

1-1-2010

Scripture in the Pastoral Letters of the Provincial Councils of Baltimore

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In the pastoral letters of the provincial councils of Baltimore (1829-1849), a dramatic shift occurs in the way Scripture is employed as a source of authority; in the earlier letters, the role of Scripture is commanding and evident, while in the later, it is almost invisible. This article addresses each letter in turn, outlining the ways in which Scripture is employed to illustrate and reinforce the decrees of the provincial councils. The analysis suggests that Scripture's role in the 1829-1840 letters corresponds to the turbulent environment of the Catholic Church in America, especially in relation to Protestant nativist groups, and that its absence in the 1843-1849 letters reflects a shift away from Scripture as a locus of authority. The article concludes by outlining three possibilities for understanding the shift away from Scripture. The pastoral letters of the provincial councils exist as much-neglected aspects of American Catholic history, and this analysis aims to bring at least part of their influence to light.

After the establishment of the metropolitan See of Baltimore in 1789, American bishops held councils to address issues related to the Catholic Church in the United States. These deliberations produced decrees that governed many aspects of Catholic life, including the use and ownership of church property, Christian education, mixed marriages, and sacraments. The seven meetings that occurred between 1829-1849, known by historians as the provincial councils of Baltimore, provide a valuable window into the history of Catholics in America. As such, one may expect to find numerous volumes detailing their proceedings as well as their effect and import. A search for scholarship on these councils yields few results, however, as they remain largely unaddressed. Some of the most neglected aspects of these councils are the pastoral letters issued by the bishops at the conclusion of each assembly. The letters provide summaries and

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* This article originated as a seminar paper for Dr. Patrick Carey, and I am grateful for his helpful and constructive comments on an earlier draft. Any errors and shortcomings are of course my own.

explanations of each council's decisions, as well as attempts to address problematic issues in the American Catholic culture at large. They are valuable to the historian not simply because they reflect the proceedings of their respective councils, but because they paint accurate episcopal portrayals of Catholic life in America at that time.

One of the most remarkable features of the pastoral letters is the way each makes use of Scripture. In the letters of 1829 and 1833, for example, the role of Scripture is discernible to the cautious reader. Biblical texts are often employed to demonstrate significant points, although the letters do not make a habit of overtly documenting the texts from which they draw. For the reader who has little or no exposure to the Bible, many of the Scriptural references in the early letters may be missed entirely. In the letters of 1837 and 1840, however, a radical change occurs. In these letters, explicit Scripture citations, often accompanied by exhaustive and meticulous notes, can be found in almost every section of every page. In contrast to the early letters, which reference Scripture anywhere from twenty to forty times each, the letters of 1837 and 1840 contain 110 and eighty-four references respectively. In the pastoral letter of 1843, however, Scripture is invoked a mere seven times, and in the letters of 1846 and 1849, it enjoys no voice whatsoever. This article presents an analysis of the pastoral letters of 1829-1840, with special attention given to the usage of Scripture found in each, as well as to the historical circumstances surrounding each of the respective councils. This analysis suggests that the usage of Scripture in the pastoral letters corresponds with the turbulent environment of the American Catholic Church in the nineteenth century, and that the absence of Scripture in the later pastorals illustrates a movement away from the biblical texts, perhaps in favor of the papacy. This article will conclude by posing several possibilities for explaining the lack of Scripture in the pastoral letters of 1843-1849.

Historical Background to the Provincial Councils of Baltimore

That the Catholic Church has always existed in a state of flux is a point with which most historians would find difficulty disagreeing. Its existence in an ever-changing world has demanded dialogue with the larger culture and, to some degree, response and adaptation to the ebbs and flows of history. The Catholic Church in America is representative of this dialectical relationship, as its presence in the larger American culture has been fraught with both internal and external tension. In the centuries following the establishment of the first Spanish missions in the sixteenth century, American Catholics

existed largely as émigrés in a foreign land. The external friction that characterized their presence in the culture can be in part attributed to their immigrant statuses, as well as their adherence to tenets perceived as alien to the dominant Protestant sensibilities.

Catholics in America have also been subject to internal disputes, as the lack of a domestic hierarchy before 1789 presented numerous difficulties in areas of church discipline and polity. Before the establishment of American bishoprics, priests and parishioners alike found themselves with little episcopal guidance or accountability.¹ Rapid expansion made consistency difficult, as nomadic priests, often immigrants themselves, were often unable to adequately serve the migrating communities. According to Patrick Carey, "Scarcity of clergy, some wandering and inept priests, weakness of Catholic 'fervor,' and ignorance of the fundamentals of the Catholic religion were continuing obstacles to the realization of the canonical vision."² Difficulties were exacerbated by the fact that the church existed under foreign jurisdictions (e.g. Spain, Quebec, London), whose geographical and ideological distance made recognition and execution of authority a slow and difficult process. In light of these issues, James O'Toole observes, "early American Catholics did not always toe the church's line as closely as they might have."³

In the years following the American Revolution, Catholics in America began to see their relationships with the nation and with the church through different eyes; Jay Dolan refers to this as "Catholic Republicanism."⁴ During this period, as Catholics began to vote or even run for public office, their participation in the affairs of the nation began to influence the ways in which they perceived of their responsibilities, perhaps even their rights, with regard to the church.⁵ The influx of Republican and Enlightenment ideals that occurred in the wake of the Revolution led, at least in part, to "trusteeism."⁶ This

1. See James O'Toole, *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 1-28.

2. See Patrick W. Carey, *Catholics in America: A History*, Updated Edition (New York: Sheed and Ward, 2008), 19.

3. O'Toole, 21.

4. See Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 102.

5. So Dolan claims, "Catholics in the United States were embarking on a new experiment seeking to fashion a church in tune with the republican age." Dolan, 111.

6. Patrick Carey notes that trusteeism, as he defines it, "was most certainly a movement to accommodate Catholic ecclesiastical structures and practices to the democratic élan of the age, but it was also a campaign to preserve, with certain necessary modifications, European Catholic practices and customs." He also notes, however, that while *influenced* by the European milieu, trusteeism "arose from American republicanism, legal structures, changing social conditions, and the

phenomenon originated as small communities gathered to buy land and to build churches; as there were decisions to be made regarding the ownership and operation of these churches, parishioners would form small corporations with elected "trustees" to act in the congregations' best interests.⁷ Often, such incorporation was necessary according to state property laws.⁸ From the point of view of parishioners, and even some priests, trusteeism was seen to be in line with Catholic tradition and teaching. John England and John Carroll, for example, both agreed that the spiritual and temporal matters facing parishes could be, perhaps even should be, handled separately.⁹ With a few notable exceptions, the system operated with few or no issues in most parishes.¹⁰ Despite this fact, however, "trusteeism" was almost unanimously opposed by American bishops, who were, according to Carey, the "principle antagonists to the trustees."¹¹

The problems facing the church in America were ameliorated in part with the appointment of John Carroll as prefect-apostolic of the United States in 1784. After five years in this position, the Holy See

hegemony of American Protestant ecclesiastical practices." See Carey, *People, Priests, and Prelates: Ecclesiastical Democracy and the Tensions of Trusteeism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 17, 39.

