

American Conservatism and the Catholic Church

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The relationship between the modern conservative movement and the Catholic Church in America is just now beginning to be understood. Despite evidence of a close relationship between Catholicism and conservatism, the Church is most often considered a liberal institution, while the Catholic Church in its official capacity denies that it has an inherent connection to any political party or ideology. Nevertheless, the connection between American conservatism and Catholicism is much closer than is usually realized, so much so that the Church is better understood as a conservative than as a liberal institution.

Catholic Origins of American Conservatism

One of the overlooked facts about the modern conservative movement is the irreplaceable part played by Catholics.¹ Indeed, it is almost possible to believe that the conservative movement in America was largely a Catholic thing, but this would be to overestimate the influence of Catholics. The conservative movement was not

an explicit attempt of lay Catholics or the Church itself to manufacture a movement or arm to gain political influence for the Catholic Church. (This is in contrast to the Moral Majority, which was an explicit attempt to gain evangelical Protestantism a secular arm and direct political influence.) The Catholic Church in America, in contrast to the Church in Europe, has not allied itself officially with any political party or ideological movement, respecting the American separation of church and state. Further, Catholic influence tends to be more diffuse, representing the wide variety of political opinions held by its members.

The two outstanding representatives of Catholicism in the conservative movement, well-known to readers of this journal, are William F. Buckley and Russell Kirk, the founders of *National Review* and *Modern Age*, respectively. Buckley was a cradle Catholic who attended an English Catholic boarding school. He held a strongly traditional view of the Church and was an opponent of the vernacular Mass that resulted from the Second Vatican Council.² *National Review* often dealt directly with Catholic issues, most famously in attacking the encyclicals of Pope John XXIII but also in its criticisms of the neo-Marxist Catholic liberation

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theology emanating from Latin America.³ Russell Kirk, whose book *The Conservative Mind* went through multiple printings, greatly encouraged a traditionalist form of conservative thought. He was a Catholic convert but had already established his conservative philosophy at the time he entered the Church.⁴ While Buckley represents the influence of cradle Catholics whose religious beliefs made them sharply critical of political and social developments in America following World War II, Kirk represents the conservative Catholics who joined the Church for personal reasons of faith, certainly, but also because their conservatism was explicitly and strongly represented in the Catholic Church. The presence of a large number of cradle Catholics in the conservative movement and the tendency of conservatives to become Catholic converts raises the question: what is the nexus between Catholicism and conservatism?

There is a large overlap between Catholicism and conservatism, and five areas can be distinguished. First, there is the conservative *respect for tradition*, that is, the Burkean assumption that any social institution in place for a great length of time and serving many people well has a claim on us. The Catholic Church has contributed an essential and distinctive element to Western civilization in art, literature, music, theology, and philosophy, and—not least—in its spreading of the Christian gospel, which had a civilizing effect on the many peoples of Europe, including those originally thought of as “barbarians.”

Second, there is a *moral realism* intrinsic to the Church’s doctrines and practices that presupposes good and evil’s actual reality and actual distinction. As the European world order collapsed during the twentieth century under the weight of total wars and totalitarian movements, good and evil were forsworn as ancient notions easily disposed of in the face of the

onslaught of naked political power. The Catholic Church’s continued assertion that there exists an objective moral order thus seems salutary and providential.

Third, there was the policy of *anti-Communism*, which was especially noteworthy after World War II, when the Church supported centrist or mildly leftist political parties in Italy and France in opposition to Communist political parties that had many adherents. In America in the 1950s, figures such as Bishop Sheen and Cardinal Spellman vigorously opposed Communism; a disconcerting result of Vatican II was the Church’s change from a policy of anti-Communism effectively to one of anti-anti-Communism.

Fourth, the Catholic Church provides a primary example of *an institution that survives in history* not because it remains static, but because it changes slowly over time, accommodating itself to new circumstances while retaining its essential identity. Thus the confusing effects of the Second Vatican Council have amounted to a seemingly radical change in the Church and sorely tested the faith of many Catholic conservatives. Alterations in the order of the Mass and the reversal of the anti-Communist policy have caused especially severe discord.

