainted, when she politely made way for him to go out.”

Cummiskey failed as a gentleman. But even more alarming, he had failed in his capacity as clergyman. The women indicted him for callously replying to “a pious and respectable matron” distressed over losing Hogan as her confessor. When she told Cummiskey “she knew not where to go to confession, nor to whom she could send her children,” he snapped that, “he did not want her, or them at confession.” The women expressed disdain for Cummiskey’s threat that they risked excommunication through their energetic defense of Hogan. They sneered at this “laughable bugbear, worthy of the poor ignorant creatures, who build their hopes of defense and power on the magic influence of one word.” And they claimed that Cummiskey was not alone in neglecting the spiritual welfare of his flock. The women were convinced that the Reverend Mr. Hurley pretended to be too ill to say Mass the previous Sunday, only to spend the day busily building an alliance against Hogan.

The women surely understood that they possessed limited means of demanding redress. Only men could cast ballots in the selection of trustees. The fees for pew rents that entitled laymen to temporal authority within the parish were assumed to come from male heads of

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162 Address of the Ladies of St. Mary’s Congregation, presented at the meeting, in Washington Hall, on Wednesday evening. February 14, 1821.
163 Ibid.
164 Ibid.
households. But the women knew that they were the lifeblood of their parish communities. Their very presence in the parish and participation in its affairs entitled them to respect and a degree of deference. And so, among their resolutions they proclaimed their intention to “absent themselves from St. Mary’s Church” until Hogan was restored and Cummiskey removed. Moreover, they announced, “we will never cease to defend Mr. Hogan, the friend of the poor and the orphan, in his just rights.” Interestingly, they chose not to address the allegations of sexual impropriety directly. By impugning the masculine honor of the clergymen making such scandalous claims, they made their contempt for the substance of the charges known, even as they preserved their feminine delicacy by refusing to repeat the specific accusations that so offended them.165

No surviving document directly reveals Conwell’s reaction to the particular grievances leveled by the ladies of the congregation against his clergymen. But New York’s Bishop Connelly transmitted a revealing clue to the clergymen’s dismay over women’s participation in the crisis in a letter he sent to the beset Conwell. On March 1, 1821, he wrote, “I have heard this morning that some females of your congregation, offered a petition to a meeting at some hall to be adopted by it, and to be presented to your lordship for the restoration of William Hogan. May the Almighty enlighten these poor deluded creatures.” Connelly’s particular emphasis on the women’s presence “at some hall” seems to imply the time-worn insults attendant on women who appeared in public in this period. It seems he disapproved not only of the substance of the women’s complaints, assuming them to be “poor” and “deluded” for holding such views, but to their participation in any capacity. Unwilling even to consider the legitimacy of the women’s concerns, he wrote them off as silly and immoral, however improbable those charges may have been. But that he chose to remark on the women’s continued support for Hogan at all indicates that their judgment carried weight. Conwell understood this as well and he felt the sting of the laywomen’s disapproval. In an open letter to Conwell signed by “A Lady,” the author could hardly contain her

165Ibid.
pleasure upon having heard that Conwell “complained to Bishop Connelly, of the contemptuous treatment [he] met with from the women.”

While the trustees and their sympathizers employed the dignified forum of the public meeting and the civilized tactic of adopting resolutions to make their point, the more confrontational members of the Hoganite party implemented another time-honored strategy. Ribald anonymous pamphlets allowed the Hoganite faction to campaign in more strident and provocative terms. The members of this camp turned Conwell’s accusation of Hogan’s sexual impropriety on its head not only to defend the virtue of the women of the congregation but to impugn the masculinity of the Bishop. A Review of the Pastoral Charge, Delivered by the Right Rev. Henry, Bishop of Pennsylvania, Feb. 11, 1821, published under the extravagant pseudonym Dr. Chrononhotonthologos, is one such document. In it, the author did not attempt to challenge the prevailing view that a clergyman embodied the Catholic masculine ideal. Rather, the good Doctor ridiculed the Bishop for his failure to employ the paternalism that would validate his claims to the patriarchal privileges he so readily exercised. In this way, Dr. C. hoped, however awkwardly, to question the legitimacy of Conwell’s harsh treatment of Hogan.

Dr. C. chose his curious pseudonym deliberately. The name referred to the main character of an outrageously farcical play by Henry Carey called The Tragedy of Chrononhotonthologos: Being the Most Tragical Tragedy that Ever Was Tragediz’d by any Company of Tragedians. Written and first performed in 1734, the play traced the misadventures of King Chrononhotonthologos and Queen Fadladinida. The King rescued his kingdom, Queerumania from an incursion of Antipodeans, only to lose his life to one of his own generals. General Bombardinian stabbed the king in a fit of pride-fueled rage when Chrononhotonthologos slapped him for telling him they had nothing to serve the army but pork. Meanwhile, widowhood suited the Queen quite well. Upon falling in love with the defeated Antipodean king, the Queen

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167 Dr. Chrononhotonthologos, A Review of the Pastoral Charge, Delivered by the Right Rev. Henry, Bishop of Pennsylvania, Feb. 11, 1821.
had appealed to Cupid and Venus for relief from her unconsummated marriage. It turns out that, having taken pity on her, they had arranged for the dispatch of her husband so Fadladinida might enjoy “Two jolly Husbands” that her “Person shall share” from among the male attendants at court.\textsuperscript{168}

Though the characters of \textit{Chrononhotonthologos} did not directly map onto the identities of the lead players in the Hogan crisis, Dr. C. clearly intended his alias to conjure images of gender—and more specifically, of sexual—disorder. The message was clear enough: when men failed to manage and contain the ambitions of women, they risked the anarchic release of their emotional and sexual desires to the detriment of domestic and social structures. Moreover, Dr. C. undoubtedly expected his readers to assume a parallel between the catastrophic showdown of the King and his General in the play and the Bishop and Hogan in the parish. In both cases, indulgence in unmanly pride caused men of talent and status to abandon their responsibilities as patriarchs to pursue personal and, ultimately futile, squabbles.

Dr. C. assumed a connection between the legitimacy of the Bishop’s authority and his competence to protect his metaphorical children of the faith. He vigorously denounced the Bishop for failing in this matter when Conwell sought to compel Hogan’s speedy departure by limiting the priest’s suspension to the Diocese of Philadelphia. Dr. C. derided Conwell for possessing “so pliable” and “accommodating” a conscience. If Conwell understood Hogan to be an unreformable source of scandal, why inflict him on the unsuspecting co-religionists of another diocese? Dr. C. expected a bishop to interact with his flock on terms of paternal solicitude. In contrast to this, Conwell had degraded the sanctity of his station by acting, not as a protective father, but as a laborer who had reduced religion to nothing more than a “handicraft trade.”\textsuperscript{169}

Interestingly, Dr. C. conflated the language of pastoral nurture and fatherly protection with the rhetoric of republicanism and rights. “You, as the shepherd, are to feed the flock…. to cherish

\textsuperscript{168} \textit{Chrononhotonthologos, the Most Tragical Tragedy That Ever Was Tragediz’d by a Company of Tragedians} (London: Printed and Published by Barker and Son, [n.d.]).

\textsuperscript{169} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 5.
our souls with divine grace,” he wrote. “Has a man in your congregation received any of this spiritual food?—no; I am sure I have not. But the food you have dispensed to us, has been to excite envy, hatred, and malice among us—to stir up strife and animosity between man and man, for the support of your arbitrary and unjust rights.” Here, Dr. C. seemed not to quibble with the prevailing Catholic assumption that clergymen, as the spiritual fathers of their “households of faith,” could claim patriarchal privileges superseding those of laymen. However, he implied a link between the domestic paternalist’s responsibility to provide for his family and his rights to deference and respect from the “children” of the parish subject to his patriarchal authority. Because he had failed to nourish his congregational family, Conwell had forfeited his claims to deference from Philadelphia’s Catholics.170

Dr. C. clearly struggled to reconcile the tensions between two conceptualizations of appropriate masculinity. On the one hand, he appeared to affirm clerical masculinity by conceding the validity of priestly claims for solicitude from their flock. He did not reject, in principle, the Catholic expectation for him to relate to his clergyman as a child would relate to his father. On the other hand, he rejected the bishop’s assumption of “rights” as “arbitrary” and “unjust” because Dr. C. had taken on elements of American individualism and embraced the American construction of a fraternity of men led by the ablest among them.

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It is important to note that Hoganites like Dr. C. believed themselves to be Ultramontanists just like their Bishopite rivals. And they, also like their adversaries, agreed that clergymen should embody the Catholic masculine ideal. Thus, what previous scholars of trusteeism understood to be conflicting European and American paradigms for Church organization were, from the perspective of the participants, disagreements over who possessed the right to police the boundaries of a commonly-agreed-upon Church structure. The geographically remote cardinals of the Propaganda Fide had to rely on the information of some

170 Ibid., 14.
American Catholic constituency. The Bishopites saw no reason to doubt the capacity of American clergymen to institute the canonical framework that would govern the growing American Catholic population. In contrast to this view, the Hoganites believed that they, as heads of the principal Catholic families and the founders of local Catholic institutions, possessed significant expertise that qualified them to inform the Propaganda Fide on conditions within the American mission.

Predictably, Dr. C. was most caustic when replying to Conwell’s insinuations against St. Mary’s women. But whereas the trustees leapt to the defense of their wives and daughters, Dr. C. shrewdly deflected attention away from members of the parish by pretending to assume the Bishop referenced a very different group of women. He mocked the Bishop for being afraid to leave the women Conwell had described as “my females” alone with Hogan when the females in question “never [had] any character to lose.” Surely Conwell had been referring to the women “…Mr. M’Girr dragged forth from the stews, to give [false] evidence against Mr. Hogan.” Though the Bishop might freely associate with such degenerates, Dr. C. claimed, “I am very sure that Mr. H. would shun such poor outcasts of society.”

Dr. C. did not stop there. He included a postscript in which he claimed to have just received an anonymous letter comically describing Conwell’s recent visit to an infamous brothel in Southwark. The Bishop, Dr. C. related, had been visiting homes in heavily Irish neighborhoods in the hopes of convincing Catholics to vote his way in the upcoming election of trustees. On his travels, he stumbled into Madame Beldame’s disreputable establishment. Dr. C. acidly professed that both he and his informant guessed Conwell was ignorant of the work carried out by the women of the house. And so it must have been in complete ignorance that Conwell sought to influence the women’s votes by promising to find husbands for the younger and fish stores for the older among them. The trustees, in their public forum, had defended Catholic women by vouching for Hogan’s good character. But the anonymity of a pseudonymous pamphlet made it possible for

171 Ibid., 11.
Dr. C. not only to offer assurance of Hogan’s propriety, but also to turn the tables on Conwell and call the Bishop’s sexual self-discipline into question.\textsuperscript{172}

As the crisis escalated, the Bishopites organized to counter the Hoganites’ public relations offensive. On February 21, a meeting of pro-Conwell laypeople met to discuss how they might defuse the situation. They chose a committee of seven men and dispatched them to “use their exertions, and influence to effect a reconciliation on the difference of opinion existing among our religious brethren on this subject, and terminate the scandals which may probably arise from a further pursuit of the subject in agitation.” Toward that end, the committee sent a letter requesting that the lay trustees meet with them “for the purpose of devising the best and most efficient means of restoring harmony in that congregation.” John Leamy, responding on behalf of the Hoganites, assured the Bishopites that his party “shall be always ready to co-operate with you in saving the church from ultimate ruin.” But since Conwell’s refusal to compromise doomed any such meeting between the parties to failure, he respectfully declined the invitation.\textsuperscript{173}

After the failure of the lay Bishopites’ efforts to persuade the Hoganites to accept Conwell’s ruling, the Bishop deployed his own pamphleteers in support of his cause. Michael Hurley, the pastor of St. Augustine’s parish, was dispatched to make an offensive strike. Hurley’s mocking, ascerbic pamphlet, issued under the pseudonym “an Independent Catholic,” demonstrated that he well deserved his reputation for surliness. Hurley perceived that the laymen felt their masculinity had been impugned by the Bishop’s accusations against Hogan. So he exploited their defensiveness by exhorting them to “act like men worthy of [them]selves.” He scornfully claimed the Hoganites were on the precipice of creating “The Independent Catholic Church, which [they] are about astonishing the world with…” Mockingly assuming the voice of a Hoganite, he dismissed the Bishop’s accusations of Hogan’s sexual impropriety. “Is it for such monkish notions of a self-excommunicated Bishop, and a narrow minded Clergy we are to lose

\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., 24.
\textsuperscript{173} Documents reproduced in the Appendix of William Vincent Harold, \textit{A Reply to a Catholic Layman, on his late ‘Address to the Right Reverend the Bishop of Pennsylvania, the Catholic Clergy of Philadelphia, and the Congregation of St. Mary’s in this City} (Philadelphia: Bernard Dornin, 1821), p. 60-63.
“Ornament of his profession?” he asked. “What a folly, and injustice! to suspend a man for such trifling infringements of sacerdotal sanctity, and matrimonial rights, which however they puff off as attempts at sacrilegious adultery.”¹⁷⁴

Hurley’s gift for sarcasm may have worked too well. The pamphlet elicited a reply from a writer identifying himself as “a sincere Catholic and no Traitor” who apparently took Hurley’s pronouncements seriously. Assuming “an Independent Catholic” to be a genuine Hoganite attempting to form a break-away church, he denounced Hurley for threatening to “out-do Henry the VIII” and ardently defended Conwell’s suspension. He asked, “Are we to place into the sanctuary of the living God one, who is more fit for the temple of Venus? Are we to receive the pure doctrine of the catholic church from the mouth of him, who has shown himself to be more than once ready to apostise [sic] for her faith?” He blamed the women of the congregation for insisting on Hogan’s retention, claiming that “a single glance” at the Hoganite pamphlets “will show it to be the language of females, nay, ladies, who even now continue to dance the levee at the door of this worthy idol of theirs! Oh shame, where is thy blush!”¹⁷⁵

“A Sincere Catholic” warned that only “the learned and benevolent prelate” possessed the authority to settle the matter. He pointed to a ruling of the Council of Trent that forbade secular magistrates (in this case, the lay trustees) from interfering in clerical censures. Moreover, he questioned the capacity of laypersons to understand and apply canon law to the controversy. He asked, “Is the majority of you fit to judge of the faithful citation of the canons of the church? and if they are, have they the volumes at hand, to compare what is said to be genuine?” Again, “A Sincere Catholic” pinned responsibility for the laity’s acceptance of Hogan’s illegitimate use of canon law on the women. “No sooner had [Hogan]... flung the chain of excommunication around the neck of his episcopal captive [Conwell],” he claimed, “and his chorus of female attendants, as

¹⁷⁴An Independent Catholic, Last Appeal to the Congregation of St. Mary’s Church (Philadelphia, 1821), pp. 1-4.
¹⁷⁵A Sincere Catholic, and no Traitor, The True Sentiments of the Writer of the Last Appeal to the Congregation of St. Mary’s Church (Philadelphia: Bernard Dornin, 1821), pp. 4-5.
if set agog by the power of animal magnetism, proclaimed the existence of a self-excommunicated bishop.\textsuperscript{176}

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From the perspective of the clergy, sexual self-control was a crucial gauge of Catholic masculinity. But they also indicated that education and expertise were critically important to the exercise of masculine authority within the community. Conwell recognized that his office and age conferred on him the assumption of expertise. So throughout the crisis he did what he could to capitalize on the authority that many automatically ascribed to him. In March, Conwell arranged for the publication of \textit{Sundry Documents, Addressed to St. Mary’s Congregation}. He cited selections from the provisions of the Council of Trent that, according to Conwell, “the Rev. William Hogan… wilfully [sic] passes over.” Conwell pointed to the “absolute power invested in bishops by the wisdom of the Council of Trent, whereby (for the good of religion and the correction of their subjects) they may withdraw [inferior clergymen’s] spiritual power, which are always revocable at will, particularly in a missionary country like this…” Lest the reader remain skeptical of the authority the Council imputed to him and his fellows, Conwell also included references to texts such as the \textit{Bibliotheca Canonica}, the pronouncements of Pope Leo X, and others to reinforce the legitimacy of his exercise of power.\textsuperscript{177}

Additionally, Conwell compiled a number of letters intended to call Hogan’s expertise and authority into question and to sully the renegade priest’s reputation. He recruited Hogan’s cousin, Father George Hogan, for the purpose. Conwell induced George to speak to the brevity and inadequacy of his cousin’s theological training back in Ireland. George characterized William’s education as an “almost ‘miraculous’ course of theology [that] did not exceed ten months.” George also accused William of plagiarism. He claimed a sermon delivered by William on All

\textsuperscript{176}Ibid., p. 5-6.