7. See O'Toole, 52. Carey observes that there were three dominant models of trusteeism active before the 1829 Provincial Council of Baltimore. Generally, the initiative for forming corporations and constitutions was taken by: 1) lay persons alone; 2) clergy alone; 3) clergy and laity in cooperation. After The Baltimore Council of 1829, it was expected that future titles of *new* churches would be deeded to the bishops, and that those bishops alone would have rights of supervision over ecclesial matters. Carey, *People, Priests, and Prelates*, 60-70.

8. See Joseph Agonito, *The Building of an American Catholic Church* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 75-76; also Carl F.G. Zollmann, *American Church Law* (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1933), 112.

9. See Carey, *People, Priests, and Prelates*, 201; also Carey, *Catholics in America*, 28. Notably, by 1823, England had developed his *Constitution of the Diocese of Charleston*. This constitution, approved by Rome, enabled and cultivated cooperation between laypersons, priests, and bishops, but differed from the typical trustee model in that it did not allow for lay control of matters concerning property or the appointment of clergy. James Hennesey refers to England's constitution as "[o]ne practical attempt to work out a distinctive American polity." See James Hennesey, SJ, "Catholicism in an American Environment: The Early Years," *Theological Studies* 50 (1989): 657-675, esp. 668. See also Carey, *An Immigrant Bishop: John England's Adaptation of Irish Catholicism to American Republicanism* (Yonkers, NY: U.S. Catholic Historical Society, 1982), 111-126. England's constitution may be found in its entirety in volume 5 of Ignatius Reynolds, ed. *The Works of the Right Reverend John England*. 5 vols. (Baltimore: John Murphy & Co., 1849), 91-108. It is absent from later editions of England's collected works.

10. For these exceptions, see Carey, *People, Priests, and Prelates*, 107-109.

11. Carey, *People, Priests, and Prelates*, 193; also Carey, *Catholics in America*, 28; John Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 273.

permitted the American priests to elect him as their bishop. Carroll's firsthand experience with Catholic parishes and missions across the nation convinced him that immediate action was needed to address the disciplinary problems that affected the American church, and in 1791 he organized the first diocesan synod to confront these issues. The synod of 1791 is seen as a turning point in the history of the Catholic Church in America; the councils of the American hierarchy that proceeded in the wake of the 1791 synod were certainly characterized by their own unique agendas and concerns, but the foundation laid by John Carroll would remain at least tacitly fundamental.¹²

At a meeting of the American hierarchy in 1810, Carroll and others decided to schedule the first provincial council of Baltimore for 1812 to address issues that had arisen since the 1791 synod. Carroll issued an announcement of such plans in June of 1812, but due to the subsequent outbreak of the War of 1812, the decision was made that the council should be postponed. Carroll died in 1815, less than a year after the war ended, and due to the deteriorating health of his successor, Archbishop Leonard Neale, the council's postponement was sustained. Ambrose Maréchal succeeded Neale in 1817, and his opposition to the idea of a provincial council led to further deferment. Archbishop Maréchal felt that the situations in local parishes needed time to right themselves before a provincial council was held to legislate a solution.¹³ He maintained his position in spite of opposition from Bishop John England, who felt that provincial councils would be of great benefit to the hierarchy of the American church.¹⁴ In an 1827 letter to Maréchal, England writes, "The deranged and unsettled state of the American church can be reduced to order and peace and permanent system only by Provincial Synods of the American hierarchy."¹⁵ England believed that to place disciplinary action solely

12. Carey, *Catholics in America*, 20. Peter Guilday writes, "The synodal legislation of 1791 is in reality the corner stone of the edifice erected by our prelates during the century which followed down to 1884." Peter Guilday, *A History of the Councils of Baltimore (1791-1884)* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932), 62-63.

13. James Hennessey, SJ, *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 100. See also: Carey, *Catholics in America*, 28; Guilday, *A History of the Councils of Baltimore*, 82.

14. Hugh J. Nolan, ed., *Pastoral Letters of the United States Catholic Bishops*, 5 Vols; Vol. 1, 1792-1940 (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference/National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1984): 31; Hennessey, "Catholicism in an American Environment: The Early Years," 668; Carey, *An Immigrant Bishop*, 141-147.

15. The letter can be found in its entirety in Peter Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England, Bishop of Charleston*, vol. 2 (New York: The America Press, 1927), 108-110.

upon diocesan bishops would be to undermine the republican aspects of church government. Despite his efforts, Maréchal continued to resist the idea of a provincial council, and it was not until after his death in 1828, under the leadership of James Whitfield, that a council was called. Although Whitfield shared many of Maréchal's reservations toward a national assembly, he eventually conceded and called for the convocation of the first provincial council of Baltimore in 1829. This council, as well as the six provincial councils that followed, would be responsible for shaping and maintaining the unity of American Catholicism in the midst of ever-present political and religious strife. In addition to developing the shape of the American church, the provincial councils also deepened the unity between American Catholics and Rome, a unity that, Guilday writes, "has ever been the greatest source of joy to bishops, priests and laity of the church in the United States."¹⁶

In keeping with the tradition begun by John Carroll, each provincial council issued a pastoral letter that communicated its decrees to the clergy and laity. The analysis that follows will address each letter in turn, outlining the approaches to Scripture present in each and focusing on those sections in which Scripture is invoked most often. In addition, an overview of the historical context of the individual councils, as well as those issues that were present at each, will be provided.

The First Provincial Council of Baltimore (1829)

When the first provincial council of Baltimore was finally convened on October 1, 1829, the issues facing the assembly were many. Some of the questions present at the council had developed since Carroll's initial synod in 1791, and most were related to issues of discipline and uniformity.¹⁷ Those bishops in attendance brought their own concerns to the table, although many of the issues present were agreed upon by all. For example, nearly every bishop present at the council believed uniformity in the liturgy needed immediate attention; Catholic priests in the United States were often nomadic, wandering from parish to parish without much, if any, regulation. As stated earlier, many of these nomadic priests were immigrants from Europe, and as such they came from diverse educational, social, and cultural backgrounds. More than simple directives or mandates, this complex body of priests needed formal direction and supervision. A related issue before the

16. Guilday, *A History of the Councils of Baltimore*, 99.

17. See Nolan, 31; also Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England*, Vol. 2, 117-118.

council involved how best to fill unoccupied sees in the American church. Perhaps the greatest challenge of the 1829 council was the problem of trusteeism, which was addressed before the council in the 1822 Papal brief, *Non Sine Magno*. In this document, Pius VII condemned the perceived right of some trustees regarding the appointment and termination of clergy.¹⁸ These issues, among others, were of central concern to the 1829 provincial council.