Finally, especially appealing to intellectual conservatives is the Church’s espousal of the doctrine of *natural law*, which is conformable to the doctrine of natural rights found in the practice of American law and written in the Declaration of Independence, which refers to “nature’s God” as the source of rights and an implied moral order by which the actions of political agents can be fairly and rationally judged.⁵

These considerations do not mean that Catholicism and American conservatism are altogether compatible. The conservative tradition in America is diverse, tending especially toward the principle of personal

freedom from state controls. The Catholic tradition is communitarian and family-oriented, seeing the individual as embedded in a network of social connections and responsibilities ultimately of divine origin. This communitarianism sharply contradicts the individualism that is an inherent part of American culture, especially as expressed in the libertarian strain of contemporary conservatism. Previously, Catholic teaching had criticized the doctrine of individual rights; this, however, is changing. Since Vatican II official Church documents have stressed the individual's right of conscience in order to defend freedom of religion in places where the Church is actively suppressed, as in China, or where Christian worship is severely curtailed, as in Muslim nations.⁶

Another point of likely disagreement is free-market capitalism. Continental Catholic theologians have long had an animus toward the "Anglo-Saxon" social arrangement of England and America with its emphasis on political freedom and monetary advancement.⁷ This may be only a cultural prejudice, but in fact Catholic social teaching cannot be comfortable with an unrestrained form of capitalism in which there is no Reagan-style safety net (at least) for those who do not benefit directly from the free market. Catholic doctrine leans toward promoting communal solidarity with some kind of guarantees for housing and income for all, and from a Catholic perspective, the philosophy of unrestrained capitalism elevates the free market as a false idol. Here again, however, Catholic attitudes are changing toward a more conservative position; Pope John Paul II's last social encyclical approved the free market as an efficient way of setting prices and allocating goods, and prominent lay Catholics such as William Simon and Michael Novak have favored the free market as compatible with Catholic thought.⁸

The Liberal Church

While there is nothing in the documents of the Second Vatican Council that explicitly commits Catholicism to a liberal social philosophy, liberals and progressives have seized upon the Council to promote their programs and philosophies within the Church. Vatican II urged lay participation in the world, so that the Christian message would be spread through all aspects of society. Without careful delineation by the bishops who attended the Council and under whose supervision its documents were written, it was somehow automatically assumed that the Council reforms meant social activism of the sort carried out by promoting left-wing schemes and agendas. The bishops, including the popes who initiated the Council, John XXIII and Paul VI, were unaware of how suddenly changes would overtake the Church under pressure from various cadres of the Left, including feminists, pacifists, liturgical experts, anarchic radicals, and advocates of welfare expansion.⁹ Church authorities were overtaken by events until it became necessary for them to push back and re-establish lines of authority, as happened under Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

One of the reforms of Vatican II was to give national councils of Catholic bishops a greater degree of authority and independence, without having to wait for direction from the Vatican.¹⁰ In the United States the bishops made policy in their annual meetings and relied on the bureaucracy of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to promulgate those policies and bring them into effect. Since both the bishop's annual meetings and the USCCB are based in Washington, D.C., this amounted to the Church's becoming a Dupont Circle-type lobbying group promoting a liberal line in virtually all areas of public policy and domestic and for-

eign affairs.¹¹ USCCB policies, which are intended to “share Catholic social teaching,” have nonetheless attracted opposition from conservative Catholics and other critics who not only have a different ideological take on the issues but often have more expertise about the issues addressed than the USCCB staff that writes the policies and lobbies for them. The one exception to the liberal line taken by the USCCB is in the area of sex and reproduction, including abortion, gay marriage, cloning, and stem-cell research.

The presumption that the Church had become politically liberal and progressive was encouraged by the writings of the two popes who oversaw Vatican II. John XXIII promulgated two major encyclicals and, as mentioned above, *Mater et Magistra*, in particular, was criticized by *National Review*. In fact, however, that encyclical was a sensible essay on Catholic social doctrine as it had developed to that time, and it appeared that conservative criticism of it was about its utopian tone or presumed intent rather than its specific provisions. Paul VI, on the other hand, in his document (not an encyclical) *Populorum Progressio* expressed a deep concern for justice for the Third World and condemned the economic policies of the First World.¹² Not merely progressive, but radical, dimensions of Catholic social doctrine were rapidly developed by the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM), which explicitly deployed Marxist themes and language to denounce American capitalism. A major contribution of CELAM was to promote the doctrine of the preferential option for the poor, which quickly became the usual standard by which social and economic policies were judged and promoted by the American bishops and the USCCB.¹³

The bishops promulgated a pastoral letter entitled *Economic Justice for All* in the 1980s that was meant to be a guide

for Catholic social action emerging from public hearings on economic issues, a new approach to writing such documents.¹⁴ Despite the open manner in which opinions were sought and the importance of the topic, the letter was a failure, since it was basically a committee document with a general tendency toward progressive social and economic reform but whose recommendations did not consistently make sense. Unlike a previous pastoral letter by the bishops on nuclear war, the letter on the economy made no splash on the national scene.