\textsuperscript{177}Henry Conwell, \textit{Sundry Documents, Addressed to St. Mary’s Congregation} (Philadelphia: Bernard Dornin, 1821), p. 22.
Saints Day, “which he obtruded on [the congregation] as his own production, was given him by
the Rev. Justin M’Namara, of Cork, with many other sermons.” In addition to George’s damning
testimonials, the Bishop published vague letters that referred to mysterious circumstances under
which William had fled his homeland. Apparently, previous cases of sexual impropriety had
induced him to try his luck in the unsettled American Church. Conwell also obtained statements
from fellow bishops in the American hierarchy regarding William’s erratic behavior in their
dioceses. Among other transgressions, the bishops reported William’s failure to produce a proper
exeat from New York before taking up his Philadelphia assignment and an alleged flirtation with
conversion to Protestantism.178

William Hogan claimed to be unfazed by the revelations contained in *Sundry Documents*
and unruffled by the Bishop’s attempts to discredit him. He sniffed at Conwell’s depiction of him
as a “young and simple priest.” And he relentlessly mocked the Bishop’s claims to authority,
calling him a “self-created president of the board of trustees of St. Mary’s Church.” Hogan used
the language of the Bishop’s *Second Pastoral Charge* against him. He ridiculed Conwell’s
intention to “wipe the eyes of his flock and remove the dust which I had been throwing into them.”
According to Hogan, “something worthy of a bishop, was expected” and, indeed,

> when he told his flock that “HE was the church, that is the representative of the church,”
> they were led to expect something like infallibility in his promises: but, alas! what must be
> the disappointment of his credulous followers, when SUNDRY DOCUMENTS were
> introduced into the world, as an antidote against the effects of the “dust I have been
> throwing into the eyes of the people…”179

Despite his performed disdain, Hogan clearly struggled when confronted with the
substance of the Bishop’s claims. Conwell did, in fact, possess the authority to censure Hogan’s
conduct, and Conwell had launched a credible attack on Hogan’s reputation. Hogan had not

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178 Ibid., pp. 7-8, 12-13, 16. It appears that George Hogan sided with Conwell against his cousin in an effort to return to
Conwell’s good graces. George Hogan had found himself at odds with the bishop even before the trustee crisis when he
protested his assignment to a remote and undesirable country outpost.

179 William Hogan, *A Brief Reply to a Ludicrous Pamphlet Compiled from the Affidavits, Letters and Assertions of a*
*Number of Theologians, with the Signature of Henry, Bishop, and Entitled Sundry Documents, Addressed to Saint Mary’s*
*Congregation* (Philadelphia: 1821).
procured an *exeat* from his New York post even before the trustee crisis had erupted. Now that Bishop Connelly placed himself firmly in Conwell’s camp, Hogan could harbor no hope of receiving one retroactively. Moreover, Louis DeBarth would certainly support Conwell’s claim that Hogan had “surreptitiously obtained admission into this diocese [sic].” Hogan must have understood the futility of refuting the content of the charges. So in a sly bid to defend his reputation, he sought to deflect attention away from the *substance* of Conwell’s charges and onto the *manner* in which those charges had been made: he posited a counterfactual. Even if all of Conwell’s claims against him could be proven, how could Conwell justify the dishonorable tactic of maligning Hogan’s character on charges that had not been known at the time of his suspension? Hogan referred to the accusations made against him in *Sundry Documents* as “*ex post facto* proofs of guilt” and he called Conwell’s invocation of authoritative texts under such circumstances “a burlesque on the canons, and conscience, and what an insult to the understanding of the public!”\(^{180}\)

In his effort to refute his cousin, Hogan met with greater success. He assembled various witnesses to swear affidavits before aldermen attesting to his own good character and to George Hogan’s lack of integrity. According to William, the series of documents “contradicts and stamps with prevarication and falsehood, G.D. Hogan.” The testimonial of John Ahearn Leahy, an Irish immigrant who had been a member of William’s Limerick congregation, proved especially useful in this campaign. Leahy refuted George’s claim that William had fled Ireland amid scandal. He swore to the great respect other Irish clergymen felt for William. Indeed, he asserted, “the parishioners denominated him the Bishop’s pet.” And William’s Limerick congregants so universally loved him that they greeted the news of his impending departure for the United States with anguish. Leahy claimed to have been present for William’s farewell sermon, at which “the

\(^{180}\)Ibid. p. 5, 7.
people were so sensibly affected as to express their grief aloud, thus affording the most satisfactory proof of his usefulness as a preacher, and his character as a man.”\textsuperscript{181}

Leahy declared the insinuations of William’s impropriety in Ireland to be “destitute of foundation.” And he easily managed to call George’s truthfulness into question by pointing to the disparity in the cousins’ ages. He explained, “G.D. Hogan’s standing, age and experience, were such as to make him rather the associate of boys and children than the director or advisor of Bishop Tuohy [of the Diocese of Limerick], to whom I am well convinced he was no further known, than as messenger from his benefactor [William].” Church disputes were the province of ordained, adult men. George’s lack of standing in this privileged community of patriarchs at the time of William’s alleged impropriety made his claim to special knowledge of an alleged conflict preposterous.\textsuperscript{182}

Laymen seeking to undermine Bishopite claims to the prerogatives conferred by age, experience, and expertise aimed to deploy those tropes on their own behalf. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the series of pamphlets that passed between Mathew Carey, again writing as “A Catholic Layman,” and William Vincent Harold. Harold returned to Philadelphia in the midst of the schism and swiftly installed himself as chief propagandist for the Bishopite forces. Harold had fled Philadelphia under awkward circumstances after his machinations to position himself for the post of bishop backfired. Apparently he saw the Hogan crisis as a fresh opportunity to earn a bishop’s mitre, this time by angling to succeed the aged and exhausted Conwell.

The bitter series of exchanges between Carey and Harold began on February 23, 1821 with Carey’s public plea to Conwell and the Catholic clergy of the diocese. Carey had produced a timeline of the events in order to “point out the errors of both sides, so that each may be the better disposed to ‘forgive’ his ‘neighbor’s trespasses,’ in order that his own may ‘be forgiven.’” Significantly, Carey selected adjectives to describe Hogan’s behavior that invoked images of

\textsuperscript{181}ibid., pp. 34, 14-15.
\textsuperscript{182}ibid., p. 15.
youth and immaturity. Hogan had acted with “folly, imprudence, and petulance.” But, according to Carey, the Bishop could make no such excuse for his own behavior. Conwell had been “obstinate” when he insisted on Hogan’s suspension. He possessed “an overweening idea of the extent of episcopal authority” that may have served him well back in Ireland, but “is not suited to this meridian.” Scholars of trusteeism have seized on phrases such as this to establish the connection between republican rhetoric and an emergent Irish-American identity among Catholics such as Carey. But, unlike his earlier efforts to defend American Catholics from Protestant attacks, Carey did not build an argument based on a citizen’s right to freedom of religion. Instead, in a series of arguments that demonstrate his adherence to Ultramontanism, he conspicuously shifted his focus to canon law.183

According to Carey’s research, the Roman Catholic Church had erected an elaborate and long-standing series of “provisions to guard against oppression and injustice.” Carey cited passages that called for Hogan to receive a written statement of the charges leveled against him, provided for an ecclesiastical trial to determine the justice of those charges, and if found guilty, recommended punishment in proportion to the severity of the transgression. Carey made clear that he represented not only a “very numerous and respectable portion of the congregation,” but also the fathers of the primitive Church. He invoked the authority of canon law to establish that he and his party upheld the Ultramontane ideal. It was, he asserted, Conwell and the Bishopites who deviated from prescribed Church law.184

Harold quickly responded with a spiteful Reply to a Catholic Layman in early March, devoting much of the pamphlet to undermining Carey’s claims to expertise. He declared that “a schoolboy’s knowledge of canon law, would have saved [Carey] from falling into [numerous] blunders” and he scolded Carey for “rushing into the literary strife with nothing better than index learning to support him.” Harold, too, cited liberally from canon law. But he explained that his

184 Ibid., pp. 19, 15.
superior knowledge allowed him to locate the passages that either contradicted or superseded those quoted by Carey. According to Harold’s reading of the texts, Hogan’s guilt met the threshold of being “manifest” and his crimes were “notorious,” thus rendering a written condemnation and ecclesiastical trial unnecessary. But Harold did not confine himself to a refutation of the substance of Carey’s observations. He also attacked the manner in which Carey had made his case and, thus, Carey’s intellect and education. Harold expressed relief that another pamphleteer had “spared me the drudgery of collecting all your blunders” and declared himself unwilling to engage in “wanton cruelty” by “play[ing] the critic on such helpless writing.”

Throughout the pamphlet, Harold revealed his continuing preoccupation with rank. He chastised Carey for his “indiscriminate and leveling censure that places them [Hogan and Conwell] on an equality. You sink the bishop below his rank, and would lift the priest above his station, in the ministry.” In Harold’s estimation, Carey’s injudicious attack on Conwell exposed his shortcomings as a gentleman. He observed that, “in addressing a Christian bishop, good taste and a proper regard to the decencies of society, might have taught you a more subdued tone than that which you ventured to assume… These, sir, are not the terms which gentlemen employ to qualify the errors even of their equals.” Indeed, he remarked, even the “lowliest peasant” of Ireland “would have blushed to utter” the charges Carey had made against the Bishop. To Carey, an immigrant and self-made man whose postfix as “esquire” still shone with its newness, this rebuke must have stung considerably.

Unsurprisingly, the rancor of this initial exchange piqued the interest of both Catholic and Protestant Philadelphians so that both pamphlets merited reprinting. And with the notoriety he and Harold had awakened, Carey naturally felt compelled to defend his reputation against Harold’s insinuations of ungentlemanly behavior. On March 28, he issued his Rejoinder to the Reply of the Rev. Mr. Harold. Carey insisted on the purity of his motives and even went so far as

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185 William Vincent Harold, Reply to a Catholic Layman, on his late “Address to the Right Reverend the Bishop of Philadelphia, the Catholic Clergy of Philadelphia, and the Congregation of St. Mary’s in this City” (Philadelphia: Published by Bernard Dornin, 1822), pp. 18, 22, 40-44.
186 Ibid., pp. 4, 29-30.

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to declare, “I pledge my honour that the grand object of my solicitude on the subject of the affair, has been as it regarded the peace and honour of the congregation.” But he devoted the bulk of his pamphlet, not to the present crisis, but to Harold’s transgressions of the previous decade. It seems Carey believed the best way to defend his own reputation was to sully Harold’s. He recounted the details of the “inflammatory and violent proceedings of the Rev. Mr. H. in the year 1812, whereby discord and disunion were introduced into the Congregation of St. Mary’s.” He claimed to offer the unbiased facts of the case, remarking that Harold’s behavior served as sufficient proof of the clergyman’s lack of integrity. Carey asserted, “Had I been disposed, I could have employed the same miserable weapons of sarcasm and sneer against Mr. Harold, as he has done against me.” But, presumably because of his superior capacity for restraint, he could prevent himself from commenting on Harold’s “overbearing spirit—his thirst for the mitre and crozier—his journey to Baltimore to force the trustees to raise his salary—and, more than all, the shocking contrast between the rudeness of his treatment of Dr. Egan and his present knight errantry in defence [sic] of episcopacy.”

Interestingly, Carey invoked martial imagery to describe his war of words with Harold. He clearly understood his masculinity to have been impugned by Harold, and he defended himself by casting Harold as the transgressor of a common code of masculine honor. He explained that he had anticipated from Harold “an essay decorous, manly, dignified, and argumentative—worthy of a man beyond the fiery ebullitions of youth—a gentleman—a clergyman—and a scholar.” Instead, Harold had “wantonly and wickedly dragged me into the arena—and though I pretend not to his profound knowledge of canon law, (mine being mere ‘index learning,’)—nor to his transcendent talents, yet I trust his victory over me... will not be a bloodless one.” This line of argument betrayed the class-specific nature of the conflict between Carey and Harold. Both men understood that their status as gentlemen depended on their felicity with intellectual—not

187 A Catholic Layman, Rejoinder to the Reply of the Rev. Mr. Harold, to the Address of the Right Rev. the Catholic Bishop of Pennsylvania, and the Congregation of St. Mary’s, in which are Detailed, the Inflammatory and Violent Proceedings of the Rev. Mr. H. in the Year 1812, Whereby Discord and Disunion Were Introduced into the Congregation of St. Mary’s (Philadelphia: H.C. Carey &I. Lea, 1822), pp. 31, 5.
physical—combat. By casting Harold as pugilistic, Carey assailed his status not merely as a man, but as a gentleman. In a later pamphlet Carey made the connection more explicit. He claimed that Harold had “indulged in a degree of abuse, of which the instances are rare, among those who have any pretensions to the rank or character of gentlemen.” The rules of decorum that Harold violated threatened the very stability of society because, Carey asserted, “[t]hey form the grand characteristic difference between men of refinement, and the rude and uncultivated—and prevent arguments and disputes from degenerating into beer-garden brawls.”

With so much at stake, both men took pains to locate themselves on the proper side of the line between undignified enthusiasm and masculine self-possession. In Harold’s Reply to the Catholic Layman’s Rejoinder, he sought to establish his capacity for restraint and called Carey’s composure into question. He claimed to have, “merely convicted you of misstatement and pulled off your mask.” But Carey’s Rejoinder had dragged both men to a new low of incivility and Harold declared, “I do not hold myself bound to struggle with a mind deranged by passion, nor to set a mark on all the foolery which a mind so deranged, naturally puts forth.” He characterized Carey’s accusations as “the ravings of an angry and malignant man” and his writings as “turgid, assuming, utterly deficient in mind and manners.” Indeed, Harold claimed, Carey’s arguments “might have been put down by a child.” He even took the provocative step of accusing Carey of “having invented a few falsehoods,” to which, naturally, Carey angrily replied.

Accusations of youth and inexperience also provided a rare opportunity for laywomen to criticize their clerical superiors. A “number of matrons” had presented the February 4, 1821 meeting of laymen with an Address of the Ladies of St. Mary’s Congregation. In their heated condemnation of Cummiskey for preventing them from taking their case to the Bishop, they derided him as a “shallow-brained school boy.” Only by assuming the role of scolding

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189William Vincent Harold, Reply to the Catholic Layman’s Rejoinder (Philadelphia: Printed by Bernard Dornin, 1822), pp. 4, 11, 16, 12. The exchange between Carey and Harold consisted of six pamphlets, including Harold’s Remarks on the Catholic Layman’s Desultory Examination and Carey’s Review of Three Pamphlets Lately Published by the Rev. W.V. Harold. Additionally, several pamphlets written by others responding to these exchanges appeared.
schoolmarm disciplining an errant pupil, could they imagine themselves in a position to take a clergymen to task for his ill treatment of them. His ignorance, they asserted, had led him to advocate heretical doctrines. They scoffed that he had the “vanity to hope, he may be retained among us!” and expressed alarm that someone so unqualified “thinks he can instruct us!”190

Another pamphlet, one of only two to appear during the crisis under the name of a woman, adopted this same tactic. Purporting to express the viewpoint of “Mary,” a member of the congregation, the letter condemned the Bishopites who pettily assailed Hogan for his shortcomings as a writer. Taking particular issue with the production of a Bishopite calling himself “the Detector,” Mary pointed to the manifold errors of grammar and logic he allowed to slip past him. How could one who employed “the preterperfect tense, instead of the preterpluperfect” so arrogantly criticize the imperfections in another’s writing? She recalled her “good old mistress” and wondered what that woman would have thought of such a shabby composition. “Methinks I see her now,” she wrote, and imagined her former teacher disparaging the Detector by saying, “What, you dunce—ten years old—have been two years at school—and not yet know a substantive from an adjective—if you had no sense—had you no dictionary—have you sold it for nuts and gingerbread?”191

“Mary” undoubtedly measured her tone carefully and took pains to avoid claiming authority or expertise beyond what was viewed as achievable for her sex. It is telling that no author engaged in the debate imputed expertise of any kind to laywomen. Instead, each party to the crisis accused the other of exploiting laywomen’s naturally more emotional and sensitive natures to build popular support for its partisans. According to the Hoganite identifying himself as “a layman of the congregation,” Conwell’s accusations of Hogan’s sexual impropriety constituted “an appeal to the feelings of the women, knowing their influence over us.” He explained that Conwell’s strategy failed because “the ladies of St. Mary’s church, entertain too high an opinion of

190 The Address of the Ladies of St. Mary’s Congregation, presented at the meeting, in Washington Hall, on Wednesday evening. February 14, 1821.
191 Mary, Hoganism Defended; or, the Detractor Detected (Philadelphia: Printed for the author, 1821).
the honour, piety, and conduct of the Rev. Mr. Hogan, to be influenced by such calumniating reports: the shafts aimed at him, only fall upon the detractor's head." It seems the women's discernment did not save Hogan from condemnation. Rather, the preposterousness of the Bishop's claims so flagrantly violated common sense that even women prone to emotionality could not help but see through Conwell's calculating move.\footnote{\textit{A Layman of the Congregation, An Inquiry into the Causes Which Led to the Dissentions Actually Existing in St. Mary's, and Observations on the Mode Best Calculated to Prevent Its Increase}. p. 7.}

