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1988

The "Selective Catholicism" Thesis: A Critical Review of Literature

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Recommended Citation

THE "SELECTIVE CATHOLICISM" THESIS:

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of The Graduate School

of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

April

1988

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper has been through several versions before its appearing as a Master's thesis. I am grateful to Peter Whalley for his comments on the first, seminal version, and to Kirsten Grønbjerg for her comments on my outline. I am especially grateful to my thesis committee, Ross Scherer, who gave me the idea in the first place, and Roger Finke. Both have been most helpful by reading and commenting on various chapter drafts.

I especially thank my wife, Leah. Her contribution was two-fold. As a reader unfamiliar with the sociology of religion, she was able to tell me when I was not communicating adequately. But most importantly, only her support throughout this process could make its completion a reality. Without Leah I might, in fact, never have started.

VITA

The author, James William Kelly, is the son of James Regis Kelly and Mary Jane (McGervey) Kelly. He was born August 1, 1962 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

His elementary education was obtained in public and Catholic schools of Wood County, West Virginia. His secondary education was completed in 1980 at St. Joseph Preparatory Seminary in Vienna, West Virginia.

In August, 1980 Mr. Kelly entered Duquesne University, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Arts, summa cum laude, in sociology in May, 1984. In 1983, while attending Duquesne University, he was elected to the Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society. In 1984 he was awarded the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences' Certificate for Excellence in the Social Sciences.

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INTRODUCTION

The latter half of the twentieth century has been a
time of tremendous change for the Roman Catholic Church in
America. These changes have produced many disagreements
between the laity, who no longer feel bound to the Church's
teaching authority, and the hierarchy, who continue to
emphasize traditional teachings. The interpretations of
these disagreements vary from author to author. But they
can be categorized into two basic interpretations. More
longstanding popular and academic notions have suggested
that the majority of the Church's members is in a state of
tension. In this scenario, differences between the laity
and the Church's hierarchy have threatened the very
existence of the Church, with both sides refusing to yield
in their differing opinions, and the laity threatening
massive withdrawals if teachings and institutional practices
do not change. But some writers, such as Greeley (1977),
Kennedy (1984, 1985), and Greeley and Durkin (1984) question
this scenario. They claim that tension is minimal, because
for most of the laity, it simply doesn't exist. The laity
have become "selective Catholics,"[1] who ignore, rather than
challenge, Church leaders on many matters, but remain loyal

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[1]I borrow this term from Greeley and Durkin (1984: 3).

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to the institution through their continued participation in it locally. The popular wisdom with its dire predictions about the laity is, for these writers, simply incorrect.

The conflict image of the American Catholic Church may be lingering from the turbulence of the late 1960s and early 1970s. As a writer from that time, Osborne (1969) provides an opportunity to look back into that time. Religious reform, which Osborne claims began long before Vatican II, is the arena for change among Catholics. And one of the greatest religious reforms involved ignoring official Church rules, such as attending Mass weekly; acts which defy the very authority of the Church to promulgate and interpret "Natural Law." Osborne characterized Catholicism, then, as an institution which had "to endure the <u>struggle</u> of a 'house divided against itself'" (Osborne, 1969: 50; emphasis added). Hoge (1986) represents a contemporary example of the church-in-conflict viewpoint. Comparing American Catholics to a river and the Roman hierarchy to a flood gate, Hoge predicts a future of escalating tensions in the U.S. Church. He claims that the hierarchy's failure to change those teachings with which the laity disagree will result in an explosion of bitter tension between the two.

Statement of the Problem

Much has been written about selective Catholicism, but little from a purely sociological viewpoint. Much of the writing has been descriptive in nature and has centered on

what I call an indicator of selective Catholicism, namely the disagreements between the laity and the hierarchy. In fact, the focus on this indicator probably has contributed to the persistence of conflict models of the Church in America. Given this focus, it is hard to break away from psychological and social-psychological analyses of this phenomenon. The descriptions of selective Catholicism below, in fact, frequently rely on such viewpoints.

There are few works which ground an analysis of selective Catholicism in a macrosociological explanation. All of the descriptions of selective Catholicism mention the institutional detachment which is its root. But for many, the social changes responsible for this detachment receive secondary treatment, while the thrust of the study concerns the latest trends in the indicators: how many Catholics practice birth control now as opposed to the early 1970s, for example. Conversely, those works which do address macrosociological trends, such as secularization theory do not relate them specifically to the phenomenon of selective Catholicism.

My goal is to sociologically scrutinize selective Catholicism. I will examine in detail the role of cultural, socioeconomic/demographic, and institutional changes in its development. Thus, I try to explain for American Catholics what Luckmann (1967) claimed that most sociology tries to explain: the effect of societal forces on the individual. I

will also reverse the analysis to examine the effects of selective Catholicism on the Church currently and try to project them in the future.

My review of the socioeconomic/demographic, cultural, and institutional changes appears in the third and fourth chapters. Before I move on to that, though, I will examine several empirical indicators of selective Catholicism in the second chapter. My assessment of the organizational "state of the Church" appears in the fifth chapter. Finally in the sixth chapter, I offer some suggestions for future research which could serve to keep a sociological focus on this phenomenon.

Selective Catholicism Defined

The selective Catholicism concept asserts that policy disagreements among active Catholics are not primarily aired in the manner of protest and conflictual dissent. Rather, Catholics selectively ignore those teachings promulgated by the hierarchy with which they disagree, and accept others with which they agree. Fichter (1977: 163) states:

> What seems to be happening now is that more and more Catholics are simply disregarding the official pronouncements of the church hierarchy. They are not in revolt. They are not openly disrespectful of the prelates, but they are simply no longer impressed by the need of attending to directives and prohibitions.

Leege and Gremillion (1986: 4) identified this selective Catholicism (without giving a specific label to it) through data collected in the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish

Life.[2] They state that active Catholics

> feel comfortable with selecting which of the Church's
> teachings they will espouse and which they will reject.
> In this respect, American Catholics act very much like
> the increasingly well-educated, middle-class Americans
> that they are. They accept human authority less because
> of its traditional nature and more because of its
> appropriate positions. Yet they remain loyal to the
> underlying institution, practice its rites, and continue
> to work for it.

Kennedy (1984, 1985) contends that writers and

reporters characterize the Church as in conflict because

they attribute that which is most visible, namely protest

and dissent, as normative for most American Catholics. This

could not be further from the truth, according to Kennedy.

Rather, dissent among American Catholics and between them

and Church leaders characterizes the minority, whom he terms

"First Culture Catholics." The growing majority, the

"Second Culture Catholics," while holding the same opinions

and attitudes as the minority, do not consider themselves

rebels or dissenters. With the decline of authoritarianism

in the West, they no longer regard the Church's hierarchical

authority as legitimate. According to Kennedy (1985: 12):

> Just as most people do not think of every choice as
> another act in a never resolved rebellion against the
> authority of their own parents, so Second Culture
> Catholics' do not see their choices as continuing
> episodes of rebellion against the pope, the bishops, or

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[2]The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, which I
refer to throughout this paper, includes the following
reports as of March, 1988: Leege and Gremillion (1984,
1986); Dolan and Leege (1985); Leege and Trozzolo (1985a,
1985b); Searle and Leege (1985a, 1985b); Leege (1986a,
1986b, 1987a, 1987b, 1988). A summary of the first ten
reports was published by Gremillion and Castelli (1987).

ecclesiastical authority of any kind. In truth, many of them do not think about church leaders much at all.

Thus the version of Catholicism which characterizes Catholics as reeling in discontent over such issues as priestly celibacy or women priests is inaccurate. Those portraits, no matter how visible, spring from the minority Catholics who are still attached to the institutional structure of the Church. For the majority, the vital issues of life flow not from the hierarchy, but from their understanding of the whole society (Kennedy, 1984).

Greeley and Durkin (1984: 10-11) propose much the same scenario as Kennedy:

> With the decline in importance of institutional structures, Catholics increasingly look to their faith for comfort and challenge, for inspiration in life and consolation in death. Few take seriously anymore the Church as a teacher on either moral or social action matters. The Church is not for ethics; it is for religion.

There is no reeling discontent. Active American Catholics still support and remain loyal to their Church, especially their local parishes. But their loyalty is offered on their own terms. This usually means they ignore the official Church teachers and devote more of their attention to local matters than to the affairs of the pope and the bishops, or issues such as women's ordination. Greeley and Durkin assume this is especially true among Catholics aged twenty and younger.

Greeley (1977: 272) terms this kind of Catholic "the

communal Catholic."[3] Communal Catholics strongly and proudly identify themselves as Catholics, yet ignore the pronouncements of the hierarchy. He predicts that "the most likely projection for the future [of the American Catholic Church] is the emergence of a large group of 'communal Catholics'" who "refuse to take seriously the teaching authority of the institutional Church." Furthermore, Greeley (1977) states, those most likely to be communal Catholics are younger and well-educated.

As empirical evidence for this prediction, Greeley (1977) points to the rejection of the official sexual morality but continued support of selected aspects of the Church, such as Catholic schools. Thus, the communal Catholics may identify themselves as Catholics and remain actively involved in many Church activities. But they will not be strongly attached to the Church's formal teachings nor its teachers. Communal Catholics will strongly identify themselves as Catholics, but will select for themselves which aspects of Catholicism to accept.

The above authors state that American Catholics do not conflict with church hierarchy, but selectively ignore them. American lay people are no longer attached to, and thus feel no obligation to obey, the Church's teaching authority (primarily the Pope and the Roman Curia). They therefore

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[3]Curiously, Greeley (1977) never explains why he uses the term "communal" in describing this individualistic type of behavior.

feel no obligation to participate in the Church on anyone's but their own terms. Those terms include active participation in the local parishes despite their ignoring many Church teachings. When Greeley and Durkin (1984: 11) state that "the Church is not for ethics; it is for religion," they mean that the laity accept it only as an arena for religious practice, not as a teacher.