The left-wing social policies advocated by Catholic liberals after the Second Vatican Council were as much influenced by contemporary liberal thought as by the Gospels. The preferential option for the poor reflects the argument of the liberal political philosopher John Rawls that economic and social inequalities can only be justified by their positive effect on the poorest in society.¹⁵ It is noteworthy that the preferential option marks a significant departure from the Church’s previous concern reflected in the social encyclicals of earlier popes. The point of these earlier encyclicals was to provide a moral argument on behalf of workingmen and their families, who were seen as far less powerful than the owners of factories and commercial enterprises employing them. In the process of rapid industrialization, the Church was anxious to protect those people who had left farms in large numbers to become factory workers in large cities.¹⁶ The preferential option for the poor, however, has displaced the Church’s concern for productive workers to those who are at the bottom rung of society and do not or cannot contribute to it. In this manner, the Church has, in effect, turned its back on middle-class workers and taxpayers, who no longer appear to need its advocacy. It now seems as if in promoting the prefer-

ential option in an age of global expansion of an industrial, capitalist economy, the Church seeks to draw attention to those who cannot be participants in its expansion. Catholic advocates of progressive social doctrine in America are inclined to equate the preferential option for the poor directly with the expansion of welfare state benefits and must have found it disconcerting when Pope John Paul II in his last social encyclical declared that the “social assistance state,” that is, the welfare state, was not a reflection of gospel concern for the poor and that the free market was valuable as a means of distribution.¹⁷

The downside of the liberal influence in the Catholic Church can be seen in its effects. First, the promotion of engagement in the world as the preferred Christian vocation following Vatican II resulted in many priests and nuns’ leaving their vocations and a precipitous decline in new entrants to these vocations on which the Church depends for its existence. Social activism trumps sacramental dedication in the liberal church. Second, liberal churchmen and -women doubt the legitimacy of the Church’s claim to be a divinely founded institution and argue that the Church should cultivate a dramatically humbler idea of itself. Liberals argue on principle against the Church’s putative triumphalism and think that the only sufficient act of reparation for Catholic anti-Semitism is a degree of self-abnegation tantamount to institutional suicide.¹⁸ There is in the liberal church, a general spirit of anti-authoritarianism reaching beyond resentment of the imperious attitude of priests and prelates in the immigrant church. Rather, it is an attitude that denies or seeks to downplay the relevance of historical norms and institutional structures present in the Church. The absolutism of moral rules, the male priesthood, the existence of hell, and the authority of the pope are attacked

as if no impediment to radical reform of the Church or restriction of any kind on an individual’s personal belief or behavior is acceptable. The existence of the Catholic Church in its historical form is seen by liberals as an impediment to the attainment of true freedom and earthly perfection.

The Conservative Church

It was not long before a backlash began against the liberals who had dominated and set the terms of the reforms, first by tradition-minded priests and lay Catholics, but subsequently at the level of the papacy.¹⁹ The accession of John Paul II to the papacy seems providential in this regard. Liberal critics see him as a figure of reaction, yet John Paul II and his successor Benedict XVI were not setting the Church’s clock back to where it was prior to the beginning of Vatican II. Instead these two popes were bringing forth the intended aims of the Council, for it seemed to them that the effects of the Council had gone too far. John Paul and Benedict are not reactionaries in full, but representatives of an ecclesiastical Thermidorean reaction fighting against the excesses of post-conciliar reforms and attempting to return the Church to the true form originally envisioned by the Council fathers. It was never intended by the bishops of the Council that ancient Catholic traditions be abolished, so among these reforms is a greater willingness to have the old Tridentine Rite (the Extraordinary Form) of the Mass made available to those who want it, and lately, to put brief sections of Latin into the vernacular Mass (the Ordinary Form or *Novus Ordo*); Catholics in favor of liturgical reform portray this as a complete about-face rather than an accommodation. However, John Paul II did forcefully squelch the movement for female priests even as he rode triumphantly in parades throughout major cities in all parts of the world.