Applying a similar logic to bolster the Bishopite cause, Harold invoked the specter of emotionally manipulated women directing the course of a conflict that otherwise could have been settled long before. He presented his readers with a hypothetical scenario in which "some interesting young \textit{gentleman} who had run afoul of the law made a great show of his persecution at the hands of the lawmen carting him off to jail. Such a cunning charmer could "attract the notice (as he naturally would) and appeal to the pity, and engage the interference of all the old ladies in the neighborhood of the court." The display could not fail to stir the women to action so "that they got into a riot, and were resolved to rescue the beautiful young man from the officers of the court." In this scenario, of course, Conwell was the lawman seeking to restore order in the midst of the women's histrionics. Should he comply with the women's request simply because "[t]he old ladies are advancing on the state house, yelling the soul-stirring tune of persecution, trial, rights of man, and fair swearing"? Or should he direct the women to "go home and attend to [their] proper employments, and leave the administration of justice to those whom the commonwealth has selected for that important office"? For Harold, the answer was self-evident.\footnote{William Vincent Harold, \textit{A Reply to a Catholic Layman, on his late "Address to the Right Reverend the Bishop of Pennsylvania, the Catholic Clergy of Philadelphia, and the Congregation of St. Mary's in this City"}. (Philadelphia: Published by Bernard Dornin, 1822), p. 38-39.}

Though the majority of the congregation's women rejected Harold's support for Hogan's suspension, at least some among them accepted the gender ideology that framed his interpretation of the case. In the other of the two pamphlets to appear under the name of a woman, "a Lady" deployed the language of sentiment and feminine nurture to beg Conwell to
forgive Hogan. Rather than appeal to laws or precedents, the Lady sought to “wring tears of compunction” from the Bishop. She encouraged Conwell to treat Hogan as a lost son, just as David “lamented over [his child] with that pathetic exclamation, Oh Absalom! my son! my son! would God, that I had died for thee, my son!” She expressed regret that Conwell had not acted as a clergyman should and “imitated your divine Master.” Had he done so, he would have reacted to Hogan’s inappropriate rant from the altar with “such a look of love and pity [that], like Peter, he would have gone out and wept bitterly.” The Lady closed her petition with an ominous warning that simultaneously deprecated the force of her own production and invoked the awesome power of an omniscient God. She warned, “that even the feeble exhortation in this letter, will appear in evidence against you at the day of judgment; if you continue to ‘shut your eyes to the light,’ to stifle the voice of your conscience, and persist in refusing an act of justice, which would restore peace to the church.”  

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Though Conwell’s day of ultimate judgment would have to wait, Philadelphia’s clergy could rely on the swift rulings of their neighbors in at least some matters that vexed the Catholic community. During the crisis, both William Hogan and Henry Conwell found themselves embroiled in criminal trials in the Mayor’s Court of Philadelphia. Both men faced accusations of sexual impropriety engineered by their opponents within the Catholic community. Hogan faced charges of attempted rape and assault by Mary Connell, a servant and former supporter in the schism who defected to the Bishopite party. Meanwhile, Conwell pursued a perjury charge against a woman who claimed he had fathered her illegitimate child. The testimony at both proceedings indicates the extent to which parties to the dispute had collapsed the categories of gender and sexuality so that tests of the adversarial clergymen’s sexual self-restraint became the
means by which partisans on each side of the conflict staked their claims to authority within the community and respectability among the wider audience of Protestant Philadelphians.

As Hogan’s trial approached, it appeared to some outside the community that jurors had “to decide on the character of a reverend and beloved clergyman, and do equal justice to a poor desolate woman as Mary Connell then appeared, in opposition to a powerful defendant.” But Philadelphia Catholics understood that much more was at stake. A conviction would be a victory not only for Connell and the prosecutor, but for the Bishop who had leveled charges of sexual profligacy against the errant ex-priest more than a year before. And Hoganites were equally aware that a repudiation of their champion would deal a severe blow to their party, which Hogan had come to represent.\footnote{Compendious Trial, p. 5.}

The grand jury aided the Hoganite agenda by refusing to indict Hogan for assaulting Connell “with intent to ravish.” In all, the grand jurors discarded five of the seven charges sought by prosecutors. When the trial began on April 1, 1822, Hogan and co-defendant Hannon each faced only one count of “assault and battery upon Mary Connell.” Nonetheless, both prosecution and defense pursued the case as if a sexual assault were at issue. In her analysis of the proceedings, Kathleen Kennedy observes that the trial “pitted two sexually suspect archetypes against each other.” On one side, the prosecution deployed time-worn Protestant narratives of libidinous, predatory Catholic priests to “cast Hogan outside the boundaries of legitimate manhood.” On the other, Hogan’s defense team exploited assumptions about the sexual availability of working class women. Thus, “Connell’s associations with African Americans, her presence near houses of vice, her drinking and her disorderly conduct marked her as a prostitute rather than the victimized worker presented by the prosecution.”\footnote{Kathleen Kennedy, “A Charge Never Easily Made: The Meaning of Respectability and Women’s Work in the Trial of the Reverend William Hogan, 1822,” American Nineteenth Century History, Volume 7, Number 1 (March, 2006).}

Kennedy relies heavily on Patricia Cline Cohen’s study of the 1844 trial of New York’s Episcopal Bishop Benjamin Onderdonk to provide the framework for her analysis. Both scholars
understand their historical subjects to have conflated the religious and gendered meanings of their circumstances to make their experiences intelligible to themselves. As Cohen asserts (and Kennedy quotes), “in the complicated religious and political terrain of antebellum America, gendered ideas were often invoked as a strategy to distill debates and simplify disagreements. Stereotypes of masculinity and femininity tend to be widely shared in a culture and can thus be used as a kind of shorthand to make accessible other, more complicated ideas.” This surely was the case in the Onderdonk trial. But Kennedy fails to appreciate the extent to which the Catholic community had generated a calculus of gendered respectability all its own, which had clearly been informed by the broader Protestant culture yet remained stubbornly peripheral to it. Catholics hoped to spare themselves the “calumny and abuse” they often suffered from Protestant detractors. But their separatist impulse was not merely defensive—they had forged common mores out of a shared understanding of duty to their faith community. Thus, two discourses of sexual restraint, parallel to one another but not quite intersecting, co-existed in the proceedings against Hogan. While the Protestant-dominated court and jury framed the events in question according to tenets of gender integrity widely accepted in American culture, Catholic parishioners on whose testimony they relied assessed the contending parties according to measures of virtue derived from within the parish.197

Catholic witnesses focused on the extent to which each party had served the community of St. Mary’s. They clearly had absorbed and accepted the Catholic iteration of the “household of faith” ideal described previously and supported a gendered division of Catholic labor. Take, for instance, Catholic witnesses’ insistence that the court consider Connell’s service to the parish and where she had worshipped in recent months. Bridget Gartland testified that the matter boiled down to Connell’s bitterness at having her offer to make blinds for the parish passed over in favor of another congregant’s. While Gartland and others claimed Connell had openly broken ties with the Hoganites and had begun attending services at St. Joseph’s, others claimed she had been

197 Ibid.; and, Patricia Cline Cohen, “Ministerial Misdeeds: The Onderdonk Trial and Sexual Harassment in the 1840s,” Journal of Women’s History Volume 7, Number 4 (Fall, 1995), pp. 34-57.
seen at both St. Joseph’s and St. Mary’s, where she posed as a Hoganite to obtain information for the Bishop’s party. This is not to say that Catholics disregarded Connell’s sexual continence as a measure of her feminine virtue—witnesses dutifully answered questions about Connell’s sexual history and record of marital discord back in Ireland. And those who spoke of her sexual indiscretions unequivocally condemned her for them. But Catholic witnesses seemed more concerned with her allegiances in the midst of the schism as a measure of her character. Though Protestant attorneys sought to cut off such apparently immaterial testimony (one of them derisively deeming it “female tittle-tattle”), the witnesses persisted in discussing a dispute of great importance to themselves and their community.

Connell’s appeal for redress from a Protestant-dominated court may at first glance suggest her acceptance of mainstream Protestant-American tenets of respectability. Yet it is clear that she judged both Hogan and herself according to specifically Catholic conventions. And, to an extent, she expected the members of the court to accept the legitimacy of those conventions when judging Catholic persons brought before the bar. For instance, she testified that she had prepared eggs and potatoes for Hogan and Hannon on that fateful Friday, a day on which Catholics abstained from flesh foods. But when Connell saw what appeared to be meat juices on the men’s plates, “she licked the knife with her tongue” to verify her suspicions. Connell obviously viewed the priests’ indulgence in meat as more than a violation of Catholic practice; it betrayed flawed and indifferent characters. From her point of view, this incident hinted at a more general lack of feeling that ought to bolster the validity of her claims against Hogan and Hannon in the eyes of the court.198

Gartland’s testimony indicates that Connell judged Hogan deficient in his pastoral duties on another score. She told the court that Connell became angry when Hogan advised the congregation from the altar not to “come to his house, bearing tales; and requesting that they would not make themselves busy in that way.” Gartland testified that Connell responded bitterly to

198 Compendious Trial, pp. 6-7.
his announcement, saying, “that was all the thanks Mr. Hogan gave any body, for doing any thing for him; for her part she would do no more for him.” According to at least some parishioners, Mary Connell among them, a pastor ought to mediate interpersonal conflicts among congregants.\(^{199}\)

Connell staked her own assertion of respectability less on broader Protestant-American conventions of feminine virtue than on her service to the parish. She of course appeared perturbed by defense attorneys’ persistent questions about her visits to oyster bars, her familiarity with African-American patrons of such establishments, and her inability to hold her liquor. But she sought to redeem her character in the eyes of the court by emphasizing such things as the money she had raised “to purchase the sacred vestments for the church” and her labors as a seamstress to craft them. Apparently she hoped that record of service would secure the respect and esteem of the members of the court as well. But her version of events failed to persuade—the jury acquitted Hogan and ordered Connell to pay court costs.\(^{200}\)

Despite Hogan’s exoneration by his Protestant neighbors, his party suffered a considerable mortification as a consequence of his trial. The proceedings drew large crowds that wrangled for limited seating in the gallery of the courtroom and drew coverage in both local and national newspapers. And two separate accounts of the trial appeared for sale in pamphlet form, thus allowing an even greater audience to participate as vicarious spectators in the sensational proceedings. So it is likely that some Hoganites took a perverse pleasure in seeking to turn the tables on Conwell. The dust had barely settled from Hogan’s disgrace when the Bishop found himself cast as the rogue in his own sexual scandal.

Events began to unfold on March 4, 1823, when Catharine Navis, described by Bishopites as “a woman of infamous fame,” called on Richard Palmer, a justice of the peace, to make a sworn statement that “she was pregnant to the Bishop, and that he had offered her fifty dollars if she would swear the same to Priest Hogan.” But a six-hour examination of the

\(^{199}\) Trial of the Rev. William Hogan, p. 75.
\(^{200}\) Ibid., p. 24.
complainant led Palmer and his associates to declare that “the woman’s prevarication appeared quite evident.” And so, Navis found herself facing a perjury charge and bail set at an out-of-reach one thousand dollars.\footnote{Trial and conviction of Catharine Navis for perjury in her false charges against Bishop Conwell,” in A Concatenation of Speeches, Memoirs, Deeds, and Memorable References, Relative to St. Mary’s Church, in Philadelphia (Philadelphia: 1824), pp. 85-91.}

At the trial, which began on October 6, 1823, the prosecution had little trouble implying that Navis had been made the instrument of a Hoganite plot. William Harvey, the jailor who took Navis into custody upon her indictment, testified that Navis insisted they stop at the home of Hoganite trustee C.W. Bazeley on route to her place of confinement. She intended to ask for his help in posting security. When they found Bazeley not at home, she then asked to stop at the home of another Hoganite trustee, John Ashley. By this time, Bazeley had been apprized of recent occurrences and caught up to Harvey and Navis. Harvey testified that the Hoganite “insisted on me to let her go, that I had no right to detain her.” Though Navis improbably claimed not to know the Hoganites whose assistance she sought, Harvey observed that “Bazeley and she seemed to know each other well.” He claimed that Bazeley promised to meet the pair at the Esquire’s office to post bail for Navis, but after waiting “above an hour” it became clear the Hoganite would not arrive to assist his apparent collaborator.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 86-87.}

The testimony of Samuel R. Wood, said to be “a man of known veracity,” proved even more damning for the Hoganite cause. Wood testified that Navis recanted her charge against the bishop in his presence, apparently in response to fear upon learning of the grand jury indictment against her. According to Wood, Navis admitted, “that an improper connection had taken place between her and Hogan, which left her at their [the Hoganites’] mercy, as she believed herself to be pregnant to Hogan, and had informed him so.” Navis told Wood that Hogan and Bazeley pressured her to swear the child to Conwell, though “she never had any acquaintance with the Bishop.” Thus, “Hogan and Bazeley had brought her to the miserable condition she was then in, without a friend, and abandoned by the world.” Navis’s attorneys later persuaded her to withdraw
her recantation for strategic reasons, though there seemed little hope of convincing the jury of her veracity with such increasingly muddled and contradictory accounts piling up.  

By this time, even Hoganites had little faith left in the character and continence of the now-notorious William Hogan. They had endured his trial for assault the previous year. They had winced when he made a dramatic and unwelcome appearance at St. Mary’s Church in the middle of the Reverend Harold’s sermon several months before. They smarted shortly thereafter when a communiqué from Rome condemned Hogan and his supporters for the “disorders” that plagued the diocese. And they suffered the embarrassment of being the targets of resolutions of censure by co-religionists from the Dioceses of Baltimore and New York in recent weeks. Now they discovered that the charges of sexual irregularity leveled against Conwell turned back on the head of their party, and by association, on themselves. They must have been humiliated—but not entirely surprised—when the presiding judge in Navis’s perjury case delivered a jury charge that made her conviction a foregone conclusion.

Judge Hallowell told the jurors, “Perjury is a high offence—everything that is dear to us in society, our lives, liberty, and prosperity, depend on the confidence we can repose on an oath or affirmation, solemnly taken in a course of judicial proceeding.” In a move that suggests Hallowell recognized, and perhaps even accepted, Catholic conventions of masculine honor, he emphasized that Conwell, a man of the cloth, possessed a greater probability of truthfulness than the average citizen. He told them, “You will consider the character and station of Bishop Conwell—the high obligations, civil and religious, he is under, to lead a life of celibacy and chastity—his own positive and solemn oath delivered upon this trial, in opposition to that of the prisoner, which is undoubtedly entitled to great respect.” Hallowell framed Conwell’s reliability as a witness as a matter contingent on his capacity for abstinence in compliance with his priestly vows. Of course, Hallowell did not assume Hogan to be in conformity with the injunction to celibacy and chastity. It seems he agreed with what was fast becoming the general consensus:

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Ibid., pp. 87-88.
that Hogan had, indeed, deserted his brother clergymen and violated his vows. He could no longer claim the special status extended to men of the cloth. Thus, Navis’s guilt or innocence depended on the jurors’ assessment of the relative merits of Conwell’s and Hogan’s claims of sexual self-control. In the contest between the charming renegade priest and the remote, aged prelate, the jurors required little time to ruminante. They promptly found Navis guilty.\textsuperscript{204}

Sensational reports of clerical debauchery faded from the city’s and the nation’s headlines once the trials had come to a close. But the specter of the clergy’s sexual scandals haunted Catholic Philadelphians for years to come. The Hoganites’ attempts to refocus popular opinion on the substance of their grievances fell flat as their quest to secure the backing of a reputable priest repeatedly failed. And, while Bishopite forces ultimately succeeded in subduing lay assertions of authority, the ham-fistedness they had employed to achieve that end left an ugly legacy of ill will and resentment. Moreover, the community had done irreparable harm to the character of their clergy and, by association, to themselves. In the years to come, they would face rising opposition from a re-energized No-Popery movement that deployed time worn tropes of clerical profligacy and lay gullibility. It must have been with no small measure of bitterness that they realized their trustee-era escapades had inadvertently given credence to these familiar—and ruinous—aspersions.