Not only does this explain a lack of current conflict among the laity, it predicts the same for the immediate future. Hoge's assertion that possible Vatican-imposed restraints on the American Church will result in "increased tension" and "polarization and alienation among the laity" (Hoge, 1986: 297) does not seem likely in this framework. The laity will selectively ignore future actions of the hierarchy with which they disagree, just as they do now. Why? Because they realize that the hierarchy cannot enforce most of their teachings (Greeley and Durkin, 1984), particularly moral pronouncements, and they feel no obligation to obey anyway.

The Development of Selective Catholicism

Selective Catholicism, then, is religious individualism. It departs from the American Catholicism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when adherence to Church teachings was more the norm.

Like all other social changes, it did not develop in a vacuum. It is caused in part by a detachment from the

Church's teaching authority, despite regular participation in the Church locally. The authors cited above tie it to other social changes such as the decline of institutions and authoritarianism. I suggest that selective Catholicism resulted from socioeconomic and demographic changes within the Catholic lay population, secularization and the rise of "radical individualism" within the larger American society, and institutional changes within the Church itself.

In some ways, these changes affected the development of selective Catholicism directly. In other ways, they caused detachment from the Church's teaching authority, which in turn affected the development of selective Catholicism. Put briefly, detachment from the Church's teaching authority is an intervening variable between social and institutional changes and the development of selective Catholicism.

Upward socioeconomic mobility and greater religious tolerance, beginning after World War I, allowed American Catholics to break away from the protective isolation originally afforded by the Church and distance themselves from it. Just like with any other social group, as more Catholic generations were born in America and enjoyed relatively greater affluence, they moved into the mainstream American culture. There, the laity were exposed to a society in which religion was privatized. As Catholics became American and privatized their religion, they began to

practice selective Catholicism. Religion's role was compartmentalized within their social lives. Like most other American institutions, it occupied a less central position in their social circles. The Church no longer occupied a prominent enough position to affect their everyday decision making. This lack of attachment prompted them to believe in an individualistic, i.e. selective manner. Selective Catholicism further developed as individualism increasingly pervaded American culture beginning in the 1960s.

These cultural and demographic changes were eventually accompanied by institutional changes within the Church. The windows opened by the Second Vatican Council may have reinforced the developing individualism among the American laity, who more and more were becoming like their non-Catholic neighbors in their appreciation of democratic institutions and individual initiative. However, it may have been Vatican II which encouraged the laity to participate in the Church locally though they were detached from the Church's teaching authority.

INDICATORS OF SELECTIVE CATHOLICISM

Changing Attitudes

The literature regarding Catholics' attitudes, especially attitudes about sexual morality, is abundant indeed. The fact that Catholics disagree with their teachers and do things which the hierarchy condemns is common knowledge. This knowledge is in fact the basis for claims that the laity are in a state of tension and on the verge of leaving the Church, if not revolting against it. Hoge (1986), for example, would compare the differences of opinion to a river and a flood gate, with the hierarchical flood gate bursting if it does not yield to the lay pressure to change teachings. But an examination of these differences of opinion can reveal selective Catholicism. Of all the documentation of the laity's differences with the hierarchy, Leege and Gremillion (1986) and Gallup and Castelli (1987) point out the selective rather than oppositional nature of the differences.

Both Leege and Gremillion (1986) and Gallup and Castelli (1987) use attitudes regarding abortion and contraception to illustrate the selective nature in which Catholics form their opinions. Both the Notre Dame data collected from active parishioner and Gallup poll data collected from the general population showed that Catholics

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generally disagree with the Church's ban on contraceptives, but generally agree on its condemnation of abortion. For example, Leege and Gremillion (1986: 4) asked parishioners their level of agreement to the following statements: "The Church should remain strong in its opposition to the use of contraceptives;" and "The Church should remain strong in its opposition to abortion." Possible responses ranged from 1 to 4, with 4 meaning strong agreement. The mean score on the first question was 2.23, showing disapproval of the Church's opposition to contraception. The mean score on the second was 3.35, showing a fairly strong approval of the Church's opposition to abortion. It was this trend which led Leege and Gremillion to conclude that Catholics do not disagree with the hierarchy for the sake of disagreeing. They also believe Catholics are not content to accept teachings on the basis of tradition alone. The active Catholics in their sample listen to and consider the moral teaching of the Church, "but... in the end will consult their conscience and experience in deciding whether to accept or reject it" (Leege and Gremillion, 1986: 7).

Gallup and Castelli (1987) point out the same relationship between abortion and contraception attitudes among Catholics in the general population. They state that American Catholics "accept church teachings only when it makes sense in terms of their own consciences" (Gallup and Castelli, 1987: 183). Thus they found that Catholics

disagree with the Church on teachings related to sexual morality, but tend to agree on "life issues" such as abortion. Catholics, however, do not only disagree with the conservative teachings. Several moderate and liberal bishops have proposed a "seamless garment" social philosophy whereby "life issues" should be linked together and approached by a common philosophy: e.g. opposition to abortion, the arms race, socioeconomic inequalities, abortion, and capital punishment. But Gallup polls show that Catholics overwhelmingly support the death penalty (Gallup and Castelli, 1987). And the Notre Dame study discovered that most active Catholics do not consider attitudes about nuclear disarmament "a valid test of whether or not one is a true Catholic" (Leege, 1988: 4).[4] A "seamless garment" approach is not likely to be very popular since poll data reveal Catholics as relying on their own individual judgment to construct their beliefs. Unlike the bishops, the laity tend not to adopt unifying principles, but apply principles (such as the "life principles") to certain situations as they see fit (Leege, 1988).

Mass Attendance

Osborne (1969) used attendance figures to demonstrate the turbulence in the U.S. Catholic Church in the late 1960s

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[4]In fact, Leege (1988) reveals, a 1987 Gallup-National Catholic Reporter poll discovered that only one-third of those who identified themselves as Catholic had heard of the American bishops' pastoral letter on nuclear arms.

and continuing through the early 1970s. But Mass attendance figures which once revealed a Church in crisis in the 1960s and 1970s today can demonstrate the emergence of selective Catholicism. Osborne (1969: 44) claimed that:

> Mass attendance as a norm and behavior pattern is one thing. But the Mass is also the central ritual of Catholicism, if not its most distinguishing feature. It is probably no exaggeration to say that with respect to the future of Catholicism "as the Mass goes, so goes the Church." Boas, Malinowski, and a host of other scientific students of religion assert the primacy of ritual. Anthony Wallace, an anthropologist from the University of Pennsylvania, makes the point quite clearly when he says, "Ritual is religion in action; it is the cutting edge of the tool...it is ritual which accomplishes what religion sets out to do." What occurs in or around the Mass, therefore, carries far more import for the future of the Catholic religion than what happens to parochial schools or to the chancery. Catholic schools and the chancery are not where "the action is."

Likewise, Gallup and Castelli (1987: 26) hold that "Mass attendance is... important because it serves as a barometer of more general belief and practice." They furthermore interpret opinion data to conclude that Catholics feel more strongly than most Protestants that weekly religious services are important. The weekly Mass is the focal point of Catholic activity for the Church. It is the one Catholic activity that all Catholics share. If, then, Mass attendance can gauge "the state of the laity," I believe it points toward the rise of selective Catholicism in the 1980s.

In 1969, traditional Mass attendance was dropping and showed no indication of increasing again, especially among

the young. Although types of "underground Mass" (Osborne

1969: 45) and Masses held by cult-like fellowship

organizations were gaining in appeal, Mass attendance was

dropping on the whole. Thus Osborne, and no doubt many

writers of the time, were moved to label Catholicism as a

Church in crisis. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, many,

especially young and educated, Catholics aired their

disagreements with the hierarchy by withdrawing their

attendance (Roof and McKinney, 1987). In 1963, for example,

71 percent of the Catholic respondents to a National Opinion

Research Center survey stated that they attended Mass

weekly. By 1974, that percentage had dropped to 50 percent

(Greeley, 1977; Greeley, McCready and McCourt, 1976).

Gallup polls showed that the decline was strongest between

1968 and 1978, when the total percentage of Catholics

attending weekly Mass dropped from 65 to 52 percent (Gallup

and Castelli, 1987).

But currently, attendance figures have stabilized

(Gallup and Castelli, 1987; Gallup and Poling, 1980), with

the proportion of Catholics attending weekly Mass remaining

at 51 percent in 1987 (Gallup and Castelli, 1987). Also,

Mass attendance among younger adult Catholics (ages 18-30)

has increased in the past ten years, and now attendance is

positively correlated with higher education,[5] according to

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[5]Albrecht and Heaton (1984) discovered positive
relationships between education and church attendance within
several religious denominations. This was despite a general

NORC and Gallup surveys (Gallup and Castelli, 1987; Leege
and Trozzolo, 1985a). Life-cycle changes can partially
explain the change, as "baby boom" Catholics in their late
20s and early 30s have children and return to Church (Gallup
and Castelli, 1987). However, it also implies that "if
there is a policy discontent among educated young Catholics
[who still participate in the Church]... it is manifested in
a different way than in failure to participate in Mass"
(Leege and Trozzolo, 1985a: 5).

   If Osborne's (1969) statement about the centrality of
ritual in religion is valid, then the changes in American
Catholics' attendance since the mid-1970s signals a change
in American Catholicism from a "Church in conflict."
"Policy discontent" is not manifested in absences or
protests. American Catholics, despite their relatively
strong attendance figures, hold much the same attitudes they
did in the early 1970s. But the years of the dramatic drops
in attendance have been over for some time. Instead of
leaving the Church, they have become selective Catholics.

Privatized Religion

   Despite steady Mass attendance trends since the late
1970s, the Church has not regained its status in the lives
of American Catholics from the days of the immigrant Church,
before World War I. The recent Notre Dame study of Catholic

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negative relationship in the national population.

parishes empirically investigated the role the Church plays in active American Catholics' lives. Analyses of the Notre Dame data have confirmed the existence of the privatized religion which generates selective Catholicism among American Catholics.