During his long papacy John Paul II wrote and sent out to the world a large number of writings addressing spiritual, but just as often cultural, political, and economic issues. There were important encyclicals opposing moral and epistemological relativism and another on the relation of faith to reason aimed at Catholic theologians but of direct interest to philosophers and intellectuals concerned with the topic.²⁰ There were other writings as well, but it was by his very presence as a charismatic leader who often outshone the politicians with whom he appeared that John Paul II was influential, reviving confidence among many Catholics about their faith and, not incidentally, inspiring many young Catholic men to become priests. It was by his charismatic presence that he inspired the Solidarity movement in Poland, and his conspiratorial maneuvering with Zbigniew Brzezinski (also a native-born Pole), the American labor movement, and President Reagan was instrumental in bringing down the Communist regimes in Poland and Eastern Europe and eventually in Russia itself.²¹ The papacy of John Paul II was enormously influential, because it revived the sense of Catholic tradition and brought to fulfillment the Church's anti-Communist policy in Europe.

There is a parallel conservative church consisting of educational institutions, publishing houses, and a television network existing alongside the liberal church. Among them are colleges including the University of Dallas, Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ave Maria College and Law School, and Thomas More College, mostly newly formed institutions, often founded by laymen, with a traditionalist or conservative bent (Thomas More and other traditionalist colleges often advertise in *National Review*). These colleges are more likely to produce priests and nuns from among their alumni, on a

relative basis and possibly an absolute basis, than the older, more established Catholic colleges and universities. There are several conservative Catholic journals including *Crisis* (formerly *Catholicism in Crisis*), founded by Ralph McInerney and Michael Novak, while the *National Catholic Register* is the traditionalist weekly counterpart to the liberal *National Catholic Reporter*. Ignatius Press, founded by Joseph Fessio, S.J., is the largest provider of books, Bibles, DVDs, and audio recordings for the conservative church. The most unique and visible element of the conservative church is the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN), founded by a charismatic nun, Mother Angelica and directly supported by its viewers. EWTN broadcasts 24/7 and produces most of its programming from Irondale, Alabama.

The Catholic Church in America shares certain religious and cultural tendencies with Protestantism in its multifarious forms. One such shared tendency is with evangelical and tradition-minded Protestants who have brought great attention to the need for the restoration of traditional values and of opposition to the recent secularization of American politics. Conservative Catholics and traditionally minded Protestants have combined forces on social issues including abortion and the sexualization of the media, and traditional Christians of all denominations enthusiastically received Mel Gibson's *Passion of the Christ*.²² Protestantism and Catholicism, which historically have been at loggerheads, found themselves with a great deal in common in the face of secularization and moral relativism, a coming together that has provided significant support for the conservative movement in America.

The Catholic Church Divided

The dilemma of American Catholicism is that it is in a situation of profound internal

conflict between those roughly characterized as left-wing, liberal, or progressive, on one side, and right-wing or conservative on the other. This internal split affects the manner in which doctrines are interpreted and understood, the way that individual Catholics practice their religion, and their opinions about politics, culture, and the role of the Church in the public arena. It is possible, and indeed likely, that a conservative Catholic will disagree with an official statement of the American Catholic bishops expressed through their official organization, the USCCB.²³ On the other hand, it is often the case that a liberal Catholic will disagree with papal pronouncements and policies that contradict the “spirit” of Vatican II, which, albeit indefinite, seemed to promise a greater freedom of opinions and actions within the Church. It is possible for either a liberal or a conservative to be a “good Catholic,” that is, one who attends Mass regularly, is loyal to the Church, and tries to obey the Commandments. However, it is likely that liberals will eschew traditional Catholic practices such as Eucharistic adoration, the Rosary, or devotions to specific saints such as Therese of Lisieux, and will support the ordination of women to the priesthood. The liberal mindset tends to make the Catholic religion rest on its concern for the poor and on social activism while downplaying traditional Catholic expressions of the evils of sin and the need for reparation. In Catholic Masses today, it is usual that almost all the congregants receive Communion even as very few Catholics go to confession any more, an anomalous situation that is more likely the result of “feel good” apologetics within the Church than a decisive increase in the holiness of most Catholics. The conservative mindset remains alive to the existence of evil in the world and the necessity to combat it and is particularly energized by the presence of

abortion, which it sees as a scandalous fault of contemporary American society. Conservative Catholics will participate in traditional devotions and may look favorably upon the Extraordinary Form of the Mass.