\textsuperscript{204} Ibid., p. 89-90.
CHAPTER FIVE—

NATIVISM, THE RIOTS OF 1844, AND THE CATHOLIC QUEST FOR RESPECTABILITY

The May 12, 1844 edition of Philadelphia’s Democratic newspaper, Spirit of the Times, described the uncharacteristic gloom and emptiness of the city’s Catholic parishes on the preceding day’s Sabbath. The author observed that, while Protestant houses of worship bustled with activity, the Roman Catholic churches “stood desolated, silent, and untenanted. In obedience to the orders of the Bishop they were not opened for public worship. The solitary tread of the sentinel, or the clank of the musket, was the only sound that disturbed their solitary repose.” Bishop Francis Patrick Kenrick had reluctantly issued the order in response to brutal riots that were destined to rank among the most notorious examples of nativist aggression in American history.\(^{205}\)

Those contemporaries with cooler heads took stock of the bloodshed and destruction perpetrated by the rioters and widely agreed with the Spirit of the Times author who predicted that “Philadelphia is unutterably and irremediably disgraced.” From the very first, appalled onlookers recognized that the riot was more than an expression of local antagonisms. It represented a crisis of American identity that, until the nativist ruptures, had predicated itself on toleration and goodwill. The author lamented, “Who ever dreamed that the red stripes of the American flag would become crimson with the blood of slaughtered victims of religious phrenzy?” That such an outburst of bigotry had taken place in William Penn’s fabled “City of Brotherly Love” only added to the tragedy. “Who ever was mad enough to dream that the city of ‘Penn’ would exceed even the illiterate and fanatic Pagan in these massacres for religion[?]” he grieved. Who could have anticipated that the inheritors of Penn’s legacy would stand by and “countenance a mob engaged

\(^{205}\)Thoughts for the People,” *Spirit of the Times*, May 12, 1844.
not only in the assassination of Bible worshippers, but in the destruction of the Bible itself by huge bonfires in our public streets[?].

The catalyst for the “massacres” to which the *Times* author referred had been Kenrick’s request to excuse Catholic children from Protestant religious exercises in the public schools more than two years before. The outcome of Kenrick’s protracted campaign was what historian Bruce Feldberg described as “a brutal ethnoreligious war” between nativists and their Catholic neighbors. By the end of what would be the first salvo in this war, the Churches of St. Michael and St. Augustine had been burned down, numerous private homes occupied by residents of Irish descent had been stoned or burned, a former convent had been destroyed, and numerous casualties reported. Philadelphia Catholics were caught in the midst of a massive national movement to decry what Protestants perceived to be the evils of “popery” in American life.

Several generations of historians have labored to make sense of the perverse logic that underlay this widespread phenomenon. Ray Allen Billington’s *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* remains the most comprehensive and groundbreaking of these efforts. Billington traced the European antecedents to the American anti-Catholic movement and described more than two centuries of Protestant persecution of American Catholics that preceded the Native American and Know-Nothing crusades of the mid-nineteenth century. Billington emphasized that many Protestants believed that Catholic doctrine required them to swear primary allegiance to the Pope, rendering American adherents to Catholicism incapable of assimilating into a democratic society based on the exercise of reason and the practice of free will. And they believed Catholic clergymen alienated the members of their flock from the unmediated Word of God by refusing them access to the Bible. These supposed Catholic beliefs, along with other alleged practices such as invoking the intercessory powers of saints, pursuing indulgences, and requiring the faithful to make confession and perform penance,

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206 Ibid.
convinced many Protestants that Catholicism was wholly incompatible with American values and customs.\textsuperscript{207}

The popularity of social history inspired a new generation of scholars to look at the ethnic and class motivations that informed rising anti-Popery sentiment in the antebellum era. A number of these historians used Philadelphia as their case study. In his now-classic article, “The Shuttle and the Cross,” David Montgomery examined the socio-economic dislocations resulting from changes in Kensington’s weaving industry in the 1830s and 1840s. According to Montgomery, many artisans had once identified most strongly with fellow members of the laboring class, both skilled and unskilled, native-born and immigrant. But a decline in wages and job security led many to embrace anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic politics popularized in the midst of economic depression. Michael Feldberg built on Montgomery’s analysis. While he accepted Montgomery’s thesis of economic causality, he emphasized that perceptions of Irish immigrants’ peculiarities fueled both the economic resentments described by Montgomery and the religious hostilities denounced by Billington. As Feldberg observed, the immigrants’ “poverty, their high crime rates, their poor sanitary habits, and their tendency to clannishness” all generated the perception that Irish Catholics were incapable of assimilating into American society.\textsuperscript{208}

More recently, scholars have examined the nativist movement through the lens of cultural studies. Jenny Franchot, for instance, explored the manner in which anti-Catholic propaganda generated a perception of sameness among Protestants who otherwise would have been at odds with one another over doctrinal and social differences. Gender played a crucial role in Franchot’s analysis. She argued that narratives of Catholic iniquity that focused on the sexual deviance of nuns and priests normalized new prescriptions for middle-class domesticity. Bruce Dorsey also emphasized the salience of gender in nativist critiques of Catholicism. In his study of antebellum reformers, he demonstrated that nativists reacted against Irish working-class standards of


appropriately gendered behavior. These studies have been enormously helpful in elucidating the origins and motives for anti-Catholic prejudice in early America. Just as importantly, they have helped to expose the discrimination and suffering endured by marginalized Catholics.209

Historians of religion also have examined the Catholic response to the resurgent no-Popery crusades of the 1840s. Curiously, the preponderance of scholars has argued that Catholics, led by their Ultramontane-leaning clergy, embraced separatism. As Maura Jane Farrelly argues, “[f]rom the 1840s until the end of the Second World War, if not the post Vatican II era of the 1960s and 1970s, American Catholicism was characterized by a parochialism that encouraged Catholics to settle in the same urban enclaves and send their children exclusively to Catholic schools.” She claims that clergy sought to keep the focus of the faithful pointing Romeward by encouraging laymen and laywomen to nurture a distrust of American democratic institutions and the American penchant for celebrating individualism. Clergy could easily leverage Catholics’ distress over Protestant hostility to reinforce their argument that the Catholic faith and American culture were generally incompatible. In an argument that echoes the findings of scholars as diverse as Jay Dolan, John McGreevey, and Garry Wills, Farrelly claims that such behaviors gave rise to nothing short of a “‘ghetto mentality’” among American Catholics that could only be overcome by a profound revolution in worldview.210

The response of Philadelphia Catholics to the tragic conflagrations that rent their city abrogates the ghettoization thesis. It is certainly true that the Catholic community briefly assumed a defensive posture in the immediate aftermath of riot. And the laity more enthusiastically embraced Bishop Kenrick’s campaign to establish a comprehensive system of Catholic education once they had exhausted all efforts to reform the public schools. But the city’s Catholics never embraced an era of disengagement from Philadelphia society. In fact, the community zealously defended the compatibility of their faith and their participation in American culture. No-Popery

agitation inspired laymen and laywomen to redouble their efforts to prove their respectability to Protestant detractors. Elite and middle class Catholics devoted special attention to habituating recently-arrived Irish immigrants to American manners so they might more efficiently establish themselves as credits to the faith and to American society more generally. Lay elites took the lead in founding organizations such as the Catholic Philopatrian Institute and the Catholic Total Abstinence Society to accomplish this objective.

The laity, for the most part, had capitulated to the demise of trusteeism by the 1840s. By this time, the appointment of the clergy and the disposition of parish funds had been placed in the hands of the nation’s increasingly numerous—and increasingly powerful—bishops. But laymen and laywomen remained the driving forces behind much of Catholic associational life. And they assumed considerable responsibility as ambassadors of the faith. In an era when the integrity of priests was notably suspect, laymen and laywomen understood they were Catholicism’s more credible emissaries. Scholars such as Farrelly who presume the unquestioned ascendancy of an American-based Ultramontanist clergy miss the extent to which the faithful had already embraced the Ultramontane orientation of Catholic devotional life in the 1820s and 1830s, but rejected certain aspects of clerical authority that came along with it. And these scholars fail to discern that most laypeople detected no dissonance between their adherence to Ultramontanism, their participation in the development of American Catholic institutions, and their engagement in American society.

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It is impossible to overstate the levels of brutality and invective that characterized the more virulent strain of anti-Catholic sentiment of the 1830s and 1840s. Consider the public’s reaction to Maria Monk’s bogus memoir of her residency in an Ursuline convent, *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery*. By the time of its publication in 1836, American readers
had already demonstrated a prurient fascination with convent tales that described deviant sexual practices and perverse religious observances supposedly performed by nuns and priests. So, it should come as no surprise that the public devoured Monk’s unusually explicit expose of clerical predations, making it a runaway bestseller. Monk described the method by which she had been seduced away from the Protestant faith of her childhood and convinced to take the “black veil” and become a nun. Though the naïve young woman had entered the convent with the intention of serving God and his Church, she found herself forced into a very different kind of servitude. According to Monk, she and her fellow nuns were coerced into becoming sexual consorts for priests who accessed the nuns’ chambers through secret passageways connecting convent and rectory. The children resulting from these unholy unions were swiftly baptized and summarily murdered and discarded by their putatively virtuous parents. Monk alleged that her rape had resulted in pregnancy. In order to protect the life of her unborn child, she risked her own by fleeing the convent and seeking refuge with kindly Protestants. In the aftermath of her ordeal, she had been convinced to tell her tragic story as a means of protecting other impressionable Protestant girls from making the same mistakes she had.211

It was later revealed that a committee of Protestant ministers had collaborated to produce the fictions published under Monk’s name. And numerous sources—including Monk’s own mother—repudiated the incidents in the book, sullied Monk’s character with revelations of her promiscuous sexual escapades, and insinuated that Monk suffered from mental derangement caused by a brain injury sustained in childhood. Yet, Awful Disclosures continued to draw a broad readership that, for the most part, accepted its claims uncritically. The book underwent numerous reprintings, spawned a sequel, Further Disclosures of Maria Monk, and drew enormous crowds to Monk’s public appearances.212

211 Maria Monk, Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal (New York: Published for Maria Monk by Hoisington & Trow, 1836).
212 Ibid., and Maria Monk, Further Disclosures by Maria Monk, Concerning the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal; also, Her Visit to Nuns’ Island, and Disclosures Concerning that Secret Retreat (New York: Published for Maria Monk by Leavitt, Lord, & Co., 1837); and Nancy Lusignan Schultz, Veil of Fear: Nineteenth-Century Convent Tales by Rebecca Reed and Maria Monk (West Lafayette, Indiana: Perdue University Press, 1999).
Such fabrications primed Protestant audiences to believe the worst of their Catholic neighbors. And many considered themselves duty-bound to take action in the wake of such revelations. The tragic events in Charlestown, Massachusetts in the summer of 1834 are a case in point. An angry mob assembled outside an Ursuline convent that housed a number of women religious and the young girls who boarded at their elite academy. Members of the mob demanded to search the premises for a nun rumored to be held captive in a dungeon on the property. Though local Selectmen conducted a thorough search and found no dungeon and no unwilling occupant, their pleas for restraint went unheeded. The mob drove the women and children from the building, looted the premises, desecrated the gravesites of deceased Ursulines, and burned the building to the ground. The parallels between apocryphal convent tales such as Monk’s and the assumptions of the Charlestown rioters are obvious enough. And, consider that prominent Presbyterian minister Lyman Beecher had delivered a series of sermons heavy on anti-Catholic invective in Charlestown in the week preceding the conflagration. Many American Catholics understandably feared that it was open-season on the members of their persecuted community.  

These increasingly dangerous conditions inspired many American Catholics to step up their efforts to defend the doctrines of their faith and the respectability of its practitioners. As historian Robert Francis Hueston observed, many Catholic communities founded periodicals that aimed to counteract nativist intimidation. According to Hueston, “[t]he number of Catholic periodicals, while increasing only from six to seven between 1836 and 1840, soared to fifteen by 1845.” Philadelphia Catholics took the lead at the vanguard of this movement. In 1833, they added their own publication to the considerable number of Protestant denominational newspapers rolling off Philadelphia’s presses. The purpose of the Catholic Herald was twofold: to foster a sense of community among the faithful and to answer the slurs and insults of local Protestants. In the prospectus for the Herald, Bishop Francis Patrick Kenrick took aim at those

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Philadelphia-based Protestant clergy who maligned the Catholic faith in their publications. He wrote,

If these sectarian publications had been content with maintaining the system of doctrine, which they have severally embraced, we could have continued, as heretofore, silent spectators of their controversies, and confined ourselves to the publication of those standard works, which, we are convinced, present a satisfactory demonstration of the truth and purity of the Catholic Church. But when we observe, in several of those religious journals, false statements of facts reflecting upon our Religion, and doctrines ascribed to us which our Church condemns—when we know that our silence is assumed as an admission of the truth of these charges, and that thereby uncharitable feelings are created, and prejudices confirmed, we deem it expedient to establish a regular periodical journal, through which we may be enabled, from time to time, to lay before the public temperate vindications of our doctrines, according as the unprovoked attacks of our adversaries, may appear to us worthy of notice.  

The Herald's first adversary was Presbyterian minister John Breckinridge. Father John Hughes had accepted Breckinridge's challenge to debate a Catholic clergyman on the question “is the Protestant religion the religion of Christ?” Hughes would offer the first missive, to be published in the Herald, and Breckinridge would respond the following week in his own denominational newspaper, the Presbyterian. The exchanges would continue until the parties had exhausted their arguments. As diocesan historian James Connelly reported, Kenrick greeted the news of Hughes’s zeal to confront Breckinridge with dismay. The Bishop was well aware of Hughes’s inferior education and easily-roused temper. But Kenrick agreed to assist Hughes once the latter clergymen insisted upon moving forward. Alas, what Kenrick hoped would be a dignified and civil discourse quickly degenerated into something else entirely. Hughes and Breckinridge exchanged insults via written missive from January through September of 1833 and moved on to verbal mudslinging when they resumed their dispute in 1835. As Connelly observed of the

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clergymen, by "using abusive language and hurling sharp epithets at each other, [they] did little to promote religious harmony in the City of Brotherly Love."  

Clearly, Kenrick's acquiescence to Hughes's self-appointment as the Herald's chief apologist cannot be counted among his accomplishments. Indeed, Hughes would go on to serve as Bishop of the Diocese of New York, where he routinely managed to antagonize his Protestant neighbors. So, once the Hughes-Breckinridge clash came to an unsettled and unfriendly conclusion, Kenrick saw to it that the Herald refocused on celebrating achievements in Philadelphia Catholicism and providing guidance in the tenets of the faith. He also encouraged the faithful to use the Herald as a platform for publicizing upcoming community events. This is not to say that the paper abandoned its apologetic mission. Instead, it was transformed into a more finely tuned instrument for honorably representing the faith.

Indeed, Kenrick's subtlety and finesse in dealing with Protestant detractors had been a major consideration that led to his appointment. Historians of Catholicism most frequently celebrate Kenrick as the figure who settled the trustee crisis that plagued Philadelphia's Catholic community throughout the 1820s and the first half of the 1830s. Kenrick is also celebrated for his achievements in clarifying Catholic doctrine. Over the course of his clerical career, Kenrick published numerous books and pamphlets on various aspects of Catholic theology. Indeed, his scholarship earned him his first leadership position in the American Church as a professor of theology at the newly-created Catholic seminary in Bardstown, Kentucky. As Kenrick's reputation rose, many of his texts were adopted for use in the Catholic seminaries that were just beginning to be established in the United States. It is widely assumed that these theological treatises were foremost in the minds of Vatican leaders when they first elevated Kenrick to Bishop of the Diocese of Philadelphia in 1830 and eventually promoted him to Metropolitan of Baltimore in 1850, effectively making him the highest ranking Catholic official in the United States. But fellow

\footnote{Catholic Herald, January 17, 1833; Connelly, p. 138.}
clergy also had looked favorably on Kenrick’s appointment because of his impressive track record in dealing with Protestant foes.