Leege and Gremillion (1984) found evidence of the Church's privatized role in the lives of its members. On the one hand, they discovered that fully 85 percent of Catholic parishioners feel the Church meets their spiritual needs. Almost half are actively involved in activities and organizations beyond weekly religious ceremonies. Yet, on the other hand, they state "whether contemporary American parishes are meaningful social communities is another matter" (Leege and Gremillion 1984: 6). Seventy-five percent of their sample indicated that leaving their parish would not upset them very much. And 45 percent reported that their parish did not meet their "social needs." In brief, Catholics regard their parishes positively as religious institutions. However they do not seem to rate their parishes as important socially. Here is an example of the Church's playing a limited role within Catholics' lives. Within the sphere of religion, it is warmly regarded. But outside of that sphere, it has little influence because it isn't considered important.

Leege and Trozzolo (1985b) discovered further evidence of the Church's limited influence through parishioners'

views of the purpose of their parish. "Even though parishioners used communitarian language to define the parish, they use quite self-centered language when asked about the fundamental problems of human existence and how they are overcome" (Leege and Trozzolo 1985b: 8). Many Catholics in their sample defined their parishes as communities or fellowships. Most, then, probably intellectually accept the Vatican II characterization of the Church as "the people of God." Yet when asked to describe what they considered "the fundamental problem of human existence," many resorted to individualistic concepts. Despite voicing communal ideals for their local parishes, many Catholics characterize their deepest concerns as individualistic in nature. This is significant, for Leege and Trozzolo believe these operative beliefs may shape a parish more than the intellectual characterizations which the parishioners hold. Thus parishioners may shape their parish into a collectivity of individuals pursuing individual needs. More importantly, these beliefs may indicate that Catholics do not feel the Church addresses what they consider "the fundamental problem of human existence." If this is the case, the Church can have nothing but limited influence in its members' lives. The laity will not look toward it to shape their behavior if it addresses non-fundamental life issues.

In yet another analysis, Leege (1986) reveals that

institutional detachment may be most prevalent among the
young and educated. Catholics who attend Church regularly
feel it is a good and proper place to address needs varying
from: traditional religious needs, such as religious
education for children; normally stressful needs, such as
family difficulties; and extremely stressful needs, such as
unemployment. Many felt that they could bring these needs
to their parish and receive help. And many more said they
would do so if help were available. But this is not a
uniform trend. Younger, more educated, and higher income
Catholics are more likely than older, less educated, and
lower income Catholics to turn elsewhere to meet their
needs, such as professional counselors. Leege (1986: 6)
concludes that "younger Catholics of higher educational and
income attainments, who are currently raising their
families, have moved away from the parish and its staff as a
central point of orientation for many life problems." And,
Leege found, even if help in many of these services were
available at churches where they aren't currently, the
younger, more educated Catholics would nonetheless search
for them elsewhere. Leege has confirmed that institutional
detachment is more prevalent among young, well educated, and
higher income lay persons as other writers (Greeley and
Durkin, 1984; Greeley, 1977) have speculated.

The most recently released findings of the study show
that American Catholics accept the hierarchy's authority to

speak on various issues to the degree those issues affect their personal lives (Leege, 1987b; Gremillion and Castelli, 1987). When the issue is international poverty, for example, the laity feel it most proper for the hierarchy to speak out, as this issue does not personally affect them much. At the other extreme, however, the laity feels it is least proper for the hierarchy to speak out about subjects much closer to themselves, e.g. birth control. Thus, Catholics may reject Church authority when the proclaimed norm treads on areas they regard as personal freedoms.[6] However, granting legitimacy to the hierarchy's teaching on national and international issues does not translate into the laity's acceptance of it. As Leege (1987b: 12) states, the hierarchy's pronouncements become merely one element in the individual's "calculus" of her moral attitudes. The Church's teaching authority plays a limited role in the individual's outlook.

In summary, the Notre Dame researchers have found that the Catholic Church, as an institution, does not currently play a central moral role in the lives of its active members. Therefore, it is safe to say that American Catholics in general are not strongly attached to the

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[6]Unfortunately, it seems that the Notre Dame study used only birth control to test the laity's acceptance of the hierarchy's teaching on individual behavior. Lay Catholics' attitudes about the Church's role in birth control are well known. Another variable, such as legitimacy of Church teaching on charitable contributions, might have shed more light on this issue.

institutional Church. The Notre Dame researchers have
demonstrated the lack of institutional attachment which lies
at the heart of the selective Catholicism thesis.

Finally, in a separate study, Gallup and Castelli
(1987) highlight institutional detachment through Catholic
women's opinions about the way the Church treats them. They
state that

> ...it would be difficult to look at these data and
> conclude that Catholic women as a group are angry. The
> data suggest that many women who believe the Church does
> not respond well to women in general are more satisfied
> with the way their own parish treats them - women are
> three times as likely to give the Church a "poor" rating
> for its handling of women in general as for the way it
> meets their own needs. Put another way, women who feel
> dissatisfied with the Church's treatment of them as
> women are more satisfied with the Church's treatment of
> them as persons (Gallup and Castelli, 1987: 46-47).

Gallup and Castelli have found that women believe the Church
treats them poorly, but are not overly concerned about it.[7]
It does not seem to touch them personally, although they are
aware that what many consider mistreatment by Church
authorities exists. It may not affect them because their
particular ox is not being gored, but also because they are
not attached strongly enough to the institution to feel it.

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[7]Gallup and Castelli make this assertion based on
national Gallup poll data. Their sample includes both
religiously active Catholics and inactive Catholic women, as
well as women of all ages. Thus it is conceivable that
older women's acceptance of traditional female roles in the
Church might dilute younger women's rejection of them in the
aggregate survey results. Although the authors' conclusion
makes sense within the context of American society's
privatizing of religion, the potential impact of this
question makes it a compelling subject for future study.

If a woman's activity in the Church is limited to building her individual religious faith and the Church does not play an active role in her life, then the actions of the hierarchy, for better or worse, probably won't be of much concern.

THE EFFECTS OF ASSIMILATION, PRIVATIZATION,
AND RADICAL INDIVIDUALISM

Having demonstrated the existence of selective
Catholicism and privatization of American Catholics'
religion, I now attempt to explain how each developed, and
just as importantly, how the latter led to the former.
After World War I, and especially after the 1940s, change
became the dominant force for the Church. American
Catholics experienced upward socioeconomic mobility and as
they became better educated and moved to the suburbs. These
trends led to what many called the "Americanization" of the
Catholic Church. Catholics began to appear in all strata of
American society and resemble other Americans in religious
behavior as well as affluence. As they "became American,"
their religion was privatized. Sociological theorists have
explained that privatizing religion leads to a selective
style of believing because it cannot offer an all-
encompassing system of belief.

Americanization was only the first step toward the
development of selective Catholicism. After this trend
began, major shifts in the dominant culture occurred. In
the late 1960s and early 1970s, a new and intense emphasis
on individualism further inspired American church members to
selectively believe. This change enhanced the trend of

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individuals' building their own private faiths.

Socioeconomic Changes: Assimilation and Privatization

Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Catholicism offered immigrant Catholic generations protection from a hostile new society. The prominence of the Church in people's lives during the first half of the twentieth century derived from this defensive nature (Kennedy, 1984). "In the immigrant neighborhoods the parish was a central community institution. Most often organized according to language or nationality, it gave the newcomers a source of identity in a strange new world" (Dolan and Leege 1985: 2). Additionally, the Church's stress on individual salvation as the central focus of human life provided consolation, as well as protection, in the face of difficulty. Catholics found unemployment, poverty, and prejudice easier to tolerate because of the Church's constant assurance of eternal salvation (Osborne, 1969). The Church, then, played a central role in its members' lives.

I believe it is important not to romanticize the behavior of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American Catholics. It is overly simplistic to characterize them as unquestioningly obedient and intellectually passive to Rome. American Catholics' advocacy for a more democratic and pragmatic approach to Church issues received stern opposition from the Vatican at the turn of the century (Hoge, 1986; Hennesey, 1981). Nonetheless, educational and

socioeconomic levels were low, and it is safe to say that
while they were not a perfectly homogeneous population,
Catholics' disagreements with the hierarchy were much fewer
than they were to be later this century.

Socioeconomic and demographic changes occurred most
rapidly for Catholics, as for all Americans, after World War
II. The post-war boom had an especially strong effect on
the American Catholic Church. European immigration to the
U.S. already had been slowed for many years: larger
proportions of the Catholic population were native-born.
Catholics began to move to the suburbs and their children
attained more education. American Catholics began to
resemble the American mainstream.

According to Gleason (1969), this occurred not only in
terms of socioeconomic status but also mainstream attitudes
and beliefs. American Catholics, he felt, were losing their
explicit and well defined self-consciousness. The process
of Americanization, or acculturation, eliminated any need
for protection from American society, since American
Catholics were becoming a part of it. When this need
diminished, so did the role of the Church in the lives of
its members (Kim, 1980). Gleason (1969: 11) stated:

> The generation now entering society as young adults
> hardly even remembers the period of "Protestant-Catholic
> tensions" in the early 1950's - to say nothing of the Ku
> Klux Klan of Al Smith days - but it does remember that
> John F. Kennedy was a Catholic who became President of
> the United States. Hence, these young people have
> little reason to think of themselves as a minority
> threatened by the society around them, but good reason

to believe that they are pretty much the same kind of Americans as everyone else. It is not surprising that they seem to wonder why older Catholics thought otherwise, that they question the need for separate Catholic schools or societies, or that they ask why Catholics should have different views from other men of good will on such matters as divorce or abortion.

After World War II, then, the parish began to lose its relevance as a source to solve their problems. Higher education and suburban living, with its more individualistic lifestyles than those of the urban immigrant neighborhoods, exposed Catholic children to a more secular world than their parents had known (Dolan and Leege, 1985). "At best, the parish was a source of indirect help" (Leege, 1986: 6). Upward mobility, suburbanization, and education broke the bonds between the Catholic institution and its members and encouraged them to seek other answers to religious questions.