The council issued two pastoral letters, one to the laity and one to the clergy.¹⁹ It is the first and only time that a pastoral letter was sent exclusively to priests from the American bishops and, according to Hugh Nolan, the 1829 pastoral letter to American priests is "not only a singular document but among the finest ever issued by the American hierarchy."²⁰ Both letters stand as *précises* of the council's thirty-six decrees, and furthermore, each letter offers commentaries alongside their summations. Most likely penned by John England,²¹ the letters make use of a range of biblical texts, mostly from the New Testament.²² Repetition of passages within the letters is nonexistent, and only once between the two does England repeat a citation.²³ By and large, citations in the 1829 letters are not explicit and are often woven seamlessly into the larger text, in a method reminiscent of the Patristic writers. On occasion, certain verses will be noted, but these instances are rare. Moreover, the wording of many passages (especially those from the Pauline epistles) will occasionally deviate

18. ". . . that trustees and laymen should arrogate to themselves the right . . . of establishing for pastors priests destitute of legal faculties, and even not unfrequently [*sic*] bound by censures . . . and also of removing them at their pleasure, and of bestowing the revenues upon whom they please, is a practice new and unheard of in the Church . . . For in that case the Church would be governed not by bishops, but by laymen, the shepherd would be subject to his flock, and laymen would usurp the power which was given by Almighty God to bishops." Cited in J.F. Maclear, *Church and State in the Modern Age* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 124. See also *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia XXV* (1914): 325-329; D.C. Shearer, ed., *Pontificia Americana: A Documentary History of the Catholic Church in the United States (1784-1844)* (Washington, DC, 1933), 128-131; also Carey, *Catholics in America*, 27.

19. Unless otherwise noted, all citations and page numbers of the pastoral letters are taken from Nolan, *Pastoral Letters of the United States Catholic Bishops*, vol. 1, 1792-1940.

20. Nolan, 32; See also Guilday, *A History of the Councils of Baltimore*, 96.

21. Nolan, 33-34; cf. Guilday, *A History of the Councils of Baltimore*, 96.

22. The letter to the laity contains three citations from the Old Testament and thirty-eight from the New Testament. The clergy's letter contains four citations from the Old and sixteen from the New. All citations are from the Douay-Rheims Bible.

23. Acts 20:28 is invoked in the letter to the laity with regard to Catholic unity, and in the letter to the priests it is cited in the introduction. Both instances stress the importance of the bishop's role in church hierarchy.

from the text of the Douay-Rheims Bible, leaving room for the author to adapt the biblical texts to the contemporary context.

The Pastoral Letter to the Laity

The 1829 letter to the laity is roughly the same length as that to the clergy, yet the former invokes Scripture more than twice as often as the latter. At first glance, the author's invocation of biblical texts seems random and unsystematic at best, but closer examination reveals that passages were carefully chosen to fit the issues they address. The letter speaks to many concerns, but due to space constraints this analysis will focus on the issues of unity and Christian education. In these sections, Scripture's role is both commanding and obvious.

The pastoral's section on unity is dominated by the voice of the Apostle Paul. In this relatively short section, twelve references to Scripture are made: eight from the Pauline epistles and four from the Acts of the Apostles.²⁴ Structured around Paul's metaphor of the church as body of Christ, the letter's section on unity urges American laity to see their role in the church as one of cooperation, rather than competition, with the hierarchy (Eph. 4:11). England imitates the Apostle in his insistence that to those members of the body who appear weak, more honor is given (1 Cor. 12:22). He portrays the bishops and priests as equally members of the body of Christ, yet he identifies them with those members who appear weak, writing, "we think God hath set us forth as the last" (1 Cor. 4:9).²⁵ Alongside the numerous citations from the Pauline epistles, England also invokes the book of Acts as illustrating the need for church unity. He draws exclusively from Acts 20, in which the Apostle Paul gives his famed address before the elders of Ephesus. In this speech, Paul defends his ministry against those in Ephesus who, for various reasons, did not want to associate themselves with him any longer. The speech ends with the elders weeping for their actions and embracing Paul (Acts 20:36-37). England draws from this speech to illustrate the importance of the clergy's role among the laity. As well, in an effort to dispel any myths of dishonest stewardship, England cites a verse in which Paul defends himself against accusations of theft or embezzlement (Acts 20:33). The passages from Acts are interwoven with those from the Pauline epistles, and no effort is made to indicate where one starts and the other begins. The passages are here treated

24. Acts 20:20, 26-27, 28, 33; 1 Cor. 4:9; 12:12; 12:15-22; 2 Cor. 11:18; 11:26-29; 12:15; Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 6:8.

25. Nolan, 45.

by England as representative of a larger narrative that encourages unity and cooperation, rather than schism and suspicion.

The pastoral's section on Christian education shifts focus from the Pauline corpus and is instead concerned with the synoptic gospels. It begins with Luke 18:16, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not . . . for such is the Kingdom of Heaven."²⁶ England reminds his readers of their duty to children, ensuring that "they might become saints in Heaven."²⁷ He then cites a passage that appears in all three synoptic gospels, "What will it avail them to gain the whole world if they lose their souls?" (Matt. 16:26; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25). He charges the laity with teaching the children to be "industrious, to be frugal, to be humble and fully resigned to the will of God,"²⁸ the same God who "feeds the birds of the air, [and] clothes the lily of the field" (Matt. 6:28). Along with this charge, a warning is issued for those who would ignore it. Again, England invokes a passage found in all three synoptic gospels, "Woe to him that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were tied around his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matt. 18:6; Mark 9:41; Luke 17:2). As was the case with the section on unity, the pastoral's section on Christian education employs Scripture harmoniously, giving no heed to questions of authorship or context, but instead operating under the assumption that the gospel message calls univocally for the care and education of children.

The Pastoral Letter to the Clergy

The 1829 letter to the clergy is obviously characterized by different concerns than that to the laity, speaking to issues of priestly responsibilities, sacramental ministry, study, and meditation. The role of Scripture is unmistakable, yet as stated earlier, citations in the letter to the laity are more than twice those in the letter to the clergy. The three sections where Scripture's role is most apparent are those on sacerdotal perfection, the clergy as light of the world, and the reading of Scripture in the church.

The first section of the letter to the clergy is dominated by references to the Matthean Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5), and begins with the declaration, "You are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). Opposed to those who sit "in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Ps. 106:10), England writes that the clergy has been charged

26. *Ibid.*, 38.

27. *Ibid.*, 39.