Kenrick’s star rose in the American Church largely because of the perception that he would serve as a persuasive and tactful ambassador for the faith to hostile Protestants. Clerical leaders had lamented the appointment of Kenrick’s predecessor in Philadelphia, the Reverend Henry Conwell, not because he lacked intellectual qualifications or appropriate experience, but because he possessed an impressive wellspring of bellicosity guaranteed to irritate both American Catholics and Protestants. So opposed were Conwell’s closest colleagues to his appointment to Philadelphia, they formally requested he turn down the appointment. In their appeal, they told him, “[w]e are well acquainted with his constitution and period of life, and from our knowledge of these have reason to apprehend he might soon fall victim to some of those diseases which frequently rage with such fury in the new world.” Success in the American mission required the delicate management of both Catholic and Protestant relations. Conwell had never been known for his delicacy. When Conwell’s management of the trustee crisis exacerbated hostilities and, in the words of Mathew Carey, made Catholics “a subject of triumph to [their] enemies,” it was clear a change of leadership was in order.216

By this time, Kenrick had already distinguished himself as an apologist for the faith. During his appointment to the Bardstown mission, Kenrick undertook a number of public campaigns defending Catholicism against the detractions of local Protestant antagonists. Kenrick came to enjoy such wide acclaim that his services were requested by a number of bishops throughout the United States. All efforts to poach him were vociferously opposed by his Bardstown superior, Benedict Flaget, who considered him indispensable to the Kentucky mission. Ultimately, the Metropolitan overruled Flaget and recommended to Rome that Kenrick take over the sensitive task of putting the Diocese of Philadelphia to rights. The metropolitan was so

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convinced of Kenrick’s fitness for the job that he dispensed with the usual custom of proposing three candidates and submitted only Kenrick’s name, declaring him to be an “outstanding” nominee. Kenrick had heard rumors of his impending elevation to Bishop of Philadelphia and, not surprisingly, he wished them to be false. But when his official orders arrived from the See, Kenrick accepted the assignment with characteristic humility and undertook preparations for his relocation and consecration.217

Kenrick understood that apologetics would comprise a major component of his Philadelphia agenda. Even before his arrival, he issued his first official pastoral letter to Philadelphia Catholics. In the first part of this letter, he addressed himself to the clergymen over whom he would soon preside. He began by praising their piety and service to congregants. But he also commended them for their apologetic efforts. Kenrick wrote, “by your talents and erudition the truths of our holy Religion have been triumphantly vindicated from the Pulpit and the Press, and by your virtues the sanctity of the priesthood has been sustained, when assailed by the tongue of slander…”218

His solicitous introduction notwithstanding, Kenrick’s campaign to practice decorum and impart some luster to the tarnished image of the Philadelphia Catholic community got off to an uncertain start, even among his own clergymen. As Kenrick biographer Hugh Nolan observed, “[h]aving received a polish and etiquette then generally unknown in the young Republic, his courtesy caused him to be considered almost effeminate by the rather brusque Irish American clergy” already placed in the diocese. Indeed, a number of Philadelphia clergymen had earned well-deserved reputations for boisterousness, hard drinking, and pugnacity. But more cultured members of the priesthood appreciated Kenrick’s grace and sophistication. And they were especially pleased that Kenrick’s refinement and even temperament were likely to foil the

217 Though Kenrick won praise for his comparatively minor skirmishes with both a Presbyterian minister and a Methodist minister while assigned to Bardstown, he achieved greatest commendation for his role in the so-called Omega-Omicron debates. Kenrick composed twenty-one letters to Gideon Blackburn, the president of the Danville Presbyterian College, to defend Catholic teachings on Transubstantiation against Blackburn’s misrepresentations. Ultimately, the letters were printed in pamphlet form as The Letters of Omega and Omicron on Transubstantiation; or, Two “Unanswerable” Letters Written by a Protestant Minister “Eulogized” in Twenty-One (Louisville: W.W. Worsley, 1828).
218 First Pastoral Letter of the Right Reverend Francis Patrick Kenrick, May 19, 1830, reprinted in Nolan, pp. 439-450.
critiques of Protestant detractors. As the *United States Catholic Miscellany* observed of Kenrick’s talent for exposition, “[h]is reasoning and arguments are cogent and powerful; his diction chaste, his language copious, his figures striking and appropriate, and his appeals to the heart irresistible.” Kenrick, the American hierarchy agreed, was perfect for the Philadelphia post.\(^{219}\)

Of course, it was understood that the newly-minted bishop could not counter every Protestant detractor singlehandedly. Kenrick, like his predecessors to the mitre, recognized the extent to which he would have to rely on the laity to serve as the key transmitters of Catholic apologetics. He aimed to make the members of his flock effective—and tactful—defenders of the faith. Indeed, he undertook much of his scholarship with this purpose in mind. This aspect of Kenrick’s intellectual pursuits has been left underexplored by his biographers. Many historians choose to emphasize that Kenrick meant to reframe Catholic doctrine to reflect a Roman sensibility. This, too, was high on the Bishop’s list of priorities. He feared the pernicious influence of Gallicanism on both European and American Catholicism. He intended to purge American clergymen of the impulse to deviate from the precedents and directives set by the Holy See. Toward that end, he undertook a decades-long project of painstakingly translating the Latin Vulgate Bible into English and appending his own explanatory notes and commentary. He also wrote a number of treatises explicating various Catholic doctrines. But Kenrick also understood that the American clergy and lay faithful would have to apply his teachings to the unique context of the American mission. In his writings, he emphasized those aspects of Catholic life and practice that were especially salient to American Catholics.\(^{220}\)

Kenrick’s famed exposition, *The Primacy of the Apostolic See Vindicated*, armed American Catholics with more elevated, intellectual arguments to refute the claims of Protestant critics. In it, Kenrick drew on ecclesiastical history and the writings of the Church Fathers to

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\(^{219}\) Nolan, p. 29; and *United States Catholic Miscellany*, July 22, 1830, as reprinted in Nolan, p. 52.

\(^{220}\) At this time, the American clergy was dominated by Irish-trained priests who had attended the seminary at Maynooth. Nolan emphasized that Kenrick had deliberately chosen to attend seminary at Rome, rather than in his native country, precisely because he wished to remain untouched by the Gallican viewpoints that he believed had seeped into the Maynooth curriculum. Gallicanism was first articulated by leading French Catholics of the seventeenth century who believed there were scriptural precedents for limiting the Pope’s powers. Gallicanism was assumed to be the converse of Ultramontanism.
overcome commonly-leveled Protestant objections. As Nolan noted, Kenrick “took a special
delight in showing that most modern errors were only recrudescences of early heresies which the
first apologists had so ably refuted.” Though Kenrick initially composed the series of letters
contained in Primacy as refutations of charges made by anti-Catholic propagandist J.H. Hopkins
in 1837, he saw the broader potential for the text to serve as a useful tool for the clergy and the
faithful to deploy in their dealings with Protestant antagonists. Primacy went through multiple
editions between 1837 and 1875 (twelve years after Kenrick’s death), including a German
translation, distributed by several publishers throughout the United States. Kenrick made slight
alterations to the text for some of the subsequent editions. But the most notable alteration was
the elimination of any reference to Hopkins in the titles of later editions. Primacy began as a
specific refutation of a particular Protestant propagandist and eventually became a general
guidebook for conducting a learned and reasoned defense of the faith.\textsuperscript{221}

By the time Kenrick arrived in Philadelphia, he had become well-practiced at merging his
didactic and defensive postures to fit his American audience. He always made the spiritual
welfare of his flock his first priority. But he maintained a watchful eye on the surrounding
Protestant population among whom his subjects would have to practice and protect their faith. Yet
the especially antagonistic climate in Philadelphia tested even Kenrick’s capacity for patience. His
frustration surfaced in his attempts to defend the faith against repeated assaults launched in the
pages of the city’s Episcopal newspaper, Banner of the Cross. By the 1840s, Kenrick had
become so habituated to responding to the unreasonable attacks leveled against Catholics in its
pages he could no longer conceal his disgust. He had exhausted himself in his efforts to correct
the Banner’s warped (though widely-held) misinterpretations of Catholic devotional texts. At one
point, Kenrick thundered, “The Banner of the Cross seems determined to do two things: 1st, To
calumniate and belie our doctrines—and 2dly, refuse to refute any errors which [its editor]

\textsuperscript{221}Nolan, p. 43; Francis Patrick Kenrick, The Primacy of the Apostolic See, and the Authority of General Councils
Vindicated in a Series of Letters Addressed to the Right Rev. J. H. Hopkins (Philadelphia: J. Kay Jr. and Brother, 1837);
Francis Patrick Kenrick, The Primacy of the Apostolic See Vindicated (Baltimore: Murphy and Co., 1875); various editions
of the text were also published in 1838, 1843, 1845, 1848, 1853, and 1855.
charges upon us. This is, most certainly not honorable, nay, it is not just.” This particular
denunciation had been issued in reply to the *Banner’s* accusation that Catholics’ *Mother of God: The Glorious Mary* endorsed idolatrous worship of Jesus’ mother.\(^{222}\)

Kenrick experienced his exasperation so acutely because he had already debunked
these claims in reply to the *Banner*’s earlier condemnation of a fresh edition of *New Month of
Mary*. He had done so, “with a fair and open spirit of investigation,” only to have his foe refuse to
engage him in a courteous, ongoing exchange. Editors at the *Banner* arrogantly had written that
“Protestants need no arguments, and they would be thrown away upon Romanists.” Kenrick
angrily denounced his rival, who “having uttered false charges, refuses the refutation of the errors
and evils which he unhesitatingly charges upon a large and respectable body of his fellow
citizens!” In this hostile climate, it was crucial to Catholics’ social and political interests, as well as
their spiritual interest, to precisely distinguish between an intercessor to the divine and the divine
itself. But, often, even their most careful explications fell on deaf Protestant ears.\(^{223}\)

By this time, Kenrick no longer could rely on the inviolability of the church building itself to
serve as a safe haven for Catholic belief and practice. He had been appalled by his encounter
with Protestant John Alden at the communion rail of the Cathedral of St. John during a Mass
celebrating Pentecost. Non-Catholics had long attended Catholic services in parishes throughout
the city, often out of curiosity about Catholic rituals. But on this occasion, Alden did more than
gawk at his Catholic neighbors—he tampered with the sacred service. Alden knelt before the
Bishop to receive communion “with the design making an experiment of the divine mystery, as if
the mysteries of God could be tested by human artifice.”\(^{224}\)

Though Alden hailed from Reading, Kenrick knew of the man’s “respectable family
connexions [sic] in this city,” and, thus, knew Alden to be a Protestant. He refused to give Alden
communion and dismissed him “with a mild rebuke.” When Kenrick followed up on the incident

\(^{222}\) *Catholic Herald*, March 10, 1842.

\(^{223}\) Ibid.

\(^{224}\) *Catholic Herald*, May 19, 1842.
with Alden’s relatives, he hoped to learn the man had some excuse for his insult. Perhaps, the Bishop dispiritedly suggested, the man suffered some “derangement of mind” that might mitigate his actions. But Kenrick learned from Alden’s family that “this deliberate act of sacrilege [was] avowed without the slightest extenuating circumstance.” Kenrick also heard that Alden was “said to be an exhorter in some sect.” The incident was a melancholy reminder of the extent to which many Protestants viewed Catholic doctrine and practice as spurious.\(^{225}\)

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Many of Philadelphia’s Protestant denominations had embraced the utility of print as a means of shoring up Protestant cultural hegemony. But they also understood that a rigorous public school system was necessary for nurturing discerning readers capable of seeing through what they viewed as the hypocrisies of their spiritual rivals. Americans had long believed that common schools were critical training grounds for molding virtuous Protestant citizens. In the face of increasing immigration by destitute and largely uneducated Catholics, public education seemed even more crucial to the fate of the republic. Consider the increasingly unreasonable and vitriolic compositions flowing from the pen of Calvinist intellectual Samuel F.B. Morse. Morse claimed that his travels abroad had alerted him to the existence of a vast Jesuit plot to subvert American liberties and to place the United States under the despotic rule of the Pope.\(^{226}\)

As scholar Jody M. Roy has observed, “Morse believed that a free press and a Protestant education not only could bolster Protestant resolve, but also could deflate the Jesuit plot by marshalling public opinion against the Catholic conspirators and by countering the Jesuits’ influence on immigrants.” Roy pays particular attention to Morse’s notorious tract, *Foreign Conspiracy Against the Liberties of the United States*, in which he advised that the “Bible, the

\(^{225}\)Ibid.

Tract, the Infant School, the Sunday School, the common school for all classes, a free press for the discussion of all questions. These, all these, are the weapons of Protestantism." There is no question that the public embraced Morse’s message. *Foreign Conspiracy* had first appeared as a series of letters printed in various editions of the *New York Observer* in 1834. The following year, the letters were printed collectively as a tract, which in turn underwent multiple printings for more than a decade.227

Like their Protestant neighbors, Catholics viewed education as a crucial means of instilling sound values and civic responsibility in students. They also hoped that schools would improve the socio-economic prospects of coreligionists. In their view, of course, these goals did not run counter to the fervent exercise of their faith. Upon his arrival in Philadelphia, Bishop Kenrick stepped up efforts to provide a comprehensive system of Catholic education to his new congregants. In addition to the network of Sunday, charity, and orphan schools already in place upon his arrival, Kenrick oversaw the establishment of a seminary and a number of elite private Catholic academies. Kenrick also harbored early ambitions to establish a network of parochial schools that would provide comprehensive educational services to children in a spiritual idiom, regardless of socio-economic status. Early in his tenure, he lacked the funding necessary to the success of such a bold initiative. For the time being, Kenrick would have to content himself with making the public schools more hospitable to Catholic children.228

Kenrick applied his customary measured approach to the matter of the Bible in public schools. He treaded lightly precisely because he understood that hostile Protestants would accuse him of assailing their children’s right to access the King James version of the Bible. In a carefully worded appeal to the Board of Controllers for Philadelphia’s public schools, composed in November of 1842, Kenrick outlined Catholics’ objections and aims. First, he requested that Catholic children be allowed to opt out of morning exercises that required students to read from

the King James version of the Bible and sing Protestant hymns. Instead, he asked that they be allowed to engage in silent meditation on their own Douay Bibles. Second, he requested that textbooks and other instructional materials that contained anti-Catholic slurs be eliminated from the curriculum. Third, he requested that Catholic teachers who refused to comply with Protestant religious instruction be spared dismissal. Though the Board refused to allow the Douay Bible into the schools, they did compromise by approving a policy to excuse Catholic children from Protestant religious exercises.²²⁹

The Board’s plan for conciliation satisfied no one. Kenrick and Catholic parents were disappointed that their children were barred from pursuing their own religious observances at school while Protestants were outraged at what they perceived to be a concession to Catholic antagonism toward the Bible. The denominational presses in the city argued vehemently against compliance with any of Kenrick’s wishes. Soon, Kenrick found himself defending his flock against fresh waves of anti-Catholic invective. And, despite his best efforts, it seemed that antagonism was mounting, rather than dissipating. Kenrick expressed alarm that the *Banner’s* vituperation had been reprinted with an approving comment in the pages of the *Baptist Record*. Both publications endorsed the view that

Protestants must be on the alert, and guard against the assaults of Papists on our free institutions in time. Much of course will depend on the choice of the school commissioners and directors. It is important that men should be selected who love the Bible, and who are therefore not prepared to see it hurled out of the schools. If the priests succeed in erecting the cross of Antichrist over our common school houses, they will have gained the triumph which every Christian and philanthropist will deplore.

Tellingly, Protestant opponents of the compromise rallied Protestant men by appealing to their obligations as male heads of households. They bore an obligation to protect their dependents and impressionable children were, by far, the most vulnerable charges in their care. In this formulation, the ballot box was more than a democratic mechanism for change. It also served as

the tool by which Protestant masculinity could be affirmed over the depraved embodiment of manhood represented by priests.

Ever the artful master of rhetoric, Kenrick invoked distressing images of his own to rally sympathy for Catholics’ plight. He implicitly condemned Protestant obstruction of Catholic parental prerogatives when he described the mistreatment of an unnamed little girl at the hands of her Protestant teacher. The little girl found herself in an untenable and terrifying situation. She had been told not to read the “Protestant Bible” by her grandparents and wished to follow their directive. But the day before, she had seen one of her Catholic classmates whipped for his refusal to participate in a lesson taken from the King James edition. When the teacher of this “poor and trembling victim” demanded to know why the child had grown anxious and pale, the little girl explained that she wanted to obey her grandparents, but “‘I’m delicate ma’am, and afraid of being whipped.’” The teacher asked the child whether she preferred whipping to Protestant Bible reading and the child answered affirmatively through her sobs. Though the teacher was disinclined to whip the girl, she felt little compassion for the child, telling her, “‘Sit down you little fool.’”230

Kenrick reacted with understandable horror, declaring, “[t]ruly such cruel abuse of power should be restrained.” He demanded to know “where is the defence [sic] of innocence, or vindication of purity[?]” and called on “the [public school] Directors to defend the natural rights and privileges of the pupils in the absence of their parents or guardians.” He sought to turn the tables on detractors who claimed Catholics aimed to lead Protestant children astray. Instead, he focused on the “persecution of Catholic children in the Public Schools” by the caretakers obligated to honor parents’ wishes in their stead. The only heads of households whose power had been usurped were Catholics.231

230 Catholic Herald, May 19, 1842.
231 Ibid.
By the end of 1842, the bitterness of the so-called “school controversy” had risen exponentially. Protestant forces had begun to coalesce against Kenrick and the Catholic parents looking to shield their children from lessons from the King James. Eighty-four Protestant ministers from throughout the city formed the American Protestant Association to thwart Kenrick’s attempts at inclusive religious practices in the public schools. They aimed to popularize their suspicion that Kenrick’s attempts at compromise were part of a ruse eventually to eject the Bible from public schools altogether. At the conclusion of their early organizational endeavors, the APA issued a brutal condemnation of the Board’s compromise measures, claiming that,

[w]hile Romanism is establishing its proselytizing schools throughout the land, to pervert the tender minds of youth; and directing its efforts to destroy the religious character and moral influence of public Protestant education... a large portion of our Protestant citizens, who might with care arrest the progress of these evils, seem unwilling even to be apprized of these evils, and instead of opposing them, actually contribute of their own funds to maintain Popish churches, Asylums, and Seminaries, and commit their children to the tutelage of Popish priests and nuns.