Secularized Society[8]

In order to understand American Catholics after they assimilated, it is necessary to understand the religious behavior of the dominant society to which they joined. As mainstream Americans, Catholics' behavior would be influenced by the same social forces and events as other Americans. This is especially evident in light of the fact that many of the mainstream Protestant churches were

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[8]I prefer the term "secularized" to "secular," as the latter is often used in a negative, emotionally loaded manner (Wilson, 1979; 1985).

experiencing the same phenomena as the Catholics (drops in attendance and selective believing). Thus, much of the causes of selective Catholicism can be attributed to general cultural influences, since other churches were similarly affected (Roof and McKinney, 1987).

What kind of religious environment was awaiting Catholics when they assimilated? The culture which educated, suburban Catholics confronted was secularized. Religion had been relegated to the "private sphere" with very little influence over public life.

Individuals' detachment from religious institutions occurred because religion was declining as a social force, according to secularization theory. Secularization theory proposes a

> decline in the significance of religion in the operation of the social system, its diminished significance in social consciousness, and its reduced command over the resources (time, energy, skill, intellect, imagination, and accumulated wealth) of mankind (Wilson, 1985: 14).

In modern society, science, rationalization, and secular law have subsumed many of religion's traditional functions.

The body of secularization theory is immense,[9] and contains many different versions of the relationship between religion and modern society. There are, however, several dominant theoretical themes which run throughout the

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[9]In fact, according to Wilson (1985), the discipline of sociology was originally founded to explain the decline of religion and the rise of rationalism in modern Western society.

literature (Shiner, 1967). One theme is society's withdrawal from religion's influence, whether that results from outright rejection of religious symbols and understandings, or an attempt by society to reformulate the understanding of society as a human construction apart from the divine. The former explanation is often accompanied, according to Shiner (1967), by the prediction of a totally non-religious society. The latter explanation predicts the survival of religion, but restricted to private life. Another dominant theme explains the decline of religion's influence through a "desacralization of the world" (Shiner, 1967: 215), as sacred explanations no longer suffice to explain the universe in light of natural and social science. Still another theme emphasizes a growth of attention to the human rather than the supernatural world. Finally, another version proposes that "knowledge, patterns of behavior, and institutional arrangements which were once understood as grounded in divine power are transformed into phenomena of purely human creation and responsibility" (Shiner, 1967: 214).

These themes are complementary and each probably explains a part of the whole phenomenon of secularization. But the one which is particularly pertinent in discussing American Catholics' selective style of believing is privatization: society's relegation of religion to the sphere of private life. In modern Western society religion

exists in a self-contained sphere, having only tenuous
connections with it. For Berger (1969), religion is present
in the most public and the most private spheres of society,
but nowhere else.

> Religion manifests itself as public rhetoric and private
> virtue. In other words, insofar as religion is common,
> it lacks "reality," and insofar as it is real it lacks
> commonality. This situation represents a severe rupture
> of the traditional task of religion, which was precisely
> the establishment of an integrated set of definitions of
> reality that could serve as a common universe of meaning
> for the members of a society (Berger, 1969: 134).

This privatization, or relegation of religion to the private
sphere, occurred as various institutions in the West came to
specialize in specific segments of the society, e.g.
economics, law, medicine, etc. (Luckmann, 1967). Religion
became mere public rhetoric as this "institutional
specialization" (Luckmann, 1967: 39) made one encompassing
system of meaning impractical for both the society and the
individual. "Even for those who continue to be socialized
into [a religion], specifically religious representations
tend to have a predominately rhetorical status" (Luckmann,
1967: 99-100). Modern society's institutional
specialization relativizes religious content.

Privatization of religion causes selective Catholicism
because, when the "reality" of religion exists only in the
private sphere, it develops many of the characteristics of
the market (Berger, 1969; Luckmann, 1967). No longer having
influence over the total society or being able exclusively
to provide a system of ultimate meaning, religion must

compete with other spheres to establish its definitions of reality. Individuals likewise become religious consumers. "This is the crucial sociological and social-psychological characteristics of the pluralistic situation" (Berger, 1969: 145). As consumers, religious believers' tastes will change. They will choose religions which meet their latest desires.

This consumerist behavior, coupled with the difficulty which institutional specialization poses for a system of ultimate meaning, leads to selective believing. Luckmann (1967: 102) states that

> The assortment of religious representations - a sacred cosmos in a loose sense of the term only - is not internalized by any potential consumer as a whole. The "autonomous" consumer selects, instead, certain religious themes from the available assortment and builds them into a somewhat precarious private system of "ultimate" significance. Individual religiosity is thus no longer a replica or approximation of an "official" model.

Secularization theory, especially privatization theory, then, can address the selective tendencies of American Catholics. Religion has little influence over the rest of society if it is relegated to the private sphere. Nor can it dictate the behavior of individuals. This is the social environment American Catholics moved into when they broke the bonds with the immigrant cultures. They had already weakened their attachment to the Church by withdrawing from the immigrant culture. The society into which they moved facilitated a weak role for, and

consequently weak attachment to, religion.

Cultural Changes: The Rise of Individualism

What kind of environment did Catholics experience afterward? The latter half of the twentieth century was a time of tremendous cultural change for American society at large. The late 1960s and the 1970s experienced a cultural change to a radical type of individualism. For the mainstream religious community, the new individualism meant a decline in membership as individuals sought to establish their own personal religions (Roof and McKinney, 1987). It also reinforced selective behavior among those who remained members of mainstream churches.

Bellah, et al.: "Sheilaism"

Bellah and his colleagues (Bellah, et al., 1985), document a new, stronger cultural emphasis on the individual self in American society than the individualism inherent in privatized religion. This new individualism appeared during the late 1960s and 1970s, the tail end of Catholic assimilation. It represented another social condition in addition to the privatized religion, in which American Catholics found themselves shortly after leaving the immigrant Church.

Bellah, et al. (1985) speak of "the therapeutic attitude" dominating American culture and especially prominent in the thinking and behavior of middle-class

Americans. This attitude emphasizes self-realization over interpersonal and societal commitment. The individual owes nothing to another person or organization unless she receives subjective satisfaction from them. Relationships are governed by one social mos: individuals must protect their self-interests by communicating their feelings and assessments of the other. Permanence in relationships and commitments cannot "be grounded in something larger than the satisfactions provided by the relationship itself" (Bellah, et al., 1985: 107). In brief, relationships are fragile; "attachment" is not valued for itself or social prescriptions requiring it, but for the personal fulfillment it might bring.

The authors point to two social consequences of the therapeutic attitude which apply to religion. First, what might be termed a macrosociological effect, is a tendency to maintain the social-structural status quo. The focus for all change rests almost exclusively on the individual. Change occurs in individuals within the structures of society, but without actually affecting them. Church members, their attention focused on their "inner selves," seek to transform themselves independently of transforming their church. This is precisely the result of selective Catholicism, as lay Catholics concentrate on maintaining their personal faiths and ignore Church structure. If the formal Church structure is to change, it will have to be

changed by the hierarchy.

Placing the emphasis for change on the individual
partially gives rise to the second consequence of the
therapeutic attitude in religion: the development of
private religions. The other contributor is American
history. Bellah, et al., like secularization theorists,
describe the history of American religion as a history of
privatization. Slowly, the degree of religious influence
began to shrink during the nineteenth century. The moral
consensus and harmony which religion sought to bestow on
colonial America became limited to a sphere unto itself.
Religion became a haven within a heartless world. The
transformation of privatized religion to private religion
began with American individualism, especially that found
among the evangelical sects, but received its fullest
expression with the advent of the therapeutic attitude.
Present day Americans pride themselves on forming their own
religious beliefs apart from the teachings of any organized
church. For Bellah, et al. (1985: 221), "this suggests the
possibility of over 220 million American religions." Thus,
they describe the individualistic religious practices of a
subject named Sheila as "Sheilaism."

Roof and McKinney: A Synthesis

Roof and McKinney (1987) synthesize the concepts of
religion's declining sphere of influence with the
development of a new culture of individualism in a detailed

historical account. They explain that private religiosity is a characteristic shared by members of all American mainstream religions. It developed as the role of religion in American culture changed during the twentieth century. The authors posit a declining influence of a common, religiously based American outlook. As dominant religious ideas and social realities diverged in the 1960s, the link between religion and culture broke. By then religion could no longer explain the events of the day nor forge a national moral consensus. Mainstream religions' inability to forge national consensus eventually resulted in their inability to forge consensus within the churches.

Up to the early twentieth century, the Protestantism of white Anglo-Saxons was the only legitimate American religion. And it dictated much of the substance of American culture. The immigrants' religions, especially Catholicism and Judaism, were deviant and membership was considered unpatriotic. During the 1920s and 1930s, Americans began to tolerate the non-WASP religions, and religious pluralism pervaded. But the link of religion and culture did not dissolve with the advent of pluralism. The exclusivist tendencies of Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism were downplayed in favor of a national "civic piety," which stressed the "more inclusive, more universal elements of national faith" (Roof and McKinney, 1987: 36). It was a "broadly based moral consensus" on such matters as

"premarital chastity, marital fidelity, the undesirability

of divorce, and traditional understandings of family life

and gender roles" (Roof and McKinney, 1987: 37). It also

included common ideals for the nation and American citizens,

including "patriotism, conformity, capitalism, hard work,

success, [and] familism" (Roof and McKinney, 1987: 28).

This civic piety was largely influenced by the Puritanical

Protestant attitudes which had previously dominated American

culture, but was widely espoused across denominational

lines.[10]

The new link between religion and culture was

inherently fragile in an increasingly complex society. In

order to have meaning for members of various faiths, the

civic piety lacked explicitly religious substance, and

conveyed more secular attitudes. Modern capitalism, in the

meantime, produced larger, more bureaucratic, and more

numerous institutions which dominated public life. In the

face of these social forces,

> the very notion of a mainstream set of values had become
> problematic. With greater institutional differentiation
> and societal complexity, the churches came to have
> little persuasive power over the bureaucratic giants.
> Increasingly the public sector was governed by a largely
> unrestricted interplay of economic forces, which seemed
> impervious to individual religious and altruistic
> motives. Indeed, in a world of huge economic
> conglomerates and multinational corporations, it

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[10]The rise of religious pluralism itself had an effect
on American Catholics, according to Roof and McKinney
(1987). I deal with this aspect of the American Catholic
experience below in the discussion of the institutional
changes within the church.

appeared unlikely that religion could sustain any deep consensus of faith and values (Roof and McKinney, 1987: 29).