28. *Ibid.*

with bringing light to the world, that those who dwell in darkness "may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven" (Matt. 5:16). This section also prefigures the following section on sacerdotal perfection, as England writes of the clergy, "you are the salt," and warns them not to "lose your savor" (Matt. 5:13). Because the priest holds a higher place than the layperson, the responsibility for purity that is upon them is also greater.²⁹ If the members of the clergy are to bring light to a darkened world, England writes, "Be you perfect as your Heavenly Father is Perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

The section on sacerdotal perfection begins with a reminder that a priest's perfection "will be found in being fully animated by the spirit of [his] holy state."³⁰ England writes that prayer is necessary for attaining such a state, that "through grace we might obtain seasonable aid" (Heb. 4:16). Maintaining a focus on holiness is especially important for those stationed in America, which England calls "this pestilential region in which the duty that we owe to God detains us."³¹ Surrounded by sin, the priests are advised to be always on their guard, and in the words of St. Paul, England writes, "let him that standeth beware lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). It is also acknowledged that the priest's labor seems to be often in vain, for some may cry, "All night we have labored and we have taken nothing" (Luke 5:5). England's solution to this complaint is again found in the Pauline epistles, and he writes that the clergy's job is to plant and water, but, "that no flesh should glory in his sight" (1 Cor. 1:29), the harvest belongs to God.³² The section on sacerdotal perfection is short but significant, calling for priests to persevere in holiness and maintain hope in their labors that, at times, appear to bear little fruit.

The pastoral's section on the reading of Scripture is significant for this analysis, not because it employs Scripture uniquely or even as often as the other sections, but because of the picture it paints of Scripture's role in the clergy's discourse with the laity. England begins this discussion with the affirmation, "If the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the pit and perish together" (Matt. 15:14; Luke 6:39). He urges the clergy to "walk carefully in the footsteps of the saints" and "attend to the instructions of the spouse of Christ,"³³ so that they might walk and lead others upon a well-trodden path. England employs imagery from Ezekiel 2:8-3:3 to illustrate Scripture's role in this journey, as he instructs the clergy

29. *Ibid.*, 51.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*, 52.

33. *Ibid.*, 54.

metaphorically, "eat [the volume of the Scriptures] before you go to speak to the children of Israel . . . you shall be filled; from the fullness of your heart your words will proceed, your discourses will not be in the expressions of human wisdom but in the power of God."³⁴ This imagery encourages the priests not to seek the Scriptures for proof texts or maxims to relay to congregations, but to ingest the words in a way that they become almost indistinguishably a part of their speech. Such a view of interpretation is significant, especially in the context of a letter in which the author makes use of Scripture in a way that one can often not discern where his own words stop and the words of the biblical authors begin.

The Second Provincial Council of Baltimore (1833)

As was the case with the provincial council of 1829, the idea of holding another council in 1833 was initially met with some resistance. Archbishop James Whitfield believed that it was too soon for another council, as all the decrees of 1829 had yet to be enacted. At the urging of Bishop England, and finally the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*, however, Whitfield agreed to hold another council. In comparison with the council of 1829, as well as with those that would follow, the council of 1833 was uneventful. The discussion of filling vacant American Sees continued, as did the delineation of diocesan boundaries and the enduring issue of trusteeism, but by and large the decrees from the council of 1833 did not deal with specific issues of discipline as had the previous council's. Perhaps the most significant contribution of the council was its decision on the next council's convocation date, by which it established the tradition of the American hierarchy meeting every three years.³⁵

Although the decrees of the council itself were fairly ordinary, the situation of the Catholic Church in the larger American culture was far from it. Beginning around 1830, the flow of European Catholic immigrants to America began to increase, and their arrival occasioned suspicion from the native population. Such suspicion gave rise to newspapers such as *The Protestant*, an anti-Catholic publication intended "to inculcate Gospel doctrines against Romish corruptions [and] to maintain the purity and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures against Monkish traditions."³⁶ This publication was not a singular occurrence, as the early 1830s saw the rise of other anti-Catholic

34. *Ibid.*, 54-55.

35. The final decree of the council calls for the holding of another on April 16, 1837.

36. Taken from a pre-publication prospectus in the *Massachusetts Yeoman*, December 19, 1829.

papers such as *Priestcraft Unmasked* and *Priestcraft Exposed*.³⁷ Alongside anti-Catholic literature, American nativists also began to coalesce, and in 1831, for example, the New York Protestant Association was formed. Anti-Catholicism had been present in the culture up to this point, but the early 1830s saw a rise in organized groups dedicated to explicit action against Catholics.

The 1833 pastoral letter to the laity and clergy, written by John England, addresses many topics, such as prayer, supernatural grace, and the importance of frequent communion. Like the 1829 pastorals, it employs a range of Biblical texts, mostly from the New Testament.³⁸ There is little repetition in citations between the 1829 and 1833 letters, and none within the 1833 letter itself. The citations are likewise woven seamlessly into the texts, usually bracketed only by quotation marks. As was the case with the 1829 letters, the author of the 1833 letter is comfortable with altering the words of Scripture at points, mostly those from the Pauline epistles. This analysis will focus on the sections concerning the purpose of life, Scripture, and the grace of the sacraments, since these are the points at which the biblical texts are invoked most often.

England begins the pastoral's section on the purpose of life with the familiar verse from all three synoptic gospels, "What will it profit a man to gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul?" (Matt. 18:26; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25). He then discusses the reality of death, specifically in relation to Jewish wisdom texts, as an equalizer of wealth, enjoyment, and honor. Citing Wisdom 5:8,³⁹ England urges readers to strive for those things that are beyond the grave and eternal, and he writes also, "There the just shall live for evermore: and their reward is with the Lord, and the care of them with the Most High" (Wisd. 8:16). He continues with citations of Sirach 1:13 and 1:14, speaking of the fear of the Lord as bringing delight to the heart of the believer. The purpose of life, he writes in the next paragraph, is "To save our souls, through the merits of our Blessed Redeemer."⁴⁰ Again he returns to the earlier cited aphorism, "What will it profit a man to gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul?" (Matt. 18:26; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25). He urges the laity and clergy to see the role of

37. First published in 1830 and 1834, respectively.

38. The letter contains two citations from the Old Testament and twenty-seven from the New Testament. As well, the 1833 letter makes use of Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon, citing twice from each. All citations are from the Douay-Rheims Bible.

39. "What then doth pride profit us, or what advantage doth the boasting of riches bring?"

40. Nolan, 68.

bishops as teachers and guides of the flock, and he asks them to accept their authority, not as constraining, but as comforting.