In their view, public schools were the primary conduit through which American values and republican principles were imparted to youth. Kenrick’s initiative, however diplomatically framed, seemed to justify Protestants’ fear of Irish-Catholics’ unwillingness to assimilate into mainstream (Protestant) American culture. Kenrick’s appeals to emotion, however wrenching they may have been to fellow Catholics, failed to gain traction with his Protestant adversaries.²³²

Anti-Catholic propagandists sustained the campaign to reverse the compromise measure for nearly two years before matters came to a head in May of 1844. Matters deteriorated toward riot in response to a widely circulated—and erroneous—report that an official in the Kensington school district ordered a teacher to abandon morning Bible readings altogether. The American Protestant Association descended on Kensington to organize protest efforts and was soon joined by members of the Native American Party in its endeavor. Before long, Catholic residents had gathered to counter-protest the joint ASA-NAP initiative and violence erupted.

²³² Address of the Board of Managers of the American Protestant Association, with the Constitution and Organization of the Association (Philadelphia: Published by James C. Haswell, 1842).
Though the first wave of bloodshed unfolded over three days, from May 6 through 8, the precipitating event took place on Friday, May 3. Members of the Native American Party conspicuously chose to hold a rally near the Nanny Goat Market—Irish turf—and constructed a platform for their speakers to use. By the time the meeting had officially begun, a crowd of mostly (Irish) neighborhood residents had gathered. The nativist speakers were heckled and driven off and the crowd dismantled the stage. Nativists resented the humiliation of being run out of the neighborhood, so they determined to reconvene at the same spot three days later. By that time, they had advertised the meeting throughout the city and drummed up widespread interest. On May 6, an expectant swarm of about three thousand crowded into the small Irish neighborhood.

As historian Michael Feldberg has observed, it is impossible to determine which constituency held the numerical advantage. But scattered evidence indicates that, “at least some nativist participants did seem especially prepared for violence” and had an edge in the form of bricks, clubs, and guns.233

The first few nativist speakers to take the stage encountered little in the way of resistance. Some members of the crowd heckled them, and a carter named O’Neill deposited the contents of his wagon (perhaps dirt, perhaps manure) in front of the newly reconstructed speakers’ platform. But when a strong thunderstorm caused the nativists to relocate inside the market, a number of neighborhood Irishmen demanded they stay out. A public thoroughfare near the market had been bad enough; but trespassing so flagrantly on Irish turf excited the locals’ territorialism. The verbal altercation escalated to physical force and soon spilled out into the street. Riot ensued for more than an hour before the city sheriff, later reinforced by members of the Pennsylvania militia, arrived to restore some semblance of order. By that time, four nativists lay dead from musket fire that issued from the upper floors of nearby buildings. Many others—both native and Irish—had been wounded.

233Feldberg, p. 103.
The cessation of hostilities was short-lived. In the era before a standing police force patrolled the city streets, men like Sheriff Morton McMichael and militia General George Cadwalader faced a multiplicity of challenges protecting the residents of Kensington. Law enforcement personnel were prevented from acting outside their narrow jurisdictional borders, so the legitimacy of importing officers of the law into Kensington was questionable. Law enforcement also faced stringent limitations on acceptable levels of force. These circumstances gave nativist mobs a decisive advantage when they regrouped to exact revenge on behalf of their fallen comrades. Nativist gangs inflicted considerable destruction on Irish homes and property as residents fled to nearby woods for cover.

Nativists also destroyed a convent that recently had been vacated by Sisters of Charity. Their choice of target is telling. As Feldberg observes, the convent attack “had no strategic or defensive purpose. It simply indicated the identity in the nativist mind between hostile Irish immigrants and the Catholic church.” And the convent was only the first of many Catholic structures nativists intended to destroy. Reliable intelligence of the imminent threat to Kensington’s St. Michael’s Church led parishioners to arm themselves and guard the structure throughout the night.234

Native Americans descended on Kensington the following day, ostensibly to rally on behalf of their political platform. But rioters’ simmering hostilities were sparked by incendiary speeches, and mobs renewed the violence of the day before. Nativists continued to target Irish homes and businesses. But they increasingly devoted themselves to destroying neighborhood symbols of Catholicism as well. After a coordinated effort to lure guards away from St. Michael’s Parish, nativists looted and sacked the church and rectory. They then set the buildings on fire. They returned to the convent they had merely vandalized the night before and set it ablaze as well. By Wednesday night, rioters had moved on to St. Augustine’s Church, where they repeated their pattern of destruction. The massive structure, including its majestic steeple, burned to the

234Ibid., p. 106.
ground amid the cheers of an exhilarated crowd. But, to the eternal satisfaction of the city’s Catholics, the rear wall of the church inexplicably survived the conflagration, along with the words etched into it: “The Lord Seeth.”

* * *

On Sunday, May 12, 1844 Bishop Kenrick delivered the most important sermon of his ecclesiastical career. He spoke from the pulpit of Philadelphia’s cathedral church on the subject of “charity towards enemies” occasioned by the bloody riots of the previous week. Four days before, the city had been placed under martial law and city officials had agreed to post guards at each of Philadelphia’s Catholic churches. But tensions remained high, and Kenrick encouraged his flock to respond to the bloodshed with forgiveness and forbearance. Kenrick invoked Romans 12:13, “To no man rendering evil for evil,” to convince the faithful that “[e]very instinct of revenge must be restrained by the controlling power of religion, and we must totally abstain even from all desire for vengeance.” He counseled Catholics not only to exercise restraint, but also to practice forgiveness, charity, and beneficence toward the enemies of their religion. As Kenrick explained, “[i]t is the perfection of charity cheerfully to bestow favors on enemies, even when they do not need them, and to labor to subdue their hostile feelings by unsolicited kindness.”

Kenrick understood that matters of religion, ethnicity, and class had become so completely intertwined in nativists’ critique of their Catholic neighbors that the Catholic response would be scrutinized for transgressions of patriotism and propriety as well as Catholics’ presumed spiritual deviance. Kenrick, therefore, framed his response to reflect more than the Catholic capacity for religious toleration. He also sought to demonstrate American Catholics’ capacity for respectability. In Kenrick’s view, a restrained and forbearing reaction to the crisis would prove

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235 Kenrick’s sermon was reprinted in the Catholic Herald of May 16, 1844 and later reprinted in a number of Catholic periodicals and issued in pamphlet form; the most comprehensive overview of the riots remains Bruce Feldberg’s The Philadelphia Riots of 1844: A Study in Ethnic Conflict (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1975), p. 102.
Catholics’ ability to adhere to mainstream tenets of decorum even as it drew attention to the Protestant rioters’ deviation from those norms. As Kenrick explained to his flock on May 12, “[i]f these deluded men can succeed in disturbing the peace of society, by their combined attack on their unoffending fellow-citizens, worshipping God according to the dictates of their conscience, let no portion of the blame rest with us.” Rather than respond with belligerence, Kenrick recommended that Catholics “forgive even the midnight incendiary who applies the torch to the unprotected mansion of virgins; you must pardon even the assassin who fancies he renders God service when he points the poinard [sic] at your breast:— you must pardon the wild enthusiast—the wanton calumniator—the bold aggressor—and, even in the face of an enemy, recognize a brother.”

Not all Catholics could practice forgiveness so liberally. But most laypeople saw the wisdom of Kenrick’s plea. They anticipated that Catholics would be blamed for inciting the riots. And they realized that a hostile response would confirm Protestants’ worst fears of their Catholic neighbors’ unfitness for integration into Philadelphia society. Laypeople, therefore, employed a measured and mournful tone when responding to the riots. Laymen and laywomen flooded the offices of the Catholic Herald with anguished descriptions of Kensington residents’ desperate flights from their homes ahead of descending mobs. They offered appalling descriptions of Catholic refugees without adequate food and shelter—and even recounted the harrowing experience of a Catholic woman forced to give birth in the woods after having been driven from her residence.

Several laypeople expressed their grief through poetry and invoked images of burning churches to communicate Catholics’ sense of alienation from a hostile Protestant society. One creative wordsmith, identified only as J.M.L., played on the phrase etched on St. Augustine’s miraculously preserved rear wall to express his conviction that God would see the Catholics vindicated. In The Lord Seeth, he described the arson thusly: “…impious hate against His throne/

236 Catholic Herald, May 16, 1844.
Would hurl their madden’d flame/ And fire the temples all His own/ Where dwells his holy name.”
He went on to predict that “He seeth from the smoldering heap/ The ruined walls of prayer—/ Nor
will His sword of justice sleep/ Against its fellow there./ Unscathed by fire and raging flame./
Stands written on the wall,/ ‘The Lord Seeth’ is His mighty name/ The thoughts and deeds of all.”
Catholics need not seek retribution for themselves. Surely their Protestant persecutors would face
divine recompense for their sacrilege.\(^{237}\)

Another lay poet, Miss E. F. Walsh, described her reaction to viewing the ruins of St.
Augustine’s Church in verse. She lamented, “With sorrow deep my soul is stirr’d,/ That I the
harrowing tale must tell,/ How ev’n the Inspir’d Word—/ The Bible—Christians love so well—/
Was cast in the consuming flame,/ By those who boast the Christian’s name.” Walsh understood
the extent to which Protestant views of religion and citizenship were enmeshed, and she played
on the absurdity of Protestants justifying their anti-Catholic bigotry as a defense of republicanism.
She wrote, “Son of Columbia! cease I pray—/ No more of those sad horrors say./ I thought I trod
on ‘holy ground,’/ Where Liberty and peace are found—/ ‘Twas but a dream!—this cannot be/ The
home of those both brave and free—/ For surely if with Freedom blest,/ Your brethren could not
be oppress’d.” The incongruity seemed especially flagrant to Walsh because the riots had
unfolded in a region celebrated for its religious liberty. She keened, “Oh! no, the peaceful state of
Penn,/ Owns no such bold, degenerate men,/ I have miscalled you—this rude land/ Is not
Columbia’s rescu’d strand.”\(^{238}\)

Despite the best efforts of laypeople such as J.M.L. and E.F. Walsh, Catholics failed to
convince much of the public that they had been the victims of Nativist machinations. A Grand Jury
convened in the aftermath of the riots placed blame squarely on the shoulders of Catholics.
Tellingly, the jurors traced the fateful events of May 6-8 back to the long-standing nativist claim
that Catholics had been seeking to banish the Bible from the public schools. Jurors described the
Native Americans as having been engaged in “the peaceful exercise of the sacred rights and

\(^{237}\) Catholic Herald, May 30, 1844.
\(^{238}\) Catholic Herald, June 6, 1844.
privileges guaranteed to every citizen by the Constitution and laws of our State and Country” at the time of the conflagration. They had gone to Kensington to defend the Bible against Catholic intrigues and were “rudely disturbed and fired upon by a band of lawless irresponsible men, some of whom had resided in our country only for a short period.”

Prominent members of the Catholic laity moved swiftly to contradict these charges. They called a meeting of the “Catholic citizens of Philadelphia” and presented a rebuttal to the presentment for consideration by their co-religionists. The resulting *Address of the Catholic Lay Citizens* attempted, once again, to explain the Catholic position on Bible use in the public schools. It also refuted the nativist account of the riot that had been accepted by the jurors. But the authors indicated that they aimed to do more than set the record of recent events straight. They asserted their desire to protect religious freedom for all Philadelphians. In this way, they implied that they behaved more honorably than the Protestant citizens who assailed them. The authors wrote, “We have uniformly contended, not only for ourselves, but on behalf of our Protestant and Jewish brethren, for the fullest freedom of conscience both for children and adults in Schools or elsewhere.” In the recent disturbances, they suggested, Catholics had been the standard-bearers of respectability. Meanwhile, Protestants had revealed the incivility that lurked under their veneer of propriety twice over: first with the outbreak of riot and then in their prejudiced assessment of the contested events. In a concluding plea for acceptance and a justification of Catholics’ exercise of republican prerogatives, the authors declared, “We are Philadelphians, and we love our city. Many of us can say it is the home of our childhood, the habitation of our wives and children—it contains the ashes of our fathers.”

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240 Ibid., p. 4, 10.
The laymen’s *Address* was not unprecedented. For decades, Catholic laymen had been arguing that “[p]olitical liberty, as identified with republicanism, is quite in harmony with Catholic principles. Witness the many Italian republics of the middle ages, fostered by Popes against the Emperors, wherein the principle of popular sovereignty was acted on in the most unequivocal manner.” But they had also learned that it would take more than rhetoric to win mainstream acceptance. It would take a comprehensive campaign of social uplift and zealously-demonstrated patriotic fervor. In the aftermath of riot, the Catholic laity redoubled their efforts to demonstrate to their Protestant neighbors that they, too, possessed the capacity for civility and decorum that was prerequisite for acceptance into the American middle class. And they aimed to prove that they could inculcate those cherished values in those members of the faith not yet initiated into those expectations. Far from cowering in their ghettos, Philadelphia Catholics boldly stepped onto the public stage to stake their claim to an integrated identity as both Catholics and Americans.241

The Catholic community increasingly targeted their associational activity to those coreligionists most at risk of Protestant critique. In addition to the many existing devotional and catechetical societies, a string of new social service organizations came into existence to provide aid for the Catholic poor, many of whom were Irish newcomers. Associational activity at St. Joseph’s parish was typical. By 1848, its clergymen were obliged to make pulpit announcements regarding meetings for the Ladies’ Benevolent Society for the Relief of the Poor, the Irish Emigrant Society, the Saint Vincent of Paul Society, an organization raising funds for St. Ann’s Widow’s Asylum, St. Joseph’s Hospital Benevolent Society, and an organization dedicated to providing clothing for the needy—alternately referred to as the Society for Clothing the Poor and the Ladies’ Sewing Society. Two essential developments made such organizations possible. First, Catholics had settled the jurisdictional disputes that had plagued them in the era of the trustee crisis, which freed them up for more constructive and collaborative pursuits. Second, the diocese came to serve two very different constituencies—a sizeable, native-born middle class as well as a contingent of destitute, socially marginal recent immigrants. The more established

241 *Catholic Herald*, July 25, 1844.
members of the congregation aimed to do more than dispense alms to their less fortunate coreligionists. They also aimed to uplift downtrodden Catholics and raise them in the esteem of the broader Philadelphia society. In the process of doing so, they also hoped to help themselves.\textsuperscript{242}

Catholic social service organizations aimed to impose the structures of the ideal American middle class family on the Irish working class recipients of their ministrations. For example, the founders of St. Joseph’s Emigrant Society clearly harbored didactic and assimilationist goals. In their founding address, they expressed confidence in the immigrant’s “sincere offering of his heart, his energies, his devoted allegiance and everlasting gratitude—which from an Irish heart is of no small value.” With such promising raw material, the Society members considered themselves duty-bound to “prepare him by kindness, to be moulded [sic] into a good and loving citizen of the Republic, irrespective of creed or politics.” The Society extended care to women and children, of course. And the organization based itself in the city’s parishes, recognizing that the vast majority of its beneficiaries would be co-religionists. But it expressed particular interest in establishing Irish men as independent heads of households and, thus, as suitable republicans. Society members understood that admission to a fraternity of American citizens was predicated on dominion over a stable and respectable household. The Society exhorted Catholics to donate as generously as their means allowed. Even a modest contribution might “be the means of recalling strength and confidence to the sinking father of a family—consolation and blessed hope to the timid, and perhaps desponding mother—supplant for the anxious tear upon the cheek of the saddened child, evoked by the call of parental anguish…”\textsuperscript{243}

In an effort to forestall critics, Society members took pains to establish, “that our formation may not be mistaken or misconstrued into an encouragement of emigration to our shores which would produce consequences, not only foreign to our purpose, but highly prejudicial

\textsuperscript{242} St. Joseph’s Announcement Book for 1848, housed in the archive of St. Joseph’s Parish, Willings Alley, Philadelphia.