The civic piety, however delicate, survived through the 1950s because of other prevailing social situations. Post-war affluence endorsed the optimism shared across the denominations. Furthermore, the Cold War validated a need for shared definitions of patriotism and national consensus. Mainstream churches, the channels of the shared national "faith," thrived.

The bond between religion and culture broke in the 1960s and 1970s when social events contradicted the religious context. Reasons for optimism and national consensus disappeared with the Vietnam War, urban rioting, and poverty's stubborn prevalence despite massive welfare efforts. Americans, already facing an economically complex society, were confronted with contradiction. America had serious problems and the traditional national faith seemed unable to respond. The Watergate scandal was the final "precipitating event" to break the influence of the civic piety. "By that time the old civil faith embodying national ideals and messianic conceptions of America as an instrument of divine purpose had lost much of its force" (Roof and McKinney, 1987: 28). Not only were the problems too complex, they defied the shared definitions of society.

The disconnection of religion and culture led to another dominant twentieth-century characteristic,

individualism. Without shared ideals, the individual must
search for ideals and meaning himself. Roof and McKinney
describe individuals' search for meaning as a "quest" for
self-fulfillment. And the affluence of the 1960s and early
1970s allowed Americans to pursue their quest with great
intensity. Subsistence was not a problem for most people.
These individualistic quests for meaning touched religious
organizations. As common ideals declined so did the ability
of mainstream religions, a source of those values, to
reforge them. Believers emphasized the primacy of the self
over institutions and socially ascribed statuses. This
"reinforced the view that religious institutions should
serve individuals and not vice-versa" (Roof and McKinney,
1987: 50). It also reinforced the cultural attitude of
voluntarism, that a person adhere to a particular belief
because by choice, and not because of family or ethnic group
background. In short, after the 1960s and 1970s:

> Americans generally hold a respectful attitude toward
> religion, but also they increasingly regard it as a
> matter of personal choice or preference. Today choice
> means more than simply having an option among religious
> alternatives; it involves religion as an option itself
> and opportunity to draw selectively off a variety of
> traditions in the pursuit of the self... Questions of
> authority, discipline, practice, and common life often
> seem foreign, or at least secondary (Roof and McKinney,
> 1987: 40).

By 1978, Gallup polls showed that 81 percent of Americans
agreed that an individual should "arrive at his or her own
religious beliefs independent of a church or synagogue."
That percentage broke down into 71 percent of church members

and 86 percent of non-members (Roof and McKinney, 1987: 57).

Conclusion

During the twentieth century, American Catholics grew apart from the immigrant cultures which centered around the Church. Their socioeconomic and social-psychological needs for attachment to the Church diminished. They now belonged to secularized mainstream society which itself had privatized religion. In this environment, the force of religion had diminished to rhetoric. American Catholics became like other mainstream American believers: "religious consumers," picking and choosing, according to their own criteria, among the items they liked. This tendency was all the more exacerbated when American culture spawned a radical individualism in the 1960s and 1970s which asserted the primacy of individual judgment over institutional prescriptions.

This chapter dealt with the social sources of selective Catholicism. But the assimilation of American Catholics into the mainstream, secularized society explains only part of the phenomenon, namely the rise of "pick and choose" believing. These changes do not explain how the hierarchical, authoritarian Church permits Catholics who so behave to remain active members. Thus the focus of this review must turn from the society to the religious organization itself.

The next two chapters discuss both how the Church came

to accommodate selective Catholicism, and how institutional changes imposed by American society and from within the organization actually encouraged selective Catholicism's development.

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE: VOLUNTARIZATION

FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT

Up to now I have spoken primarily of the collectivity
of the laity. But the Catholic Church also represents a
highly structured bureaucracy with officers (the hierarchy)
serving as its leaders. The existence of this aspect of the
Church, which I've referred to as the "institutional
Church," is difficult to overlook. The Roman Catholic
Church is an institutional, financial, and political
reality. The Pope and the Roman Curia promulgate official
dogmatic and moral teachings. The American bishops draft
position statements on nuclear war and the economy in the
name of the American Church. Nonetheless, when discussing
the detached state of the laity, the possibility of
overlooking the institution increases. Since the laity are
ignoring the hierarchy, the temptation exists for the
analyst to do so. One must remember that no matter how
detached the laity may be, the institution is a social
reality. Thus, there must have been changes in the
institution which permitted the practice of selective
Catholicism.

The Catholic institution has been as subject to change
in the twentieth century as individual American Catholics.
This has occurred both in the ways in which American society

defined the Church and in the ways the Church defined
itself. The former occurred early in the twentieth century
when the dominant society stopped treating the Catholic
Church as deviant. American society bestowed upon the
Church equal status with mainstream Protestantism and with
Judaism. In the eyes of American society, the Church could
legitimately claim to be the Church no longer. It was one
among equals (Roof and McKinney, 1987). The latter change
occurred in the 1960s when the Church turned its attention
upon itself during the Second Vatican Council. The Council
officially endorsed the equality of the laity while
reinforcing the hierarchical status quo.

These changes occurred simultaneously with the
weakening of individuals' attachment and ascriptive ties to
the Church. They represented an organizational change from
a total to a voluntary organization. Thus, just when
various social changes influenced American Catholics to
attribute their Church membership to individual choice
rather than ascriptive ties (Roof and McKinney, 1987), the
Church itself became a voluntary organization. The first
change, bestowed by the American society, externally
voluntarized Catholicism for those who moved away from the
immigrant communities in the first third of the century.
They could approach Catholicism as one choice among many.
The second change, Vatican II, did not in itself voluntarize
the institution. It was, rather, the laity's selective

interpretation of new definitions of their role in the
Church which internally voluntarized the Church for the
laity, if not in the eyes of the hierarchy. After Vatican
II, American lay people felt that they could legitimately
practice "pick and choose" believing within the Catholic
Church.

"Denominationalization"

Economic and demographic changes during the twentieth
century assimilated Catholic lay people to American society.
At the same time, the developing tolerance of religious
pluralism assimilated the Catholic institution. As noted
above, the religious, if not the cultural, hegemony of
white, Anglo-Saxon Protestantism gave way to tolerance of
Catholicism, Judaism, and other mainstream Protestant faiths
in the 1920s and 1930s. The observance of "E Pluribus Unum"
stretched to include different religions (Roof and McKinney,
1987)[11].

Tolerance of several religions requires not only
mutual respect but accommodation. Many Americans therefore
downplayed the exclusivist teachings of their respective

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[11]Hennesey (1981: 235) describes the high rate of
participation by American Catholics in World War I (about
one million of the over 4.9 million soldiers) as "their
first extended experience of inter-religious cooperation."
Catholics' participation in the war may have played a role
in Protestants' acceptance of them. In addition, the
federal limits on immigration speeded acceptance of
Catholics. Distrust of immigrants had often caused tension
between Catholics and Protestants (Hudson, 1981).

religions. As a condition for their acceptance, American
religions had "to accept coexistence with others and... give
up claims of authority over them" (Roof and McKinney, 1987:
34).[12] The newly legitimized faiths lost their status as
"religions" and were "denominationalized" (Roof and
McKinney, 1987: 34). Eventually they were accepted
equally.[13] Belonging to one was, apart from socioeconomic
and ethnic differences, much the same as belonging to
another. The Catholic hierarchy may have continued to
assert its claims to exclusive truth, but such assertions
were perceived as unrealistic by the Americanized laity.
Thus the hierarchy and the laity defined the Church
differently.

Vatican II

These differences in definitions of the Church would
continue even after an ecumenical council. In the midst of
the socioeconomic, demographic, and cultural changes, the
global Church's hierarchy subjected the institution to
intense scrutiny and change. The Second Vatican Council

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[12]This of course applied to those religions seeking
equality as a mainstream religion. Religious sects and
ethnic religious groups would not have downplayed
exclusivist teachings because they did not wish to be
accepted by the dominant culture (Finke, 1988). Thus, some
ethnic parishes may not have been "denominationalized."

[13]Although tolerance of Catholicism may have begun in
the 1920s and 1930s, much overt anti-Catholic prejudice
persisted through the 1950s to the election of a Catholic
President.

reformed the liturgy, renamed some of the sacraments to emphasize different theological aspects, and changed the way people looked at the Church. It emphasized ecumenism for the first time, thus perhaps internally legitimizing, or at least accepting, the Church's equality with other religions. Practices in effect for a millennium were changed (Hennesey, 1981). Gallup and Castelli (1987: 1) call the Second Vatican Council "the dominant fact in twentieth-century Catholicism."

There have traditionally been two ways of viewing the impact of Vatican II on American Catholics: "One faction argues that the Council ruined the Church, and the other that it saved the Church from disaster a little later" (Hoge, 1986: 291). Within each perspective, I feel, lies part of the explanation as to how the Council both influenced the development of selective Catholicism and influenced selective Catholics to choose to remain active in the Church.

Vatican II as Damaging the Church

Exemplifying the former criticism, conservative Catholics argued that the sheer number and rapidity of changes instituted by the Council angered and alienated Catholics, who turned away from the Church as a result (Greeley, McCready and McCourt, 1976). Another example of this viewpoint is Kelley (1972). For Kelley, Vatican II modernized and thrust the Church's rituals and customs into

the religious mainstream. This for Kelley is the beginning of the end for any religion. Thus the Catholic declines in the late 1960s and the 1970s are directly attributable to the modernizing effects of Vatican II.