In the pastoral's section on Scripture, England stresses the importance of the clergy as a mediator of sorts, and he again stresses the importance of the priest's continual study of the biblical texts. As was the case in the 1829 letter to the clergy, England envisions the priest as involved in an almost organic relationship with the narrative and words of Scripture; when the priest speaks to his congregants, the words of Scripture are to be employed in such a way that they are woven intricately among his own. England writes, "The people seek the law from the lips of the priest, and how shall he communicate that with which he has not been intimately conversant?"⁴¹ Invoking 2 Peter 3:16, he acknowledges that the words of Scripture are not always clear, and therefore reading in communion with the tradition is of the utmost importance.⁴² Only when coupled with the tradition of the church, passed down from Christ himself, can the meaning of Scripture be rightly discerned.⁴³ The true meaning of Scripture, he continues, because it is a revealed truth, must be constant and never contradictory (Heb. 13), and any who "preach a Gospel to you besides that we have preached to you, let him be anathema" (Gal. 1:8). The section draws to a close with a string of citations from Paul's letters to Timothy. Through them, England charges the American readers, "keep that [which was] committed to your truth" (1 Tim. 6:20), "shun profane and vain speeches" (2 Tim. 2:16), "continue in the things you have learned" (2 Tim. 3:7), and "hold the form of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13) "which you have heard from *us and from our predecessors* in the faith, and in the love of Christ Jesus."⁴⁴

The letter's section on the grace of the sacraments begins, "The sacraments, beloved brethren, have been instituted by the Savior as the ordinary channels through which He might convey His grace to our souls."⁴⁵ At this point, England writes in the language of 1 Corinthians, speaking of God's choosing foolish things to confound the wise, and weak things to confound the strong. The divine establishment of things ensures "that no flesh should glory in His sight" (1 Cor. 1:29), and that "he that glorieth may glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:31). He then moves to discuss the question, "What natural

41. *Ibid.*, 71.

42. "some things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest to their own perdition." This verse originally refers to the letters of Paul, although England here adapts it to speak of Scripture in general.

43. Nolan, 71.

44. *Ibid.*, 72. *italics original.*

45. *Ibid.*, 74.

connection exists between the use of water and of oil, and the remission of sins?"⁴⁶ His answer is that no natural connection exists, for the benefits of sacraments result not from natural relationship, but from the divine agency that works through them. To illustrate this point, England draws the reader's attention to the story of Naaman the Syrian, found in 2 Kings 5. In order that his leprosy might be healed, Naaman was instructed to go and wash seven times in the Jordan river. The healing that resulted was not from the special qualities of water, but from "the special will of the Lord."⁴⁷ In addition, he references the gospel story of the man born blind, found in John 9. Just as the water itself was of no use to Naaman, England writes that the clay rubbed in the blind man's eyes was not beneficial in itself. Instead, his healing came from "the special will of Him who formed the eye."⁴⁸ The same can be said of the sacraments, as "They have no natural efficacy, though they are the ordinary means instituted by the Savior to produce in us supernatural effects."⁴⁹ Since God has ordained the sacraments as such, however, it becomes absolutely necessary that those in the church receive them as they are. Because, he continues, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you" (John 6:54). These words, England writes, are not meant to terrify their readers, but are rather offered in the same Spirit in which Jesus said, "Come to me all you that labor and are heavily laden, and you will find rest in your souls" (Matt. 11). The call to participation in the sacraments is thus not an issue of judgment, but an invitation to sit at the heavenly banquet.

The Third Provincial Council of Baltimore (1837)

The years between the councils of 1833 and 1837 saw a continuing flow of Catholic immigrants from Europe. The rapid expansion of the Catholic population was accompanied by continuing suspicion from American nativists, whose organizations continued to gain membership and structure. Anti-Catholic mob activity was rampant during the interim period, as was the continuing spread of anti-Catholic literature. 1834 saw the burning of the Ursuline convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts, and in 1835 Samuel F. B. Morse published his *Imminent Dangers to the Free Institutions of the United States through Foreign Immigration*. Moreover, the years before the

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

third council of Baltimore also saw the publication of *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*, as well as *Six Months in a Convent*, two scathing pieces that purported to be first-hand events experienced by young women in convents.⁵⁰ Anti-Catholic newspapers such as *The Downfall of Babylon* (1834) and the *American Protestant Vindicator and Defender of Civil and Religious Liberty against the Inroads of Popery* (1834), both widely read and influential, continued to feed the growing flames of anti-Catholicism, and it is among such heat that the council of 1837 was convened.

The issues before the council were numerous. The bishops deliberated on the duty of the laity to support their priests, the need for careful discernment on the part of bishops in ordaining men to the priesthood, and uniformity with the Roman Ritual. The pastoral letter of 1837 reflects the multi-faceted nature of the council, and Peter Guilday calls it "the most remarkable document of its kind in the history of the American church."⁵¹ Also written by John England, the letter is significantly longer than the pastorals of 1829 and 1833,⁵² and it is unique thus far in its explicit treatment of religious and civil persecution against Catholics. The burning of the Ursuline convent and the proliferation of anti-Catholic literature are each addressed in their own sections, and readers are encouraged to exercise patience in their sufferings. The letter also stands out with regard to the surfeit of Scripture citations found within the text. In comparison with the letter of 1833, which explicitly cites Scripture thirty times, the 1837 letter includes over one hundred citations of the Old and New Testaments.⁵³ Unlike the case of its predecessors, discerning the words of Scripture from the words of the author in the 1837 pastoral is not difficult, as each Scripture citation is explicitly noted. As was the case with the analyses of the preceding pastorals, the analysis of this letter focuses on those sections in which Scripture plays the most significant role, specifically those on the importance of faith, religious duties, and patience in tribulation.

50. Maria Monk, *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk: as exhibited in a narrative of her sufferings during a residence of five years as a novice, and two years as a black nun, in the Hotel Dieu nunnery at Montreal* (New York: Howe & Bates, 1836); Rebecca Theresa Reed, *Six months in a convent, or, The narrative of Rebecca Theresa Reed: who was under the influence of the Roman Catholics about two years, and an inmate of the Ursuline convent on Mount Benedict, Charlestown, Mass., nearly six months, in the years 1831-2* (Boston: Russell, Odiorne & Metcalf, 1835).

51. Guilday, *A History of the Councils of Baltimore*, 118.

52. By the author's estimations, the 1837 pastoral is twice as long as that from 1833, and is longer than the two 1829 letters combined.

53. The letter contains eighteen citations from the Old Testament and ninety-two from the New Testament. All citations are from the Douay-Rheims Bible.

The letter's section on the importance of faith is inaugurated by a citation from Hebrews, "without faith it is impossible to please God: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder to them that seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). Citing John 17:3 and Romans 10:13-17, England writes that faith rests on the foundation of the apostolic testimony, the words of which bring persons to faith in Christ.⁵⁴ The gift of the Holy Spirit, empowered the first disciples at Pentecost, and charged them with the responsibility of evangelization (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). The same Spirit gave them the authority of extending this responsibility to others, and it is through this transmission that the original testimony has been handed down through the years (John 12:49-50; 20:20-21).⁵⁵ England continues by invoking the example of Paul, who commissioned both Timothy and Titus to be present in his absence (2 Tim. 2:2; Titus 1:5). He urges his readers, laity and clergy alike, to remain faithful to the tradition, even in the face of bitter persecution. He writes, "Take heed to yourselves, and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops to rule the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). The testimony they have received is that from the "cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1) and is thus to be seen as "a straight way, so that fools shall not err therein" (Isa. 35:8). He continues, "We exhort you to continue steadily attached to this firm anchor of our hope, and submit your necks to the sweet yoke of Christ."⁵⁶ In the face of sometimes-violent persecution, the members of the American church are thus encouraged to remain faithful to that which they received, and to persevere in constancy and conformity.