\textsuperscript{243} Catholic Herald, August 10, 1843.
to our Society and objects.” They aimed to Americanize the immigrants, not to dilute American culture with Irish influences. They also announced that they would refuse any applications for pecuniary aid. Instead, they would establish offices along the docks where they would dispense vital information to new arrivals. They would offer advice on where to find safe and affordable shelter; leads on employment opportunities; and maps and travel information to assist newcomers in finding their way beyond the confines of the city proper. Society members maintained that most immigrants arrived with modest, but adequate, means to get themselves and their families off to a respectable start in Philadelphia. But con artists took advantage of some Irishmen’s innately trusting natures and robbed them of their small savings. Crooks would “spread their entangling web to ensnare their unsuspecting victim and… induce him to believe them sincere.” Those who perceived the Irish to be untrustworthy or disposed to lawlessness were mistaken. Newcomers generally resorted to desperate measures only when forced into woeful circumstances by inhospitable Americans.  

Gainful employment went a long way toward establishing an immigrant’s fitness to integrate into American society. But personal conduct and proof of self-mastery were essential components of American manhood as well. It should come as no surprise, then, that all parishes in the city and many parishes in the suburbs hosted temperance organizations. The separate chapters were affiliated with the Pennsylvania Catholic Total Abstinence Society, which was founded on June 25, 1840. Kenrick heartily approved the measure and urged his flock to embrace the temperance cause in a pastoral letter exhorting “the effectual suppression of this soul-destroying vice.” In a matter of months, middle class laymen had acted on his directive. Within a year of its founding, the Society boasted of more than five thousand members who had taken the pledge to abstain from all intoxicating drinks. This was, for the most part, a middle class movement founded on notions of respectability and reliant on the ideology of moral suasion, much like its Protestant counterparts. As Bruce Dorsey has observed, “Irish immigrants represented the lack of self-control that bred intemperance and embodied the dangers of

244Ibid.
corruption emerging from an alliance of immigrant politics and liquor interests.” Thus, Philadelphia Catholics’ zeal to prove their capacity for sobriety had as much to do with overturning Protestant perceptions as it had to do with Catholics’ intention to improve the lives of the immoderate members of the community.245

The officers of the Pennsylvania Catholic Total Abstinence Society revealed the class dynamic that motivated them in a report of their progress submitted to the Catholic Almanac on the occasion of their first anniversary. They viewed the poor as the particular targets of their reformist zeal, and were pleased to report that they had “seen the evidences of the beneficial effects of this Society, particularly… among the poor, many of whom have been greatly improved both morally and physically by this glorious movement.” The middle class comprised a considerable proportion of their membership, and the “many persons of standing and respectability of both sexes” who had “joined in the holy work” had done so, “as an encouragement to others.” Indeed,

the generality of the members of the society, actuated by motives of the purest charity towards their brethren, unite together and voluntarily, and without any actual necessity on their own part, pledge themselves before the minister of God to abstain entirely from the use of all intoxicating drinks, in order thereby to induce them to follow their example, for whom the pledge of total abstinence is, in a manner, almost indispensably necessary.

Catholic temperance advocates clearly accepted the Protestant assumption of a connection between intoxication and moral corruption. By taking the temperance pledge and exhorting socially and economically marginal members of the faith to follow suit, they could demonstrate their capacity for respectable conduct to Protestant detractors.246

Philadelphia’s Catholic temperance advocates—like their counterparts throughout the United States—based their organization on the model developed by the beloved Irish priest, Father Theobald Mathew. Mathew had founded the Cork Total Abstinence Society in his parish in

245Dorsey, p. 196.
1838, but his modest initiative quickly grew into an international movement. Philadelphia Catholics' adoration of Father Mathew suggests the close association many continued to maintain with their Irish homeland. But it would be a mistake to assume that their perspective was primarily trans-Atlantic. Philadelphia Catholics adapted Father Mathew's directives to a resolutely American endeavor. The Temperance Society hosted two major celebrations each year—one on St. Patrick's Day and the other on Independence Day. As the Bible controversy intensified, the Temperance Society's Independence Day celebrations became more elaborate and featured grand processions and rousing orations.247

Philadelphia Catholics’ eagerness to demonstrate their respectability eventually culminated in their creation of a Catholic Philopatrian Literary Institute. Jesuit priest Edward Sourin founded the society from his post in St. Mary’s Parish in 1848 with the intention of providing supplemental education to Catholic young men whose formal schooling had been curtailed due to economic hardship. In the Institute’s first meeting in the rectory study, Sourin proposed to his charter members that they embrace the word “philopatrian” in the name of their organization. His protégés readily agreed and the organization adopted the motto, “Revere the Church, the Mother, and love thy Fatherland.” The overt patriotism of their appellation and mission statement was deliberate. These young men intended to signal the community that their studies merged both the spiritual and the secular and potential critics should detect no discordance in these objectives.248

A flyer soliciting memberships for the Institute suggests the extent to which the Philopatarians acted in reaction to the rampant nativism that surrounded them. The mandate to educate Catholic young men extended beyond concerns for their intellectual development. Sourin intended to divert young Catholic men from sordid leisure activities that detracted from the reputation of Catholic religionists as a whole. The membership flyer explained, "[t]he young man,

247Catholic Herald, April 29, 1843 and June 29, 1843.
248James T. Gallagher, Highlights from the 100-Year History of the Philopatarians (Philadelphia: Catholic Philopatrian Literary Institute, 1950).
freed from the toils of the day, needs entertainment in the evening, and if it be not of one kind, it will be of another. There are attractions about a Library sufficient to draw hundreds who otherwise might pass the time in dissipation.” In the aftermath of the riots, Catholic young men had been cast as lawless hooligans. The Institute would rehabilitate this constituency’s tarnished public image.249

Sourin also intended the organization to produce more effective apologists for the faith. In its membership appeal, the Institute prevailed on all members of the Catholic community to donate funds to further its aims. According to the flyer, the Philopatrians did not predicate their appeal for funds on “private or individual scheme[s].” Rather, the “Society merely undertakes to become the agents of this vast and growing Catholic community, and to carry out its wishes and stand up faithfully and earnestly in defense of its cherished principles, whenever the opportunity may present itself.” Philopatrians were engaged in nothing less than “making Catholicity respected and powerful in this community.” Sourin’s initiative met with considerable success. Within a few months of its founding, the Institute reported more than five hundred members; and over the next few decades, it would continue to expand in both membership and mission.250

Philadelphia Catholics had distinguished themselves for their commitment to educating the underprivileged members of the faith long before the founding of the Institute. Many Catholic parishes in the city had been offering evening and weekend classes in reading and writing for decades. The clergy and laymen who oversaw these early educational endeavors understood the social significance of their work. They had no objection to uplifting their co-religionists, but any such benefit was secondary to the instructors’ catechetical purposes. Catholics wanted their co-religionists literate and capable of reading the catechisms and Catholic Bibles issuing from the presses of notable co-religionists such as Mathew Carey and Eugene Cummiskey.

249 Circular of the Catholic Philopatrian Literary Institute, reprinted in Gallagher, pp. 22-25.
250 Ibid.
Philadelphia Catholics also had established organizations to nurture the intellectual interests of the rising Catholic middle class and to promote sociability among these more refined members of the community. The Carroll Institute Lectures were chief among such endeavors. Catholics with the means to do so could purchase season tickets to a series of fifteen lectures. Most presenters were members of the clergy who spoke on religious themes. But other speakers considered matters such as “English Criticism on American Society and Institutions.” The Carroll Institute Lectures served a multiplicity of purposes. The proceeds from ticket sales benefited the city’s orphan asylums. The lectures entertained and edified middle class members of the faith. And the lecturers demonstrated to Protestant attendees that Catholics could engage in discourse as rational and refined as their Protestant counterparts.251

The Philopatrian Society departed from this model. Its purpose was not merely to cater to an emergent Catholic middle class but to swell its ranks. The Philopatrians aimed to raise working class Catholics to become more impressive ambassadors of the faith. Consider, for instance, that the Institute founded a Debating Society. In this, more than any other endeavor, the Philopatrians indicated the extent to which the spiritual, the patriotic, and the masculine converged. An unnamed member of the Debating Society remarked in the pages of the club’s bulletin that reticent members should “break the ice and plunge boldly in…. see how former shyness gives way to manly confidence; and he whose light was formerly held modestly under a bushel now shines on the mountaintop and dazzles his friends by the brilliancy of his remarks.” Of course, the writer left unspoken what many members would have assumed—an accomplished Philopatrian debater could dazzle critics of the faith as well as friends.252

The Philopatrians did not confine themselves to intellectual pursuits. Like generations of their co-religionists before them, they dedicated themselves to fundraising campaigns for poor relief. Unlike their forbears, however, they pursued a broader mandate and offered assistance to all distressed members of society, regardless of their religious affiliation. They intended these

251 *Catholic Herald*, October 20, 1842 and December 22, 1842.
252 Gallagher, p. 25.
efforts to signal their patriotic commitment to *Americans* in distress—not just Catholics. Philopatrians also abandoned subscription campaigns and the door-to-door pursuit of pledges in favor of refined fundraising events that featured rituals of sociability. The Philopatrician Ball became the preeminent event of Institute members’ social calendars. The revenues from annual ticket sales went to numerous organizations, including the House of the Good Shepherd, St. John’s Orphan Asylum, St. Vincent’s Home and Maternity Hospital, as well as parochial schools and the Institute itself. Philopatricians often hosted fundraisers that featured cultural presentations, such as musical evenings at the prestigious Academy of Music. It was not uncommon for them to enlist refined Catholic ladies to play the piano or sing at their fundraisers, thereby showcasing the polish and sophistication of community members. The Institute’s own members showcased their talents in performances staged by their Dramatic Association.

In the first three decades of the nineteenth century, Philadelphia Catholics who were engaged in benevolent work called upon their clergymen to offer charity sermons. Religionists would pay an entrance fee to attend a special discourse. The topics of these addresses varied. Some priests delivered explicitly religious or doctrinal charity sermons. Others spoke on themes of social or political relevance to their congregations. One could expect to hear a discourse on motherhood or the importance of industry and thrift. But even charity sermons of a social or political nature carried very strong spiritual themes. Priests urged mothers to raise their children to serve God and the Church. They exhorted men to undertake their occupations with Christ-like humility and perseverance. Charity sermons were the exclusive province of the clergy and always took place in churches, unlike Philopatrician events that took place at denominationally-neutral sites such as the Philadelphia Museum or the Library Company.

Charity sermons never went out of favor. Catholic periodicals continued to advertise them well into the 1880s. But in the midst of intensifying nativism, Catholic organizations more commonly pursued fundraisers that featured refined amusements. For instance, by the 1840s, the parishioners of St. Augustine’s Church chose to support their Sunday School by hosting a “grand
concert of vocal and instrumental music.” Though their esteemed pastor, Father Moriarty, opened the festivities with “an appropriate address,” the main attraction was Madame Lamberti Ritter, a talented soprano who performed with the accompaniment of a violinist, flutist, and pianist. The event took place at the church, but St. Augustine’s parishioners anticipated—and even welcomed—Protestant attendees. Extra-denominational patronage would generate additional funds even as it raised the congregants in the esteem of their neighbors.²⁵³

* * *

Of course, Catholics’ efforts to demonstrate their respectability presumed a receptive audience of Protestants to bear witness to evidence of Catholics’ refinement. And in this, Philadelphia’s Catholics were sorely disappointed. Many Protestants may have voiced their outrage at the violence and bloodshed occasioned by the riots. A number of prominent Protestants even patronized Catholic charitable organizations and endorsed their aims. But most Philadelphians remained stubbornly resistant to embracing Catholics as part of a common brotherhood of republicans and Christians. Protestants were willing to suppress violence against Catholics, but they readily concurred with the critique of American Catholics that fueled extremists’ use of force.

This was made clear by the rousing success of nativists’ July 4 festivities on the Independence Day following the riots. They organized elaborate processions of thousands of marchers. Banners, signs, and buttons displayed by nativists expressed their continued displeasure with their Catholic neighbors and their unwavering dedication to “Our Country and Our Bible.” Refreshments, speeches, and fireworks rounded out the celebration. But in this charged atmosphere, merriment was bound to give way to conflict, and Catholics were bound to find themselves the scapegoats of altercations. Philadelphians were put on edge when a scuffle

²⁵³Catholic Herald, December 12, 1842.
between rival gangs of nativists was falsely reported to have been instigated by Catholics. Around the same time, word spread that Catholics were stockpiling weapons in their churches. Indeed, the pastor of St. Michael’s Church had allowed armed parishioners to guard the building during the Independence Day festivities to forestall nativist threats of renewed church burnings. But Protestant observers assumed a more nefarious purpose behind the fortification of a “Romish” house of worship.254

By July 6, the city had erupted in a second wave of riots. Attempts to institute martial law proved fruitless for several days, and soldiers faced brutal reprisals from those who favored mob rule. But by July 10, many Philadelphians had had enough. A gathering of prominent citizens met on that day to express their approbation of military intervention and to applaud the governor’s efforts to restore law and order. The violence and bloodshed—though not the prejudices that underlay them—had neared their end. Gradually, the city returned to business as usual.255

In the aftermath of the riots, the animosities that had pitted Protestants and Catholics against each other were deliberately subsumed under the surface of the democratic process. These two brutal episodes of riot had persuaded many Philadelphians that expressions of anti-Catholicism must be channeled into more appropriate modes of conduct. Protestant elites sought to blunt the violent expression of bigotry through the skillful deployment of political partisanship. The Native American Party continued to advocate more stringent policies against immigrants, most of whom were Irish Catholics. But they professionalized their party structures and came to work more effectively through the legislative process. Meanwhile, Philadelphians had begun to consider ways of legislating against a similar outbreak of hostilities in the future. In 1845, Philadelphia’s first real police force was created. And city officials had begun the slow legislative process that would culminate in the so-called “consolidation” of Philadelphia, under which the

254 Feldberg
255 Ibid., p.
many separate jurisdictions within Philadelphia County would be absorbed into a unified City of Philadelphia.  

It must be noted that post-riot stability also had a great deal to do with Catholics’ willingness to follow Bishop Kenrick’s directives to lay low. For his part, Kenrick never again pressed the issue of the Bible in the public schools, fearing another eruption of violence. Instead, he redoubled efforts to establish a comprehensive parochial school system that would shelter Catholic children from the discrimination of their caretakers and classmates. Additionally, the Catholic campaign for respectability made it increasingly difficult for nativists to tar the Catholic community in broad strokes. The high profile of a number of Catholics of education and accomplishment undermined the convincingness of nativists’ most inflammatory claims.

Nonetheless, anti-Popery agitation persisted throughout the antebellum era. Protestant antagonists continued to make scurrilous accusations against Catholics. They continued to deploy the religious and secular presses to get their inflammatory messages out. And they continued to assume Catholicism and republicanism to be incompatible. Unsurprisingly, these tensions were most visible in areas where Irish immigration spiked in response to famine and poverty in the second half of the century. Because Philadelphia served as a major point of entry for immigrant newcomers, the city remained peculiarly vulnerable to anti-Catholicism throughout the antebellum era.