In the 1980s Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago proposed a “seamless garment” solution to the divisions between the liberal and conservative trends in the Church.²⁴ Bernardin’s approach sought to combine the energy of the anti-abortion movement, which characterizes the conservative church, and apply it to the broader social concerns of the liberal church. Thus poverty, prejudice, the environment, and inequities in housing and education would be included as “life” issues with the hope that the same degree of spontaneous intensity that the Catholic faithful bring to the abortion issue would be applied to these social issues. The seamless garment appeal did not take hold, although the broader social issues are still sometimes referred to in the rhetoric of the institutional Church as “life issues.” The main reason for its failure seems to be not so much resistance to social justice among conservative Catholics but a result of their greater concern about abortion. The ferocious defense of abortion rights in secular culture reflects an overall sensibility that desacralizes human life and has been expanded to harvesting embryonic stem cells, cloning, euthanasia, and assisted suicide. Allied movements include the legalization of homosexual marriage and a sexualization of the popular culture so extensive that even secular critics are presently noticing and condemning it.²⁵ The power of these aggressively secular and immoral movements within American society presents a clear and present danger according to Catholic morality, and shocks the conscience of Catholics (and many others) more than inequalities in housing and income.

The accusation is often made that Catholics today are “cafeteria Catholics,” accepting those practices and doctrines of the Church of which they personally approve and neglecting or ignoring those they don’t. This claim might seem to be evenhandedly applied to both the liberal and conservative positions within the Church, the liberals ignoring the Church on abortion, sexual morality, and authority, the conservatives ignoring the Church on poverty, social justice, and capital punishment. However, the claim more clearly applies to the liberal positions, since the immorality of abortion is a matter of clear definition, as are homosexual acts and living together without benefit of sacramental marriage, while both doctrinally and historically, the Catholic Church defended the authority of bishops and the pope. On the other hand, the conservative position on poverty does not deny the central mission of Christians to help the poor but questions how it is to be done. Welfare-state solutions to poverty, health concerns, and social inequalities meet with sharp conservative opposition, which gives a false impression that conservatives are indifferent to suffering. Conservatives will depend on free-market solutions for systemic problems in the economy and emphasize the personal obligation to help the poor we meet and among whom we live, rather than supporting massive government programs whose inefficiency and wastefulness is notorious. (Dorothy Day, a heroine of liberal Catholicism, opposed the government welfare programs of Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson.²⁶) Regarding the death penalty, according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, imposition of the penalty is allowable, although significant criteria must be met if the death penalty is to be licitly administered.²⁷

Through the USCCB and the allied Campaign for Human Development,

the institutional Church promotes what amounts to a left-wing agenda and often exerts its considerable influence on behalf of liberal governmental programs. This approach makes an appeal to liberal elites who often tout their own sense of compassion for the poverty-stricken and alienated, but in America, as in developed nations worldwide, the liberal elites tend to be explicitly secular to the point of excluding religion from their purview.²⁸ While secular liberals may accept the help of the Church in lobbying for the extension of food stamps or loosened immigration standards, those same elites promote gay marriage, abortion, and embryonic stem-cell research just as strongly, if not more. Thus any appeal to secular liberal elites has a downside since it legitimizes positions that the Church finds immoral, even as the liberal church refuses to appeal to the business, financial, or entrepreneurial communities for support.

Embracing the Church’s “Inner Conservatism”

The conflict between liberals and conservatives within the Church results in mixed messages going out from its bishops, so that the majority of Catholics in the last presidential election voted for Barack Obama even though he is a firm supporter of abortion rights. One of the causes of the Catholic majority vote for Obama was a document put out by the bishops called “Conscience and Your Vote,” which encouraged Catholic voters to consider candidates’ positions on topics other than abortion in coming to a decision on their vote.²⁹ The document followed a common liberal argument within the Church that abortion need not be the decisive issue in voting for a political candidate. The dilemma for the bishops and Catholic liberals is that political candidates who are “pro-life” are almost always conservative

on such issues as welfare, housing, immigration, the death penalty, and war, so that making abortion the decisive issue effectively results in the institutional Church's supporting Republican candidates.