The section on religious duties begins with a citation from James, "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only" (1:22). It continues, "We have noticed with regret that even where belief of doctrine was in full vigor, the duties of religion were not always regularly fulfilled."⁵⁷ In response to those who would ascribe sole importance to personal piety or religious fervor, England writes that active efforts to do positive good are as important as "the mere rooting out of vice."⁵⁸ He sustains this argument through an extensive chain of Old and New Testament citations, drawing primarily from Ezekiel, Isaiah, 1 Peter, and 1 John. He writes, "Wash yourselves, be clean, take away the evil of your devices from my eyes: cease to do perversely: learn to do well" (Isa. 1:16-17). In a similar vein, "Let him decline from evil, and do

54. Nolan, 99.

55. *Ibid.*, 100.

56. *Ibid.*, 102.

57. *Ibid.*, 95.

58. *Ibid.*, 96.

good, let him seek after peace and pursue it . . . the countenance of the Lord is upon them that do evil things" (1 Pet. 3:11-12). Lastly, he writes, "Little children, let no man deceive you. He that doth justice is just, even as God is just . . . and whatsoever we shall ask we shall receive of Him: because we keep His commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:7, 22).

England outlines the duties of the faithful in terms of existence within the larger American culture, specifically in relation to the state, society, and one's neighbors. To the state, he writes, a faithful person will be "loyal, faithful, obedient, and attached, using those rights which he possesses . . . for the general welfare and advantage."⁵⁹ Likewise in relation to society, "he endeavors to do unto others as he would be done by [Luke 6:31], not only is he strictly just, but he is kind, merciful, compassionate, and charitable."⁶⁰ Lastly, with regard to one's neighbors, England states, "he is attentive, conciliating, respectful and useful."⁶¹ As was the case with the section on the importance of faith, that on religious duties to the society, especially perhaps to the state, paints a picture of life within a culture that is often less than accommodating. Moreover, this section of the letter represents England's effort to address the ideas present in *Mirari Vos* and *Singulari Nos*, two encyclicals of Pope Gregory XVI promulgated not long before the 1837 Council of Baltimore. *Mirari Vos* (1832) condemned freedom of the press, as well as voluntarism (liberty of conscience) and ideas of religious pluralism (indifferentism).⁶² Furthermore, citing Romans 13:2 as support for the notion that all rulers are appointed or at least sanctioned by God, the encyclical defended submission to the state for Catholics, while at the same time blurring the lines between sacred and secular.⁶³ *Singulari Nos* (1834), in direct opposition to the writings of the French priest Félicité Robert de Lamennais,⁶⁴ supported those ideas put forth in *Mirari Vos*, and further condemned democratic ideas as well as the separation of church and state.⁶⁵ These encyclicals were problematic

59. *Ibid.*, 97.

60. *Ibid.*

61. *Ibid.*

62. See Pope Gregory XVI, *Mirari Vos*, esp. §13-15.

63. "there is no authority except from God; what authority there is has been appointed by God. Therefore he who resists authority resists the ordinances of God; and those who resist bring on themselves condemnation" (Rom. 13:2, cited in *Mirari Vos*, § 17).

64. Félicité Robert de Lamennais, *Paroles d'un Croyant* (Paris: Eugene Renduel, 1834). Notably, this work first appeared under a pseudonym, as *Singulari Nos* acknowledges (§2).

65. See Pope Gregory XVI, *Singulari Nos*, esp. §4.

as they showed little to no regard for Catholic bishops and laypersons living in the context of a republican nation such as the United States. Moreover, at least in the United States, they served to confirm the Protestant suspicion that Catholics were perhaps a threat to the American government.⁶⁶ While the pastoral letter of 1837 may be seen as England's attempt to come to grips with these encyclicals, especially in light of his own views on issues such as the separation of church and state, his distillation of these ideas is also an attempt to frame the matter in a different light.⁶⁷ Clergy and laity alike are encouraged to live in a way that does not return hatred for hatred, but rather fosters development of the virtues.

The pastoral's section on patience in tribulation is permeated by Scripture. It begins with a citation from Matthew, "Take up your yoke . . . and learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest in your souls" (Matt. 11:29), and then moves to a string of citations from Psalms. England writes, "Shall not my soul be subject to God? For from Him is my salvation . . . Be thou O my soul subject to God, for from Him is my patience" (Ps. 61:1, 6). He continues, "Deliver me, O my God out of the hand of the sinner and of the unjust . . . for thou are my patience, O Lord: my hope, O Lord, from my youth" (Ps. 70:4-5). The readers of the pastoral are urged to exercise patience in the face of persecution, "not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing, for unto this we are called that we may inherit a blessing" (1 Pet. 3:8-9). Likewise, Paul instructs his readers, "See that none render evil for evil to any man: but ever follow that which is good towards each other, and towards all men" (1 Thess. 5:15). Even further, he continues, these injunctions are in conformity with the teaching of Christ, who said, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be children of your Father who is in Heaven" (Matt. 5:44-45). In doing so, he writes, "[you will] ensure blessings for yourselves, and, perhaps, convert your opponents. This, beloved brethren, is the vengeance of Christianity."⁶⁸ To suffer persecution in patience, England writes, is not simply to

66. What is ironic about the confirmation of these Protestant suspicions is that the pastoral letter of 1837 *affirms* political loyalty to the United States *above* any foreign nation. James Hennesey notes as much in "An American Roman Catholic Tradition of Religious Liberty," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 14 (1977): 603-607, esp. 605.

67. On England's views concerning the separation of church and state, see Peter Clarke, *A Free Church in a Free Society: The Ecclesiology of John England, Bishop of Charleston, 1820-1842, a Nineteenth Century Missionary Bishop in the Southern United States* (Hartsville, SC: Center for John England Studies, 1982), esp. 313-368. See also Carey, *An Immigrant Bishop*, 89-90.

68. Nolan, 87.

suffer for the sake of suffering. Instead, to suffer in patience is to live as lights in an otherwise dark world, exhibiting the virtues in conduct toward adversaries.