Around this time, Philadelphia Catholics faced the added mortification of confronting their former priest-turned-nemesis William Hogan. After his excommunication and exile from his post in Philadelphia, Hogan had reinvented himself as a (sometime) attorney, a (sometime) journalist, and a (fulltime) anti-Catholic propagandist. In 1845, less than a year after his former congregants faced down angry Protestant mobs seeking to loot and destroy their churches and homes, Hogan published an “expose” of iniquities he claimed to have witnessed while a member of the

priesthood. In *Auricular Confession and Popish Nunneries*, Hogan made timeworn accusations of Catholic sexual deviance conducted through the mechanism of the confessional. It is clear that Hogan lifted his claims from existing templates for convent tales. And like Maria Monk and the other controversialist authors who preceded him, Hogan staked the authenticity of his claims on personal experience.²⁵⁷

In his books and addresses, Hogan walked a fine line between implicating himself in his own narratives of Catholic iniquity and portraying himself as a mere observer who could lift the metaphorical veil on Catholics’ clandestine activities. He carefully and repeatedly pointed out that he had *witnessed* the dishonorable actions of his fellow priests but never engaged in any nefarious pursuits himself. He strategically left his own tortured history with his fellow clergymen and his contested leadership of his former congregation out of his accounts. He also failed to disclose the accusations of sexual misconduct and violence that had been leveled against him during his time as a clergyman. Instead, he claimed to have left the priesthood once the dangers of Popery and the hypocrisy of the clergy had been revealed to him. He preemptively dismissed any lingering doubts his readers might have of him and forestalled Catholics’ challenges to his veracity by claiming to be the victim of a Papal plot. He asserted that the Catholic Church’s resentment of defectors—especially priestly defectors—was so great that they hounded and harassed apostates. He claimed the Church had unleashed its “fanatic zeal” against him and alleged that “from one end of this continent to the other, they have tried to injure me, by appeals to the public through their presses, and especially through the *confessional*.” In some editions of his work, Hogan also appended a “notice to the public” that included letters attesting to his status as a trustworthy gentleman and proving he was a member in good standing of the Georgia bar.²⁵⁸

Hogan proved adept at playing on Protestants’ fears that Catholics aimed to impose their faith on others. And he used the familiar tropes of unprotected femininity and Catholic sexual

²⁵⁸Hogan, preface to *Synopsis*.
deviance to generate suspicion of his former faith. For instance, in his first book, *Auricular Confession and Popish Nunneries*, Hogan told the tragic tale of a once-respectable “Episcopol” family he had known as a young man. A wealthy widow had been left to raise her daughter alone. Over time, the widow came to regret her permissive parenting, and she decided to send her daughter away to a convent school to curb the girl’s wild behavior. Before long, the daughter had been converted to Catholicism and convinced to take the veil. Thereafter, the daughter became the consort of her confessor-priest and was impregnated by him. She managed to have a note smuggled to Hogan begging him to visit her. When he complied with her request, he found the girl distraught. Her mother superior, she told him, was pressuring her to take what she had been told was an abortofacient. But the girl was convinced the drug was intended to kill her as well as her unborn child. According to Hogan, when he returned to the convent two weeks later, he discovered that the young nun was dead. Though the incident planted the first seeds of doubt in his heart, Hogan explained that he was young and newly ordained at the time of the murder. He had not yet been fully awakened to the sinister machinations of the Catholic Church.\(^{259}\)

Hogan claimed that his misgivings increased over time. He found himself especially troubled by the illicit uses to which his fellow priests put their confessionals. Because Catholic practice required full disclosure not only of actions, but also of thoughts and desires, confessor-priests learned intimate and sexually explicit information about their charges. Clerical celibacy rendered priests sexually frustrated and lustful toward many of their female penitents. But, he claimed, priests often came to favor one penitent in particular whom they would have married if not for the clerical prohibition against it. Many priests came to resent the women they loved—and came to resent their husbands as well. It was common for priests to debauch the objects of their stunted romantic ambitions for their own physical gratification and for the twisted satisfaction of cuckoldling the women’s husbands. In this way, Hogan craftily implied a failure of Catholic masculinity on the part of those men who allowed their wives’ confessors to undermine their authority as heads of households. And his cautionary tales carried the further implication that

Protestant men must be on their guard against a similar usurpation of their masculine prerogatives should they or their dependents entertain an interest in converting to Catholicism.\textsuperscript{260}

Hogan’s efforts to hold the moral high ground and to raise public alarm, for the most part, appear to have been successful. The Protestant religious press paid close attention to Hogan’s revelations and encouraged readers to heed his message. Even reviewers skeptical of Hogan’s claims found justification for fearing Catholics in Hogan’s writing. The \textit{Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany} offered an unusually balanced review of one of Hogan’s publications. The reviewer saw Hogan’s book as “adapted to the receptivity of church and convent burners, or of those members of the Protestant League, whose discretion bears an infinitesimal proportion to their zeal.” And he believed that Hogan had offered too little evidence to support the “sweeping inductions” the erstwhile priest had made. And yet, the reviewer accepted Hogan’s “intimate personal knowledge” of “such hidden iniquity.” He asserted that readers “cannot therefore doubt the appalling and heart-sickening facts which [Hogan] narrates,” and claimed that Hogan had “shown, if possible, with new clearness and impressiveness, the danger to chastity and purity, growing out of the established ritual of confession alike in church and convent.” It is much more difficult to determine popular reaction to Hogan’s revelations. But at least one reader, Charles Poulson, left a record of his reaction in marginalia he scribbled in a volume of both \textit{Auricular Confession} and its follow-up, \textit{A Synopsis of Popery As It Was and As It Is}. Poulson wrote, “[t]o be read with care and intelligence—by God’s help for guidance, we must wake up to our nation’s danger and peril, e’er it be too late.”\textsuperscript{261}

Hogan’s publications stirred public interest and generated enough demand to warrant multiple reprintings as well as further works. He issued two additional pseudo-exposes, the aforementioned \textit{A Synopsis of Popery As It Was and As It Is} and \textit{High and Low Mass in the Roman

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\textsuperscript{260} Ibid., pp. 35-48. \\
\textsuperscript{261} The Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany (Fourth Series, Volume XLL, November, 1846) p. 2; Poulson made this notation in an 1845 edition of Hogan’s Synopsis owned by the Library Company of Philadelphia. Documentation in the LCP file indicates, “Charles Poulson [1799-1866] was the son of Zacharia Poulson, Jr., editor and proprietor of Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser, and an early librarian of the Library Company. The son took the liberty of writing his own commentary in the margins of a number of the LC’s books.”
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Both texts were little more than recapitulations of what he had stated in his initial volume. Nonetheless, the books sold at a brisk pace and made Hogan something of a sensation. Hogan had been putting his preaching talents to work giving anti-Catholic speeches in Protestant churches for some time before he put pen to paper. Not surprisingly, his career as an author fueled his career as a lecturer and he undertook an extensive speaking tour. Hogan’s lecture circuit wound its way through Philadelphia, provoking an indignant response in the pages of the Catholic Herald. Once again, William Hogan had demonstrated that however hard they tried to assert themselves as members of the American mainstream, Philadelphia Catholics would find their path to respectability blocked by proponents of religious bigotry.
Historians who undervalue the extent to which clergy and laity collaborated in the flourishing of Philadelphia Catholicism need look no further than the community’s bold post-riot building campaign to be disabused of such a notion. Aided by the energy and offerings of the laity, Bishop Kenrick forged ahead with an altogether impractical scheme to establish a massive and elegant cathedral church at 18 and Race Streets in 1846. The land had been obtained by Catholic layman Marc Frenaye for Kenrick’s incipient seminary. But Kenrick quickly reimagined the spot as the new seat of the Philadelphia See: a magnificent, eye-catching structure that unabashedly proclaimed Catholics’ determination to sustain their faith community in spite of whatever animosity and invective might be hurled against them.

Kenrick proceeded at the behest of the laity. In a pastoral letter announcing the plan, he explained that

> the costliness of the undertaking, especially as the ground is still unpaid for, made us [the clergy], for a time, abandon all idea of engaging in it; but the anxiety manifested for several years by yourselves generally to see such a fabric erected, and the assurance of support given us by several generous individuals, have overcome our own fears, and determined us to lay the foundations in a short time, in the confidence that you will not suffer it to be said that we began to build and could not bring the work to completion.

The Bishop’s reference to “generous individuals” notwithstanding, Kenrick understood that the diocese’s wealthy minority was the least likely to support the scheme—Catholic elites aimed to maintain their premier parish, St. John the Evangelist at 13th and Chestnut Streets, as Philadelphia’s cathedral church. Kenrick knew at the outset that, while he might cajole more sizeable sums from a few privileged co-religionists, he would be reliant on numerous small donations from the city’s Catholic masses.\textsuperscript{262}

Kenrick merits considerable praise for his deftness at balancing the consolidation agenda of his predecessors with the desire of lay Catholics to serve as partners in managing the spiritual and institutional endeavors of the diocese. So we can assume he was quite deliberate when he made positive reference to trustee-era building campaigns in that 1846 pastoral letter. He reminded the faithful that “the zeal of individuals has often succeeded in raising churches from their own resources,” and he happily anticipated similar lay determination in bringing what would become the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul to fruition. Indeed, throughout his tenure as bishop, Kenrick succeeded in convincing the laity that they were crucial allies in the growth and progress of their spiritual community. They would no longer exercise trustee-era prerogatives such as ownership of church property and the authority to make pastoral appointments. But they would be valued collaborators in devotional and social service endeavors. Moreover, Kenrick’s careful oversight of the clerical training taking place at his newly-erected seminary demonstrates his determination to provide his communicants a more receptive and sympathetic clergy.

And so it was against this backdrop of increased clerical responsiveness that Kenrick and the Philadelphia laity could step boldly into the future together. To fully appreciate the optimism that underlay the cathedral campaign, a comparison of the Cathedral Basilica and Philadelphia’s first Catholic chapel is called for. In 1733, Jesuits had intentionally constructed the tiny St. Joseph’s Chapel so that it appeared to outsiders to be just another townhouse. It was only after passing through a courtyard that parishioners encountered the visual markers of Catholic spiritual life. In dramatic contrast to this small and humble parish, the new cathedral conspicuously towered above bustling Logan Square, with its massive copper dome reaching 156 feet in height. Architect Napoleon LeBrun modeled the cathedral on the extraordinary Roman basilica church of San Carlo al Corso in the Roman-Corinthian style. The interiors were to be no less impressive than the façade and featured original works executed by famed muralist Constantino Brumidi.  

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263 Architecture and Art of the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul, http://www.cathedralkila.org/about/about-the-cathedral#welcome
The cathedral proves that Kenrick and his flock never intended to withdraw from Philadelphia society or to make themselves deferential or invisible to hostile Protestants. On the contrary, they boldly proclaimed the Catholic community’s right to expand and entrench itself in the city they called home. Certain concessions were in order—the lovely stained glass windows were placed high enough to be spared any rocks that might be thrown at the edifice. And progress was slower than the community would have liked. The poverty of many Catholics meant that their contributions were smaller and less frequent than a project of such magnitude demanded. Realizing that the money would trickle in more slowly than he had hoped, Kenrick conceded that the work would have to be undertaken piecemeal as funds became available. Indeed, according to diocesan historian Joseph Kirlin, money was so scarce that progress was routinely halted for months at a time. Yet Philadelphia Catholics remained unwavering in their commitment to establishing a cathedral worthy of their ambitions for the growing See and, bit by bit, their humble donations accrued.\footnote{Kirlin, p. 352.}

Those ambitions were considerable. In the aftermath of the riots, the city’s Catholics did more than rebuild their shattered infrastructure. They expanded the schools, devotional societies, and social services they offered. In the five years following the riots, Kenrick oversaw the founding of eleven new parishes, most of which were located in the neighborhoods into which newly-arrived Irish immigrants settled. Kenrick’s building campaign was so vast that historian J. Matthew Gallman termed him “America’s leading ‘building bishop.’” To facilitate his massive undertaking, Kenrick established a diocesan bank in 1848. Its purpose was twofold. First, in the growing tradition of Catholic social uplift, it provided an opportunity for the faithful—especially vulnerable recent immigrants—to put aside a modest savings in a secure and dependable place. Second, it provided Kenrick with easy lines of credit for financing the diocesan building program.\footnote{J. Matthew Gallman, \textit{Receiving Erin's Children: Philadelphia, Liverpool, and the Irish Famine Migration, 1845-1855} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 145; James F. Connelly, ed. \textit{The History of the Diocese of Philadelphia}.}
Kenrick’s programs of institutional expansion and social welfare—and his zeal for the faith that fueled them—did not go unnoticed by the American leadership or by his superiors at the Vatican. In 1851, Kenrick found himself bound for Baltimore, where he had been ordered to accept the position of Metropolitan in spite of his repeated attempts to avoid elevation. Kenrick, of course, worried for the fate of the extensive and unfinished work he had begun in Philadelphia. He hand-picked a rather unlikely successor to complete his mission. Father John Neumann found himself in the very position Kenrick had occupied two decades before: begging to be released from Papal Bulls ordering him to lead the unwieldy Diocese of Philadelphia.266

Neumann’s mission in Philadelphia began inauspiciously. Indeed, Kenrick himself had anticipated the trouble that his successor would encounter. In a letter to the Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda Fide, Kenrick acknowledged that Neumann might meet resistance as a consequence of his German heritage and alien behaviors. Neumann had been born and raised in Bohemia and educated and ordained in Budweiss. As Kenrick explained, “he is a Bohemian and, because of this, not so eloquent and less likely to please the ear. His manners, likewise, are different from those existing in our country.” A further impediment to Neumann’s success was his austere lifestyle and commitment to missionary activity as a member of the Redemptorist Fathers. The legendary asceticism and humility of that order appeared incompatible with the rank of bishop. But Kenrick had become aware of Neumann’s zeal soon after the priest’s arrival in the American mission in 1836. Neumann had served mostly rural and German-speaking populations in New York, Pittsburgh, and Baltimore before being called to serve in Philadelphia. Kenrick saw in the young priest a deep piety and a determination that reminded him of his own ecclesiastical

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*Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Printed for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, 1976), p. 193. It would be left to the Co-Adjutor of Kenrick’s successor, Bishop John Neumann, to dismantle the “Bishop’s bank” because of the risk it posed to the fiscal health of the diocese. Wood would be appointed largely for his business prowess and it would be left to him to set some of Kenrick’s and Neumann’s more damaging financial decisions to rights. 266Kirlin, pp. 358-362.
ambitions. It must also be assumed that Kenrick saw in Neumann a similar willingness to collaborate with the faithful, whose confidence Neumann would have to earn.\textsuperscript{267}

Kenrick’s faith in Neumann had not been misplaced. Though Neumann continually sought reassignment to smaller, poorer, and more rural locales that better suited his delicate health and nervous temperament, he followed through on Kenrick’s massive crusade for diocesan expansion. On Neumann’s watch from 1852 to 1860, sixty new parishes were built within the Diocese of Philadelphia, even as a considerable portion of its territory was given over to the creation of the Diocese of Newark, New Jersey. And, as expected, Neumann saw the Cathedral Basilica through to completion.\textsuperscript{268}

All the while, Neumann worked closely with the laity to bolster their piety by revivifying lay devotion to Mary, expanding the scope of missionary activity outside the city proper, and aggressively pursuing the catechetical instruction and confirmation of Catholic children. Neumann’s most enduring pietistic legacy was his introduction of the Forty Hours’ Devotion to Philadelphia, done at the behest of Kenrick, his antecedent and mentor. This spiritual practice called on the faithful to participate in the public adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Significantly, each parish committed itself to performing its devotions at a specific hour, so that forty full hours of devotional practices had been observed diocese-wide by the conclusion of each devotional campaign. Thus, the observance strengthened Catholics’ ties to one another across parish lines even as it inspired the faithful to expand the scope of their individual spiritual efforts.\textsuperscript{269}

The work for which Neumann is most roundly celebrated is his campaign to dramatically expand and regularize Catholic parochial schools. In this matter, in particular, his ambitions mirrored those of the Metropolitan who had appointed him. In the aftermath of the riots, Catholics, both lay and clerical, agreed that Catholic children were spiritually and psychologically most secure within the nurturing framework of parochial schools. But many members of the community

\textsuperscript{268}Ibid., p. 221.
\textsuperscript{269}Kirlin, p. 367.
were dissatisfied with the fragmented and ad hoc manner in which Catholic schools were being established on a parish-by-parish basis. On April 28, 1852, Neumann announced his plan for the first Catholic Board of Education. He devised a model by which a pastor and two laymen from each parish met regularly to systematize the creation of new Catholic schools and the regulation of existing schools. Neumann himself would serve as the board’s president. The laity responded to the initiative with enthusiasm. Historian James Connelly reported that the number of Catholic children attending Philadelphia’s parochial schools soared from 500 to 5,000 within a year of launching the initiative. By the following year, the number of children enrolled had spiked to an astonishing 9,000. Unsurprisingly, other dioceses took note of Neumann’s spectacular success and swiftly implemented Catholic Boards of Education of their own. From his post as Metropolitan, Kenrick enthusiastically endorsed Neumann’s innovations, and the reports of the Plenary Council of 1852 indicate the extent to which Kenrick’s and Neumann’s projects of parochial school expansion were in harmony.  

By the time of Neumann’s unexpected death in January of 1860, he had more than overcome the early misgivings of the clergy and laity. He had emerged as a beloved spiritual director to Philadelphia Catholics and a pivotal figure in the expansion and consolidation of Catholic institutions nationwide. Catholics from Philadelphia and the surrounding area began to view Neumann’s tomb as an auspicious place to pray and, according to Connelly, “stories of cures and favors were common.” So it is not entirely surprising that, by 1886, formal investigations into Neumann’s holiness—the necessary preliminary steps to canonization—had been undertaken. And while Neumann’s official decree of canonization would not be released until 1977, Philadelphia Catholics had already begun to fete the pious bishop as their hometown saint. Today, Neumann’s body lies in state at his shrine on North Fifth Street. His successors among the Redemptorist Fathers continue to observe the Forty Hours’ Devotion and pursue their traditional missionary labors. And pilgrims continue to visit the propitious site. The faithful who

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frequent Neumann's shrine, as well as the cathedral and the more than two hundred parishes of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, carry on a legacy of resilience and devotion derived from their progenitors of two centuries ago.\(^{271}\)

\(^{271}\) Connelly, pp. 250-251; Canonization is a spectacularly lengthy project. Neumann was declared venerable in 1921 and beatified in 1963, both of which are necessary preliminary steps to canonization. His eventual elevation to sainthood in 1977 was not unusually drawn-out. To this day, Neumann's body is displayed in a glass coffin, remarkably intact and uncorrupted by decay, which is taken as a sign of his saintliness.
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