Another conflict between the Church's liberal and conservative impulses arises from the Campaign for Human Development, the Church's official arm supporting Saul Alinsky-style direct action to offset social injustice. The annual appeal made at Sunday Masses nationwide to support the CHD met with more-than-usual resistance this year because of the revelation that CHD had been contributing monies to ACORN, which has recently been accused of engaging in systematic voter fraud. One local pastor distributed the self-exonerating statement put out by Bishop Morin regarding relations between the CHD and ACORN, but added to it his own statement that left it to the consciences of individual members of his congregation whether or not to contribute to the annual collection for the CHD.³⁰

The exception to the left-wing agenda of the USCCB are the issues involving sex and reproduction, but in the present context this is not merely a broad exception to the Church's liberalism; it is a disqualifying exception. No matter how progressive it may be on issues such as poverty and immigration, the Church's opposition to abortion, gay marriage, cloning, embryonic stem-cell research, in-vitro fertilization, and euthanasia, and its refusal to ordain women to the priesthood mean inevitably that in the context of secular American culture, the Catholic Church will not be seen as progressive. On the contrary, the Church continues to be seen as a retrograde force by progressively inclined people, including those within the Church.

Culturally, the Church continues to be seen as a bulwark of social conservatism,

in its doctrines and practices the last institutional resistance to moral relativism and absolute personal freedom within American culture. This evokes tremendous opposition amounting to a new form of American anti-Catholicism. The original source of American anti-Catholicism was Protestant doctrine and anti-immigrant sentiment, most of which has been overcome as the general Catholic population has become integrated into American society. The new form of anti-Catholicism is based on the Church's doctrines regarding sex and reproduction, as well as its explicit declaration that an objective moral code based on divine inspiration exists.³¹ The new anti-Catholicism is ideological and is based on the progressive belief in personal autonomy completely free from any social connectedness and opposition to any putative authority seeking to impose social control or promote a public moral standard. Catholic attempts to influence the culture with reference to an objective moral order have been seriously undercut by the recent pedophilia scandal. But the conflict remains, and the Church's explicitly progressive policies promoted by USCCB lobbying and CHD agitation do not and almost certainly cannot overcome the implied conservatism of its actions on behalf of the truth of divinely inspired moral teaching. In effect the Catholic Church today in America is politically liberal but culturally conservative. But in the context of the increasing secularization of American culture, it is its cultural conservatism that will increasingly characterize the countercultural position of the Catholic Church in America.

Those currently called "conservative" within the Church often started out as defenders of the Church's traditional practices and its doctrines whose motive was not to promulgate a conservative political philosophy within the Church. But like

“neocons” in the political arena they often find themselves called “conservative” and relegated to an outer darkness by liberals within the Church, although their center of gravity lies in religious rather than political or economic concerns. (A well-known Franciscan preacher active in the pro-life movement has felt compelled to say, “We are not conservatives.”) Nonetheless, on the issues of abortion, church authority, and promotion of traditional devotions, the aims of these religious traditionalists coincide with the conservative mindset. But a crisis is coming and in fact has arrived, and as a result the Catholic Church

in America will have to embrace her inner conservatism, even though this will strike many Catholics as unseemly. The Church will be better off, however, by dropping its attempt to appeal to liberals and extending a more benign attitude to those peculiarly American traditions of entrepreneurialism, personal independence, dislike of big government, and the middle-class values of hard work and toleration that have enabled Catholics in America to achieve an unparalleled degree of integration and success—and which provide the universal Catholic Church with a model of how best to meet the new conditions of postmodernity.

1 However, historian Patrick Allitt has been attentive to the connection. See his *Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America, 1950–1985* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993) and *The Conservatives* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 180–81, 167, 264–65. **2** On Buckley’s attitude toward the Latin Mass, see Rev. George W. Rutler, Buckley’s confessor, at www.catholic.org/national/national_story.php?id=27680. **3** Gary Wills, then writing for *National Review*, coined the magazine’s sarcastic slogan about *Mater et Magistra*, “Mater si, Magistra no,” in Gary Wills, *Confessions of A Conservative* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), 44. **4** Kirk published *The Conservative Mind* in 1953 and converted to Catholicism in 1964. **5** See John Courtney Murray, S.J., *We Hold These Truths* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960), which argued for a natural-law basis for the American constitution. However, natural law theory is less encouraged by the Church than in 1960, since it has been seen as a block to conversations with other religious denominations; see Allitt, *Catholic Intellectuals*, 297. **6** The Second Vatican Council produced a “Declaration on Religious Freedom” (*Dignitatis Humanae*). The declaration is contained in Walter M. Abbott, S.J., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: America Press, 1966), 672–700, and has an introduction by John Courtney Murray, S.J., the American Jesuit often given credit for promoting *Dignitatis Humanae* during the Council proceedings. **7** Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 145–50. **8**