But a slightly modified viewpoint that Vatican II damaged the Church contends that the hierarchy's failure to follow through with expected reforms of Vatican II spelled disaster for the Church (Fichter, 1977; Dulles, 1981; Kim, 1980; and Osborne, 1969). Vatican II prescribed both personal, spiritual reform and structural, institutional reform. Osborne (1969) distinguished between these different levels of reform by terming them "religious" and "ecclesiastical" reform, respectively. "Religious" reform refers to change in individuals: in the ways they think and behave. "Ecclesiastic" reform is change in the structure of the Church. According to Fichter (1977), it was widely assumed that the Council's intent was to spark "religious" reform by effecting "ecclesiastic" reform. But after the Council, the institutional Church facilitated only personal "religious" reform. Fichter (1977: 157) states that

> the original expectations [that "religious" and "ecclesiastic" reform occur simultaneously] have diminished, and the enthusiasm has waned, because the promised [structural] adaptation has not occurred, or because where it was attempted the pace of change was extremely slow.

After Vatican II Catholics found themselves unable "to form an image of the church into which they can plausibly fit what they think they ought to be doing" (Dulles, 1981: 10).

Kim (1980) and Osborne (1969) attribute the declines in Catholic attendance during the 1960s and 1970s to the fact that revolutionary changes in American Catholics' ways of thinking and believing were not accompanied by similarly revolutionary changes in Church structure. The hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church translates into upward accountability. Priests are accountable to their bishops and not, at least formally, to their parishioners. This theoretically allows priests to continue to propagate the teachings of the Church hierarchy, regardless of the popularity with lay Catholics.[14] And theoretically, lay Catholics who disagree could leave (Kim, 1980). Those Catholics strongly committed to pluralism as a method of operation within the Church left when they found the rigid structures of the Church would not facilitate it.

Although each of these authors recognizes that the hierarchy failed to follow through with proposed changes, all but Dulles (1981) place too much emphasis on the hierarchy's actions after the Council. <u>Vatican II did redefine the Church, but it left the door to traditional, hierarchical understandings of the Church open.</u> For Dulles (1981), the negative reaction to the hierarchy's failure to act according to the new definitions is as much a result of

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[14]Two studies (Greeley, 1973; Leege, 1988) have shown that Kim (1980) and Osborne's (1969) understanding of the priests' role in Church teaching is incorrect. I address these studies in the next chapter.

the laity's narrow reading of Vatican II as the hierarchy's narrow implementation of it. On one hand, the Council defined the Church as the egalitarian "People of God." For instance, The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium) states:

> The whole body of the faithful who have an anointing that comes from the holy one (cf. 1 Jn. 2:20 and 27) cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural appreciation of the faith (sensus fidei) of the whole people, when, "from the bishops to the last of the faithful" they manifest a universal consent in matters of faith and morals. (Quoted in Flannery, 1975: 363.)

There is a clear sense in the above passage that the laity share in discerning matters of faith together with the hierarchy. It conveys meanings of co-responsibility and equality. Furthermore, many other conciliar statements endorsed the primacy of lay people's individual consciences in forming their beliefs.

On the other hand, the Council Fathers restate the primacy of the hierarchy over the laity in matters of faith and morals, and reassert that they "differ essentially and not only in degree" (in Flannery, 1975: 361). Another example can be found in the same text in which the Council stresses collegiality among all the bishops:

> The college or body of bishops has... no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, as its head, whose primatial authority, let it be added, over all, whether pastors or faithful, remains in its integrity. For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, namely, and as pastor of the entire Church, has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered. The order of bishops is the

> successor to the college of apostles in their role as
> teachers and pastors, and in it the apostolic college is
> perpetuated. Together with their head, the Supreme
> Pontiff, and never apart from him, they have supreme and
> full authority over the universal Church; but this power
> cannot be exercised without the agreement of the Roman
> Pontiff. (Quoted in Flannery, 1975: 375.)

This, although more moderate in tone, is more than vaguely

similar to the 1870 Dogmatic Constitution of Papal

Infallibility from Vatican I:

> Hence we teach and declare that by appointment of our
> Lord the Roman Church possesses a superiority of
> ordinary power over all other Churches, and that this
> power of jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff, which is
> truly episcopal is immediate; to which all, of whatever
> rite and dignity, both pastors and faithful, both
> individually and collectively, are bound by their duty
> of hierarchical subordination and true obedience, to
> submit, not only in matters which pertain to faith and
> morals, but also in those that pertain to the discipline
> and government of the Church throughout the world, so
> that the Church of Christ may be one flock under one
> supreme pastor through the preservation of unity both of
> communion and profession of the same faith with the
> Roman Pontiff. This is the teaching of Catholic truth,
> from which no one can deviate without loss of faith and
> of salvation. (Quoted in Neuner, Roos, and Rahner, 1967:
> 224-225.)

Dulles (1981) recognizes Vatican II's dual emphasis on a new

definition of the Church and a redefinition of the

hierarchical status quo. Dulles feels that progressive lay

people focused exclusively on the new definitions and

assumed that everyone else did as well. The hierarchy, on

the other hand, focused on the old. Each faction accused

the other of misinterpreting and, in Dulles' (1981: 14)

words "contradicting the Council." The result was a

polarization and an alienation of many lay Catholics

resulting in drops in attendance, religious vocations, and

acceptance of Church teachings (Dulles, 1981).

In the absence of structural change, American Catholics pursued personal religious renewal. They believed that if the Church was not going to meet their expectations, they would have to meet their own. Hence the growth of lay movements emphasizing personal spirituality (the charismatic and Cursillo movements, for example) at the same time many Catholics were loosening their attachments with the institutional Church (Dulles, 1981).

Vatican II as Mitigating Damage

A second view of Vatican II's effects contends that the Council did not create a crisis but attenuated one. For Hoge (1986), the rapid acceptance of Vatican II's emphasis on collegiality and consensus occurred because American Catholics were waiting for it. He states that the Council legitimized and directed changes in the Church, pressure for which had been building for many years. Although he does not explicitly subscribe to either of the two viewpoints on Vatican II's effects stated above, his model of the dam and the river seems to convey that Vatican II saved the American Church from later disaster. Had it not released the pent-up energy, the institutional dam may have burst under the pressure of the lay desire for change, resulting in an even greater abandonment of the Church.

Greeley, McCready and McCourt (1976) attempted to test the effects of Vatican II empirically. For them, the

"dominant fact of twentieth-century Catholicism" was not
Vatican II but the 1968 papal encyclical Humanae Vitae,
which reaffirmed the Church's disapproval of artificial
contraception. They found that satisfaction with Vatican II
slightly mediated the declines in religious devotion which
correlated with lay rejection of the encyclical. In their
model, Greeley, McCready and McCourt predict that had
Vatican II not occurred, religious declines after 1968 would
have been greater. They conclude that Vatican II did not
contribute to the decline by building up hopes for change.
Catholics' prior use of oral contraceptives would have meant
rejection of Humanae Vitae and declines in religious
devotion with or without the Council. Vatican II somewhat
eased the decline, allowing some Catholics to practice birth
control while participating in the Church.

Conclusion

I suggest that Dulles (1981) and Greeley, McCready and
McCourt (1976) each tell part of the story of Vatican II's
effect on American Catholics. Dulles emphasizes
differential interpretations of Vatican II, but Greeley,
McCready and McCourt's perspective of the Council's effect
may be more realistic. Those aspects of Vatican II which
appealed to the laity, specifically equality with the
hierarchy and an emphasis on conscience, may have prevented
more Catholics from leaving.   Those who voted with their
feet may have been the most attached. They could not

tolerate a hierarchy which differed from their views of the Church. For those less attached, Vatican II may have prevented further defections. It offered the American laity what they were ready to hear (Hoge, 1986) and institutionalized change in the (previously) changeless Church (Kim, 1980). Their interpretation of Vatican II therefore was enough to counter what many didn't like in the Church. That it also strived to maintain the hierarchical status quo and that the hierarchy ignored a new emphasis of collegiality and quasi-democratic reforms was probably irrelevant to less attached lay people. Having joined the American culture and placing their religion at the periphery of their social lives, it was possible to concentrate on the elements with which they agreed and anticipate change of those with which they didn't.

This scenario may represent selective Catholicism's beginning. In the social context, American Catholics were just joining the American mainstream, in which most church members were "religious consumers," picking and choosing among the items they liked. Catholics picked and chose among what Vatican II had to offer.

This selective attraction to Vatican II itself may have reinforced further selective Catholicism after the dawn of radical individualism in the late 1960s. The laity's stress of their equality with the hierarchy and the primacy of individual conscience, which they perceived that Vatican

II bestowed, may have endorsed an independence from the hierarchy in the pursuit of private religion. In other words, the laity's interpretation of Vatican II may have led them to believe that Catholicism permitted, practically and legally, private religions. (The sociological axiom is that a situation which is perceived as real is real.) If the hierarchy taught otherwise, the laity could retort with their understanding of the Council. Individualistic believing was the American norm, and had Vatican II not facilitated it, even through selective lay interpretation, most American Catholics probably would have turned elsewhere.

In brief, "denominationalization," along with other social changes, made Catholicism a voluntary organization externally. Catholicism was perceived as no better than any other mainstream religion in America. The internal voluntarization originally sparked by Vatican II encouraged American Catholics to choose Catholicism over other religions, by allowing them to maintain their selective method of participating in it.

THE ROLE OF THE PARISH

The paradox of selective Catholicism is the laity's loyalty, which they express in the form of steady local participation in it. This occurs for two reasons. On the one hand, Catholics encounter tolerant parish priests who espouse many of the same attitudes as they. Greeley (1973) found that by 1970, 71 percent of active diocesan priests rejected the principle that all artificial contraception is wrong. This represented an increase of 11 percent since the conclusion of the Council in 1965. Meanwhile, the hierarchy remained virtually unchanged as only 25 percent dissented in 1965 and 30 percent in 1970. Leege (1988) found that parish priests are as tolerant, and perhaps even more tolerant, than lay people of variations in lay behavior and attitudes, except for irregular Mass attendance. To put it bluntly, he discovered that parish priests generally tolerate selective Catholicism.

Leege's (1988) explanation for priests' tolerance lies in their location of professional leadership in the parish organization. They are trained to teach the Church's precepts, but their job is to offer the sacrament of forgiveness to all, no matter what precepts are "disobeyed." From their position, they may believe that those who break the Church's precepts are more in need of the Church's

forgiveness than those who don't.