The Fourth Provincial Council of Baltimore (1840)

In the years between the councils of 1837 and 1840, anti-Catholic sentiments persisted as immigration from Europe showed no signs of subsiding. Between 1830 and 1840, the Catholic population in America doubled, and hostile actions against the church began to grow rapidly.⁶⁹ By the end of the 1830s, Scripture itself had become a battleground, as Protestant newspapers claimed that Catholic laypersons were forbidden from reading the biblical texts for themselves.⁷⁰ Bible societies distributed the King James Version of the Bible in low-income Catholic neighborhoods, and they began pushing for further integration of the Bible in classrooms.⁷¹ These actions were met with resistance from members of the Catholic clergy, not because they were opposed to the reading or hearing of the Bible *per se*, but because the provincial council of 1829 had declared the Douay-Rheims Bible the official version for American Catholics; this version alone bore the ecclesiastical *imprimatur*, which signaled to the reader that what was found therein was free of any doctrinal or moral error.⁷² Many interpreted their opposition, however, as a rejection of Scripture *in toto*.

The deliberations of the 1840 council reflect the tensions present in the culture, as almost every decree enacted by the council addresses details of Catholic-Protestant relationships. The appropriateness of mixed marriages, Catholic children in public schools, and membership in secret societies all received treatment from the bishops present at the council, and the 1840 pastoral letter again stands as an accurate manifestation of the council's decisions. Like the letter of 1837, the

69. Carey, *Catholics in America*, 31.

70. *Downfall of Babylon*, June 23, 1836; *New York Observer*, February 25, 1837, January 26, 1839; *Christian Watchman*, March 3, 1837, August 10, 1838. Such sentiments are of course visible in other anti-Catholic literature of the time. In *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*, to cite one example, one finds the aspersion, "Great dislike to the Bible was shown by those who conversed with me about it, and several had remarked to me, at different times, that if it were not for that book, Catholics would never be led to renounce their own faith." Monk, *Awful Disclosures*, 49.

71. See Ray A. Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964), 142-143.

72. See Michael Carter, "'Under the Benign Sun of Toleration:' Mathew Carey, the Douai Bible, and Catholic Print Culture, 1789-1791," *Journal of the Early Republic* 27 (2007): 437-467, esp. 440.

1840 pastoral is replete with Scripture citations, mostly from the New Testament.⁷³ Again written by John England, this letter employs a range of texts, and like the 1837 letter, references to Scripture are explicitly noted, often extensively. There is no repetition of verses within the letter itself, and little between it and its predecessors.⁷⁴ The following analysis will again focus on those sections in which Biblical texts are invoked most often, in this case the sections on Scripture and marriage.⁷⁵

The 1840 pastoral's section on Scripture is by no means the longest in the composition, yet it contains half of the letter's Scripture citations. The section begins by referencing the "misconception in the minds of our separated brethren"⁷⁶ with regard to Christian education, and the reader is reminded straightaway of the apostolic commission to teach the nations through the power and revelation of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 27:19-20; John 14:26). Christ's teaching, England writes, was passed down through the perpetuation of the apostolic commission, and "it is manifest that the church thus constituted, formed one visible body under one visible head, and that it had the full authority of requiring from each of its members...that respect and obedience which the principle of unity required, and which the Savior commanded."⁷⁷ In contrast to those dissenters who would locate sole and primary authority within the biblical texts alone, England frames a view of Scripture that *starts* with the apostolic tradition. Scripture, he claims, comes forth through and from the church, and it is only by testimony that the meaning therein may be discerned.⁷⁸

Addressing the pertinent issue of which Bible version to value, England writes that some books in the Bible have been corrupted by incorrect translations, and the only version suitable for use in the Catholic Church is that which has been vouched for by "a responsible and authorized member of the tribunal of the Church."⁷⁹ All other translations and versions, he continues, because the accuracy of their

73. The letter contains twelve citations from the Old Testament and seventy-two from the New Testament. All citations are from the Douay-Rheims Bible.

74. There are, of course, a handful of favorite verses that make appearances in many of the pastorals, although they are typically employed to different ends. See, for example, Matt. 5:44; Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Pet. 3:16.

75. The 1840 letter contains a section on "Christian Marriage" and "Mixed Marriages." Because they are largely inseparable within the letter, they will be addressed together.

76. Nolan, 119.

77. Ibid., 121-122. cf. Matt. 18:17; Luke 10:16; 22:31-32; John 10:16; 20:21; 27:11-21; 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12-13, 20, 25-27; Gal. 3:26-28; Eph. 2:19-22; 4:3-6, 12-15; Phil. 1:27; Col. 3:15; Heb. 13:7,17.

78. Ibid., 123.

79. Ibid., 124.

translation and integrity has not been confirmed by the church, are not received as the word of God, "precisely upon the ground of total want of the requisite evidence."⁸⁰ England also addresses the use of Protestant Bibles in public schools, cautioning his readers against those who would claim autonomy, or private reading, as a standard of interpretation over against the testimony of the church.⁸¹ He expresses the desire that all Catholics be knowledgeable about the words of Scripture as interpreted through the tradition, but he locates the responsibility for reading and meditating in the home rather than in public schools. He writes, "we are disposed to doubt seriously whether the introduction of this sacred volume as an ordinary class book into schools, is beneficial to religion."⁸² Public schools fail to provide fertile ground in which the study of Scripture as a witness to truth can flourish. Catholics are encouraged at the end of this section to work toward the establishment of schools that are "fitted according to our own principles."⁸³ This section of the pastoral is striking in the way that it reframes discussion about Scripture. The subject of Scripture itself certainly plays a role, but the primary concern of the section is the location of authority and the means by which truth is conveyed. In contrast to the Bible societies who distributed texts to be read and interpreted autonomously, England upholds the view that interpretation must occur within the tradition of faith, which has been passed on from the apostles.

The pastoral's section on Christian marriage begins with the acknowledgment of "the evils which it has caused amongst ourselves."⁸⁴ There is no aspect of society, "which needs a more affectionate bond of union than that of marriage."⁸⁵ To support this point, England references Ephesians 5:25, which portrays the institution of marriage as a symbol of Christ's love for the church,⁸⁶ and he cites Matthew 19:5-6 to illustrate the strength of the bond created by a marital union.⁸⁷ Those who choose to enter into marriage should therefore do so with caution, "having a reasonable hope that

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid., 125.

82. Ibid., 126.

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid., 128. England is not clear as to which "evils" he is referring to.

85. Ibid.

86. "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered himself up for it . . . for this cause shall a man leave father and mother; and shall adhere to his wife: and they shall be two in one flesh."

87. "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." In addition, England cites Matt. 19:8-9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:10-11, 39.

they and their children should serve God in spirit and in truth whilst in this world."⁸⁸

England's discussion of Christian marriage is brief, and it immediately feeds into his address of mixed marriages. A marriage between persons of different faith traditions, is a painful situation that gives rise to regret and possibly to the perversion of generations.⁸⁹ The problem is not new, according to England, as St. Paul warned even in the first century, "Bear not the yoke with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14). England outlines Paul's teaching on the matter, specifically with regard to the dissolution of a marriage. He writes that the person of faith is obligated to honor their initial contract if their partner, either lacking or possessing a different faith, does not prohibit their children from "being cleansed and made holy through Christ."⁹⁰ If the unbelieving spouse would not allow for this, however, then the contract would be considered void and the believing spouse would not be held under any obligation.⁹¹ The problem, as England frames it, is one of perverting future generations.⁹² The church has taught from the beginning that marriage should occur only between persons who are in ecclesial communion with one another, and although deviations have at times been tolerated, they have never been sanctioned. This section is addressed to laity and clergy alike, urging both to exercise caution with regard to mixed marriages. Although the council of 1840 neither condemned nor prohibited mixed marriages from occurring, its decrees charged priests to warn the laity of their dangers.