John Paul II, *On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum* (Boston: St. Paul Books, 1991), 49–50. **9** A summary of the liberal agenda is given by one of its prominent advocates: “Vatican II signaled a change in the Church’s war against modernity . . . [t]he rights of women, the end of patriarchal autocracy, the restoration of simple honesty, the recovery from clericalism, the place of the laity, the abandonment of denominational narcissism in relation to other churches, the affirmation of sexuality. . . .” James Carroll, *Constantine’s Sword* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 548. **10** The authority of local bishops was reaffirmed in the Second Vatican Council’s “Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church,” Abbott, *Documents of Vatican II*, 396–421. **11** Brian Benestad, *The Pursuit of a Just Social Order: Policy Statements of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1966–80* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1982). **12** The text of *Populorum Progressio*, “On the Development of Peoples,” is in Joseph Gremillion, *The Gospel of Peace and Justice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1976), 387–416. **13** The preferential option for the poor was first given explicit description in a CELAM document at a meeting in Medellín in 1968 and given to the whole Church in Paul VI’s 1971 encyclical *Octogesima Adveniens*; see Gremillion, *Gospel*, 474, 496. **14** National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice For All* (Washington, D.C., 1986). **15** John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 60–82, describes a principle of justice, the “difference principle,” which

stipulates that inequalities in a society are justified only if they work to the advantage of the least advantaged. Rawls's reliance on economic and formal logical models to make his point is very different in tone from the hortatory and sometimes prophetic language of the Latin American bishops and papal encyclicals, but the point is the same: economic policy is to be directed first to the poor. **16** The Catholic tradition of papal instruction on modern economic and political matters began with Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and is often cited by his successors when commenting on social and political matter. See Pope John XXIII in *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and John Paul II in *On the Hundredth Anniversary (Centesimus Annus)* (1991). **17** John Paul II, *On the Hundredth Anniversary*: on the free market, 40 (par. 34); on the "social assistance state," 68 (par. 48). **18** Gary Wills, *Papal Sin* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 309–11. James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), requires a "reform" so vast that the self-identity of the Church would be destroyed; Carroll, "A Call for Vatican III," 547–604. **19** George A. Kelley, *Battle for the American Church (Revisited)* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 10, 11. **20** *Fides et Ratio* (1998). **21** George Weigel, *Witness to Hope* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2001), 441, 445. Weigel asserts categorically that there was no "conspiracy" between John Paul and Reagan, although their interests and view of Communism coincided. **22** *The New York Times* (Feb. 5, 2004), "Some Christians See 'Passion' as Evangelism Tool," by Laurie Good-

stein. **23** The USCCB was formed in 2001 by combining the National Conference of Catholic Bishops with the U.S. Catholic Conference. The USCCB was the policy arm of the bishops, and that function is still carried out under the authority of USCCB. **24** Cardinal Bernardin's "seamless garment" proposal combining opposition to abortion and the death penalty was first called a "consistent ethic of life" by him in a 1983 speech at Fordham University. See conservative reaction by Joseph Sobran at www.sobran.com/columns/2005/050816.shtml. **25** John Caiazza, *War of the Jesus and Darwin Fishes* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 154–57. **26** William D. Miller, *A Harsh and Dreadful Love: Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement* (New York: Liveright, 1973), x, xi, 81–84. **27** *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Boston: St. Paul Books, 1994), 546, par. 2266. **28** The case of the constitution proposed for the European Union is well-known: in a five hundred-page document, there was no mention of the Christian origins of European civilization, either Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox. See Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) and Pera, Marcello, *Without Roots*, trans. M. Moore (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 35–36. **29** www.usccb.org/bishops/FCBullinsert.pdf. **30** Report of Bishop Roger Morin, Chairman Subcommittee on Catholic Campaign for Human Development on CCHD and ACORN at http://www.nccbuscc.org/cchd/morin_acorn_report.shtml **31** See John Paul II's encyclical, *The Splendor of Truth* (Boston: St. Paul Books, 1993).