On the other hand, the parishes acted as the medium through which Vatican II prevented further withdrawals from the Church. They allowed the laity to actively pursue democratic and participatory ideals they valued and felt Vatican II espoused. Post-Vatican II parishes instituted participatory liturgies, parish councils, and a multitude of new non-worship programs (Gremillion and Castelli, 1987). In fact, the degree to which a parish establishes Vatican II reforms is directly related to parishioner participation (Cieslak, 1984)[15] and satisfaction (Searle and Leege, 1985b). The northeastern U.S. dioceses, whose parishes institute conciliar reforms less than others, have the lowest attendance rates (Roof and McKinney, 1987).

After Vatican II, most parishes allowed the laity to play an active role in their affairs. As a result, the Notre Dame Study found that almost half the laity now participate in a non-worship activity. Pastors indicated to the Notre Dame researchers that lay participation in worship and other programs is the key to parish vitality. And 30 percent of U.S. parishes now employ a lay person as a pastoral minister (Gremillion and Castelli, 1987). These

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[15]Cieslak (1984) found that the relationship between Vatican II reforms and parishioner participation held for small and medium-sized parishes, but was much weaker in large parishes. He reasons that large parishes by their nature have many programs to appeal to parishioners' various tastes, whether or not they directly respond to Vatican II.

changes both result from and encourage lay enthusiasm about the parish (Cieslak, 1984).

The conciliar reforms which probably most encouraged the laity to remain active in the parish are those affecting the Mass. The Notre Dame Study revealed a "liturgical smogasboard" (sic.) (Gremillion and Castelli, 1987: 132) within U.S. parishes, a pluralism to appeal to different tastes. This has encouraged most active Catholics to remain in their neighborhood parish rather than seek out an alternative.

Organizational Consequences

As American Catholics were assimilated into mainstream American culture, two distinct visions of the Church evolved. At the bottom, "Americanized" lay people began to favor a more democratic and participatory Church. At the top, the hierarchy continued to favor the authoritarian structure. Vatican II perpetuated this by simultaneously defining the Church as the People of God sharing responsibility, and as the hierarchical structure in which responsibility and power remain at the top. The laity focused on the Council's new definitions of the Church and the hierarchy stressed its maintenance of the old.

The combined effects of selective Catholicism and conciliar reforms made these dual visions reality. While selective Catholicism both results from and signifies detachment from the Church, Vatican II's potential for

democracy and lay participation prevented many Catholics from detaching completely. Assimilation, individualism, and a selective understanding of Vatican II influenced American Catholics to deny the Church's teaching authority in favor of individual conscience. But many parishes, through participatory liturgies and programs, facilitated their post-conciliar visions of the Church. This explains selective Catholics' continued participation and loyalty despite their rejection of many of the Church's teachings.

The Church as a social organization, then, has two distinct levels. There are now two Catholicisms: (1) the institutional Church consisting of the hierarchy, and (2) the relatively autonomous parishes consisting of lay people who believe and participate selectively. Selective Catholics literally don't care about what the Pope and the bishops might think or teach (Greeley and Durkin, 1984). Their rejection of the hierarchy's teachings severed their attachment with the international Church. But they are still somewhat attached to the Church at the parish level because there they can participate in liturgy, activities, and parish administration as they prefer.

This description of the contemporary Church must, of course, be qualified. First, although immigrant Catholics' lives centered much more on the parish, there was no gulf between the parish and the Church's teaching authority. The Catholic Church from the Reformation to the First Vatican

Council closely approximated the Weberian ideal-type of bureaucracy (Dann, 1976).[16] In the U.S., this bureaucratic character probably persisted beyond Vatican I through the first half of the twentieth century, as uniformity of belief and practice offered protection against the dominant culture.[17] Being a Catholic meant "assent" to the will of the hierarchy. The laity mostly accepted the beliefs, attitudes, and practices the hierarchy prescribed (Dann, 1976). In the parishes, lay participation was minimal (especially in the Latin Mass), pastors controlled the administration, and priests generally did not disagree with the hierarchy (Greeley, 1973).

Second, contemporary Catholics' "attachment" to the parish must be understood within the context of private religion. Selective Catholics' participation in the church includes little religious interaction with fellow believers. If the Church occupies only the limited private sphere, there is no need for strong religious community. The church's privatized position of non-influence among its members' institutional commitments discourages much interaction among them. In brief, the importance of interacting with fellow members of the institution has no

[16]According to Dann (1976), bureaucratic organization is actually an aberration within the history of Catholicism. Prior to the Reformation, pluralism was more often the rule.

[17]This is often one argument used to explain the ideal-type bureaucratic nature of the Catholic Church in Poland, as well as other Eastern Block nations.

priority among selective Catholics because the institutional church has no strong priority in their lives.

That active Catholics lack strong attachment to their parishes became clear from the Notre Dame Study. Most Catholics have few close friends who belong to the same parish but have many friends who are not Catholic (Gremillion and Castelli, 1987). This is significant since informal association among fellow members encourages attachment to a voluntary organization (Lipset, Trow and Coleman, 1956). Furthermore, American Catholics have infrequent contact with the pastor, and, as I stated in Chapter II, feel the parish does not meet many of their "social needs" (Gremillion and Castelli, 1987). As for participation in the Mass, Searle and Leege (1985b: 6) conclude that

> the liturgy does a reasonably good job of providing most Catholics with a recognizable place of encounter with God, even if it is not always clear that it is an encounter with God shared corporately, i.e. in the body of the church.

In another study, Utendorf (1985) discovered that primary motivations for attending lay ministry training programs are individualistic in nature. Dixon and Hoge (1979) discovered that suburban lay people ranked individualistic needs (education and counseling) as the highest priorities of the parish. Their top communal priority ranked fifth out of twenty-one. Finally, the parish structure itself may lead to weak attachment, since "as parishes offer more programs,

parish life tends to become more fragmented" (Gremillion and Castelli, 1987: 70).

To complete the circle, the selective nature of believing, which in part results from institutional detachment, itself further discourages interaction. As Roof and McKinney (1987: 56) state,

> one could say that the enemy of church life in this country is not so much "secularity" as it is "do-it-yourself religiosity." The latter fosters a highly personalized mode of faith which undercuts the integrality of the church and synagogue.

"Do-it-yourself religiosity," or selective Catholicism, denies a commonality of belief among believers. With individuals forging their own faiths, there is little in common to share. Selective Catholicism, then, represents religious individualism not only in the selecting of church teachings to follow, but in the lack of interaction among its members.

In brief, actively participating in a parish no longer implies strong attachment to the Church. It therefore does not indicate uniform acceptance of the hierarchy's teachings. The laity's participation today differs from their participation in the immigrant Church. Most parishes no longer serve as a communications medium for the hierarchy. They serve, rather, primarily as a medium for instituting the changes of Vatican II and for the laity's pursuit of selective Catholicism. Participation in the parish may be solid, but the laity participate because they

choose to (it appeals to them) and on condition that
ultimate authority rests with the individual. The hierarchy
today, unlike in the immigrant Church, is by and large
separated from the parish. In this context, selective
Catholics' participation and loyalty to the Church does not
seem so much a paradox. As Greeley (1977: 128) states, it
is a loyalty "transformed" from that of their grandparents.

The Future of the Catholic Organization

A question which lingers is whether this
organizational scheme will survive in light of recent
Vatican "crackdowns" on theological, moral, and
administrative "unorthodoxy." Can the hierarchy re-make the
parish into its medium? Because the question concerns the
Church as an organization, the answer lies as much in the
sociology of voluntary organizations as in secularization
and culture theory.

A classic work in that field which may shed light on
the question is Lipset, Trow and Coleman (1956). Their
subject was the International Typographical Union (ITU), a
labor union whose locals at the bottom were relatively
autonomous from the central administration at top. Most
labor unions, generally, manifest Robert Michels' "Iron Law
of Oligarchy," formally espousing democratic processes but
actually experiencing almost total rule by a few long-term
leaders. The ITU, however, institutionalized a two-party,
democratic system of rule. No party or group of leaders

held power for a substantial period of time, often because
of opposition from the locals.

My characterization of the Church resembles the ITU.
In both, the local organizations stand relatively autonomous
from the central administration. Now, there are
considerable differences between the Catholic Church and the
ITU. Most obviously, the Church never was democratic and
its structure of sacramental ministry may not permit
democracy in the future. Furthermore, ITU members associate
with each other more frequently both formally and informally
than American Catholics, thus having a greater interest in
the union's administration than Catholics have in the
Church's. But a comparative analysis of the two
organizations is possible in asmuchas Lipset, Trow, and
Coleman studied reasons for the lack of oligarchy as well as
the presence of democracy in the ITU. The common reference
points are the characteristics shared by each which resist
oligarchy. Only after determining by this comparison which
factors led to the decline of the Church's oligarchical
influence, can we turn to the question of the Church's
organizational future.

Absence of Oligarchy in the ITU

Most labor unions, according to Lipset, Trow and
Coleman, were organized by a few leaders who were able to
maintain oligarchy after the unions' founding. The entities
further down the organization are kept subordinate to the

central administration. The ITU was literally built "from the bottom up." Its origin as a federation of smaller printers' groups prevented the development of oligarchy at the outset. Throughout its history, the local organizations have not subordinated their power to the central administration.

Much of the reason for oligarchy's continued absence in the ITU is the status of the printing occupation, both in terms of socioeconomic position and occupational authority. From its inception in the late Middle Ages, the printing occupation identified itself as a skilled craft, and in modern society as a profession. Those who do perceive themselves as working-class consider printing as the "most intellectual of the manual trades" (Lipset, Trow and Coleman, 1956: 26). Printers also enjoy a great deal of freedom from the authority of both shop and union managers. They are free to conduct themselves in the shop as they see fit. The status of the printing trade overall creates a narrow status gap between union leaders and the rank and file. As a result, rank and file members do not perceive much of a difference between themselves and the leadership, and the leaders lack a status motivation to retain their positions. For Lipset, Trow and Coleman, equality of members and leaders discourages oligarchy.