Scripture (or lack thereof) in the Pastorals Following 1840

In the pastoral letter of the 1843 provincial council, Scripture is cited a mere seven times, and in the letters of 1846 and 1849, it is absent entirely. In contrast to the earlier pastorals, in which the biblical texts played such an integral part, the question arises, What is responsible for such a drastic shift? This final section addresses the question by posing three possibilities.

The first and perhaps most obvious explanation for the shift in Scripture usage among the pastoral epistles of the provincial councils pertains to the authorship of the pastoral letters up until the council of 1843. John England, the author of the 1829-1840 letters, died in

88. Nolan, 129.

89. *Ibid.*

90. *Ibid.*

91. *Ibid.*, 129-130. cf. 1 Cor. 7:12-15.

92. He here cites Exod. 34:16; Deut. 7:3-4.

April of 1842, leaving Francis Patrick Kenrick to write in his stead.⁹³ One could perhaps cease speculation at this point, and conclude *de facto* that the movement away from Scripture in the pastorals of 1843-1849 was merely the result of the pen being passed from one bishop to another, and that each bishop approached the task of authorship with different goals in mind. As Nolan observes, however, Kenrick "was a much better theologian and Scripture scholar than England."⁹⁴ For example, not long after England's death, Kenrick produced his own translation of the four Gospels, accompanied by sophisticated exegetical and analytical notes on the Greek and Latin texts.⁹⁵ It seems therefore unlikely that Kenrick's authorship of the 1843-1849 letters would by itself be responsible for a decrease in the use of Scripture. If anything, it seems as if his hand would have made Scripture's voice clearer and even more substantial. A shift in authorship remains a possible explanation for the changes that occurred after 1840, but to end with this suggestion leaves one with more than a few unanswered questions. A more plausible solution to the lack of Scripture in the post-1840 pastorals may be found by examining the larger historical context in which these later councils met.

The influx of Catholic immigrants from Europe, continued well into the 1840s, and endured even after the last of the provincial councils of Baltimore in 1849. Especially after 1845, as German and Irish Catholics flooded to America because of rural overcrowding and crop failures, suspicion from American nativists continued to increase, as did actions directed against Catholics. So, for example, 1843 saw the formation of the American Republican Party (the "Know Nothings") in New York, and 1844 brought the Philadelphia Nativist Riots, a series of violent upheavals inspired by rumors that Catholics were attempting to outlaw the use of Bibles in public schools. Considering these events, as well as this article's suggestion that the proliferation of Scripture in the earlier pastoral letters correlated with the turbulent situations surrounding American Catholics, it is indeed odd that Scripture is nearly absent from the later pastoral letters. Despite continuing tensions with the larger American culture, however, the 1840s were a time of inner progress for the Catholic

93. Nolan writes that Kenrick was, without a doubt, the author of the 1846 and 1849 letters, and notes that his "style and interests are evident in the 1843 pastoral." Nolan, 33.

94. *Ibid.*, 34.

95. See Francis Patrick Kenrick, *The Four Gospels, Translated from the Latin Vulgate and Diligently Compared with the Original Greek Text* (New York: Edward Dunigan & Brother, 1849).

Church in America. Missions and parishes continued to emerge during this period, and the legislation set forth by the provincial councils helped maintain Catholic identity and obedience in the face of persecution. Although tensions with American culture certainly lingered, the councils after 1840 operated within a system that was, for the most part, internally stable. The 1840s also brought with them a revolution in printing methods and media, which led to the burgeoning of Catholic devotional literature. Largely in response to the growing immigrant population, whose religious literacy was below average, this devotional literature flourished in a market whose demand for biblical texts was low. In this context, it could be said that Kenrick's sidelining of Scripture in the later pastoral letters was in fact reflective of the material with which the wider American Catholic audience would have been familiar.

The 1840s also saw what Patricia Byrne refers to as the rise of "American Ultramontaniam." Even as early as 1838, when Kenrick published *The Primacy of the Apostolic See and the Authority of the General Councils Vindicated*, Catholics in America were greatly influenced by the new spirit of ultramontaniam developing in Europe, and as such the center of authority had begun to shift.⁹⁶ In contrast to Protestant groups who continued to insist that final authority rested in the biblical texts, the American Catholic bishops began to stress the Papacy as the locus of authority.⁹⁷ In the 1846 letter, we read, "the obedience due to the Vicar of the Savior is in no way inconsistent with your civil allegiance, your social duties as citizens, or your rights as men."⁹⁸ Likewise, in the 1849 letter, "We exhort you, brethren, to continue steadfast in your attachment to the Chair of Peter, on which you know that the Church was built."⁹⁹ The pastorals of 1829-1840 certainly stress the authority of church teaching and tradition, but nowhere do they equate this authority with the Papacy like the 1846 and 1849 letters. The shift away from Scripture toward Papal authority could thus be seen as part of the attempt to define American Catholicism over against the larger Protestant culture. That the task of authoring the pastoral letters passed from England to Kenrick between 1840 and 1843 is significant in this light, as the two men came from different educational backgrounds, Ireland and Rome, respectively, and thus shared different ideologies and conceptions of

96. Patricia Byrne, "American Ultramontaniam," *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 305.

97. On the location and definition of religious authority in this period, see Sandra Yocum Mize, "The Common-Sense Argument for Papal Infallibility," *Theological Studies* 57 (1996): 242-263.

98. Nolan, 152.

99. *Ibid.*, 158.

authority. It would be a mistake to claim that Scripture was ever *abandoned* in favor of the Papacy, but its days as an apologetic battleground between differing ideologies certainly began to fade in the latter years of the provincial councils.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to outline the ways in which the pastoral letters of the provincial councils of Baltimore made use of Scripture in their discourses. It has argued that the usage of Scripture in these letters mirrors the turbulence of the American church at large, both internal and external, and that its absence in the latter pastorals reflects several shifts that occurred in the 1840s. The suggestions explaining the shift as outlined above will likely generate more questions than definitive answers, as the analysis offered here stands not only as an attempt to illuminate a much-neglected facet of American Catholic history, but also as an invitation for additional dialogue on the subject. The hope is that the pastoral letters of the provincial councils of Baltimore might find a place in future discourse regarding nineteenth-century American Catholicism, and that further analysis of them may continue to lend valuable insights into this formative era of the church.