ITU members engage in a number of activities with other printers, mostly leisure in nature, which are not

directly related to union activities. The significance of
these "secondary organizations" is their autonomy from the
union adminstration, their ability to arouse members'
interest in the union's political arena independently of the
union leadership, and their ability to training rank and
file members in the art of leadership. The high degree of
member interest which results prevents the union from being
able to establish oligarchy. A highly involved ITU rank and
file stands as an obstacle to the leaders' effectively
establishing an oligarchy. Thus, For Lipset, Trow and
Coleman, the members' involvement in secondary activities
prevents oligarchy.

The Laity's Similarities with the ITU Printers

Three of the characteristics of the printer's
community which Lipset, Trow and Coleman attribute to
discouraging oligarchy in the ITU exist among the Catholic
laity.

Like the ITU, the parishes literally have been built,
or more properly rebuilt, "from the ground up." The laity
have voluntarily established many of the programs in the
parish. And their newfound participation in worship and
parish governance has significantly shaped those areas.
Thus the autonomy of the parish was very much the laity's
doing. Because of the parish's autonomy the hierarchy has
little power over the laity. The question to address is
whether this diminished power of the hierarchy can be

sustained as the absence of oligarchy has been sustained in
the ITU. The answer, based on Lipset, Trow and Coleman's
analysis, is yes.

Lipset, Trow and Coleman (1956) asserted that equality
between members and leaders of a voluntary organization
discourages oligarchy. The status gap between the laity and
the hierarchy has narrowed in a number of ways. American
Catholics' socioeconomic status has increased during the
twentieth century. A significant aspect of their upward
mobility has been their attainments of higher levels of
education. The educated laity now perceive themselves as
competent to rely on their own religious judgments. Another
aspect of that mobility has been an increase in managerial
and professional, or "self-directed" occupations. Vatican
II also played a role in narrowing the status gap, by
declaring in many instances that the laity, the clergy, and
the hierarchy were equal. In brief, the hierarchy cannot
effectively regain its position of influence over American
Catholics' beliefs and behaviors because they cannot prove
their superiority over lay individuals' own judgments.

Furthermore, American Catholics' participation in
parish activities is similar to ITU members' participation
in "secondary organizations" independent of the union. Most
parish organizations exist with no reference to the
institutional Church in Rome. Some, such as organizations
for homosexual Catholics, even exist against the Vatican's

wishes. By participating in these activities, Lipset, Trow and Coleman would argue, the laity's interest in the Church rises. Although that interest cannot manifest itself in voting, as in the ITU, this heightened interest might pressure the hierarchy to back down and accept the laity's definition of how the Church is to exist. For instance, Gallup and Castelli (1987: 177-178) assert that the American bishops have "tolerated widespread internal dissent as a means of keeping the Church intact" and that "by the sheer numbers in which they have adopted this style of loyal opposition, [the laity] have forced the American bishops to accept their new definitions of Catholicism." The hierarchy in the Vatican can try to reaffirm its definitions and methods of operating the Church. But the laity, according to this analysis, are unlikely to yield. Thus, the Roman hierarchy may be faced with having to permanently accept the laity's ways of doing things, or losing considerable numbers of lay Catholics for whom choosing a new church will not be a practical or personal dilemma.

CONCLUSION: SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The purpose of this paper has been to examine a new way of conceptualizing the Catholic Church in the United States. The selective Catholicism concept suggests that, as a result of many different changes in the twentieth century, American Catholics ignore the Church's teaching authority despite participating in its local "branches," namely the parishes. I emphasized in the introduction that it was a concept which had received only cursory attention, being mentioned almost as an aside in many discussions of American Catholics. I examined the definitions of selective Catholicism, as gleaned from the literature, and spent the bulk of my discussion analyzing its causes and its effects on the Catholic organization.

Recent surveys of American Catholics empirically indicate the existence of selective Catholicism. Both active and inactive Catholics often differ with the teachings of the hierarchy. When individual beliefs do conform with hierarchical prescriptions, it is because individual judgments allow them to, not because of any sense of obedience. These surveys also demonstrate that Mass attendance rates are recovering from the declines of the 1960s and 1970s, which suggests that differences of opinion with the hierarchy no longer cause Catholics to leave the

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Church.   Both social and ecclesiastical changes have caused
Catholics to ignore the hierarchy while still participating
actively in the Church at the local level.

The literature dealing with American Catholics
suggests that a primary cause of selective Catholicism has
been the assimilation of American lay people into the
dominant culture.   One specific effect of that assimilation
has been the laity's exposure to the cultural forces of
privatized religion and radical individualism.   This was a
dominant factor in distancing American Catholics from the
Church.   Empirical research, especially the Notre Dame
study, has demonstrated that contemporary American Catholics
indeed practice private religion.

At the same time, voluntarizing changes within the
Church not only encouraged Catholics to choose Catholicism
as their religion, but allowed them to practice selective
Catholicism.   Vatican II facilitated a new understanding of
the Church as internally legitimizing selective Catholicism,
and it also allowed for more participatory and democratic
lay involvement in the local parishes.   As a result, the
Church now consists of two distinct levels: the hierarchical
institution and the local parishes.

Finally, I have predicted that selective Catholicism
will continue into the future, even if the hierarchy insists
on reasserting the teaching authority it enjoyed in the
immigrant Church.   In the event the hierarchy succeeds in

doing this, selective Catholicism will cease only because selective Catholics will join some other religion.

In light of my assertion that this concept has received inadequate attention, the task is now to propose future study of the concept as well as my arguments surrounding it. The next step is empirical investigation of selective Catholicism and the hypotheses implied in this paper. Regarding the former, I suggest the task for sociologists of religion is to survey lay Catholics to determine the patterns of selective Catholicism. Regarding the latter, I suggest the task is to observe the causal line of events which I've hypothesized lead to selective Catholicism.

Types of Selective Catholicism

A dominant theme in the literature about American Catholics is that they are a heterogeneous population about whom universal generalizations are difficult to establish. This paper has attempted to do precisely that. In such an introduction to a concept, a detailed analysis of variations of selective Catholicism has not been possible. The questions of detail remain, however. For example, is there a "scale" of selective Catholicism, a continuum from low to high, on which to place Catholics? The Notre Dame study found that Catholics felt there were some topics which the hierarchy could legitimately address, such as international poverty. They did not grant the hierarchy such legitimacy

to speak on other areas closer to individual behavior, such as sexuality issues. I have suggested that this makes little difference, since in the context of privatized religion ultimate authority lies with the individual. But this remains to be proven. Are there some areas of moral discourse in which the laity are more likely to accept the hierarchy's teachings on the basis of their authority. More to the point, which Catholics are more likely to accept which teachings of the hierarchy, if any, on the basis of its authority?

An interesting element of that investigation will be the variance according to parish. The Notre Dame studies revealed that "there is more consensus within parish than within demographic groupings" (Leege, 1987a: 3). Since selective Catholics participate heavily in the parishes, it would be revealing to see what kinds of parish might contain different degrees of selective Catholicism. From there, more complex theorizing as to the relationship between lay Catholics and their parishes would be possible.

The goal of this investigation would be a model of the Church's lower component, the collection of parishes, according to the style of selective Catholicism. Dann (1976; 1978) proposed a model of "belonging" which placed Catholics within a matrix according to their mode of relating to and interacting with the Church. A model based on selective Catholicism could be constructed if certain

patterns of selective behavior were discovered. Dann's
model allowed for infinite variations in belonging,
according to an individual's ranking on the various
criteria. A selective Catholicism model of the Church would
have to allow the same thing, since the concept in question
is a form of individualism.

Testing the Causal Line: Hispanics

This paper has proposed a causal explanation for the
development of selective Catholicism. Many changes among
American Catholics directly and indirectly, through
institutional detachment, led to its development. As
American Catholics experienced socioeconomic and demographic
changes, their need for the Church as a protector
diminished. Their attachments to the Church therefore
diminished, making them less likely to feel obligated to
obey the Church's teaching authority. These changes also
thrust them into the mainstream American culture, in which
religion was privatized. As Catholics "became American,"
they too privatized their religion, limiting its influence
to a private sphere of their social circles. From that
sphere, the hierarchy could not influence the rest of their
lives. And as a further consequence, American Catholics
became "religious consumers." The radical individualism
which started in the late 1960s, reinforced their
consumerist behavior, further distancing their decision-
making from the influence of the hierarchy. What has kept

them involved in the Church has been the parishes;
adaptation to certain reforms of Vatican II, as well as
parish priests' tolerance for selective Catholicism.

In order to test this hypothesis, the social scientist
would have to devise a way to test the effects of these
social changes on a group of Catholics. The problem is that
for most Catholics, these changes have already occurred.
One could compare empirical analyses from earlier in the
century with those of today. But a more beneficial
alternative would be to observe a group of immigrant
Catholics over time as they "become American," and
experience the same social forces as previous immigrant
groups. Fortunately such a group may exist in the Hispanic
population.

Unfortunately, this suggestion may not be as simple as
it appears on the surface. For one thing, Gallup and
Castelli (1987: 142) found that in many ways Hispanic
Catholics have "curiously loose institutional attachments."
The researcher needs to determine why that is so. Is it a
result of a poor response by the American Church to their
needs? If so, it may be only a matter of time before the
Church responds adequately to increase their attachments.
Time is one luxury the researcher may have, as the influx of
Hispanic immigrants does not appear to end any time soon.

Furthermore, the process of assimilation among
Hispanics may not occur as rapidly or in the same manner as

it did for European immigrants. The American economy of
today is vastly different than that of the first half of the
century. European immigrant generations had the benefit of
industrial jobs to propel their socioeconomic mobility. The
dual-level economy of today offers unskilled immigrants low-
paying service employment, which may not facilitate such
mobility. It may be that Hispanics could become a permanent
"underclass."

However, the potential of a "living laboratory" to
study the hypotheses which the Hispanic population offers
makes such a time series study worth pursuing.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by James William Kelly has been read
and approved by the following committee:

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the
thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the
fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and
that the thesis is now given final approval by the Committee
with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

April 20, 1988

Date

Director's Signature