

## Introduction

This issue of the *Josephinum Journal of Theology* offers a rich collection of essays centered on the theme of Catholicism in America (i.e., the United States). These studies have been written primarily by historians specializing in American Catholicism, and include contributions from several of the most distinguished scholars in this field, representing the leading Catholic universities in the United States. Given the complexity of the subject matter and ongoing debate among scholars who try to make sense of the history of American Catholicism, these essays reflect a variety of perspectives, which are not necessarily those of this journal.

The essays are arranged in a roughly historical order. In the first, Kathleen S. Cummings of the University of Notre Dame sheds light on the much overlooked role of Catholic women religious, and especially teaching nuns. She considers their contribution to the progressive era of the 1890s-1920s, in which reformers responded to myriad changes initiated by the industrial revolution. Cummings discusses how such women were recruited into the religious life, the assumptions behind their basically unpaid labor – which made possible the vast educational and charitable apostolates of twentieth century Catholicism – and the significant contribution these women made to the American progressive movement of this era. In the second article, William L. Portier of the University of Dayton introduces us to the depression-era (1935-1941) work of Fr. Paul Hanly Furfey, a sociologist at the Catholic University of America. Portier shows how Furfey's use of terms such as "Catholic Extremism," "supernatural sociology," and "new social Catholicism" are a reflection of his distinctively Catholic response to the social challenges of the great depression. For Portier, Furfey's spiritually vibrant and socially committed Catholicism should be seen not as an historical artifact but as a neglected resource that may have much to teach the contemporary Church in a time of economic and social distress.

The third essay is by Steven M. Avella of Marquette University, who traces the emergence of what he calls "sunbelt Catholicism" in the decades following World War II (and especially the 1950s). He does so with particular attention to the cities of Phoenix and Las Vegas, and indicates how the institutional growth of the Church in these areas involved both similarities to, and differences from, that in the East and Midwest. In the fourth contribution, Robert E. Carbonneau, CP offers an introduction to the life and work of Passionist Father Barnabas Ahern, CP, who was an American Scripture scholar and *peritus* at the Second Vatican Council. After a biographical introduction, Carbonneau summarizes some of the activities of Ahern preceding the fourth session of the council in 1965. These activities were centered in a rigorous schedule of global travel and lecturing. Carbonneau concludes with a review of an interview given by Ahern regarding his impressions of the Council.

In the fifth essay, James O'Toole of Boston College spans the pre and post

conciliar eras to provide a case study of the profound changes in religious attitudes and practice that followed the council. He looks in particular at what was previously called the sacrament of “extreme unction,” and explains how its meaning and practice were deeply transformed to become our contemporary “anointing of the sick.” Our sixth essay is by Joseph Chinnici, OFM, of the Franciscan School of Theology (Berkeley), whose historical specialty is Catholic prayer and practice in the United States. His essay covers a broader historical range (1930-1996) to consider three different understandings of suffering that were prominent in American Catholicism in the twentieth century: one juridical; one sectarian; and one centered on compassionate solidarity. Chinnici discusses how these emphases were influenced by cultural and theological factors, and how they illustrate the richness of the Catholic tradition. In the seventh essay, Perry Cahall of the Pontifical College Josephinum offers a case study of another aspect of post conciliar Catholicism, the secularization of Catholic institutions of higher education. In particular, he considers the case of Webster College of St. Louis, which was the first U.S. Catholic college to become a legally secular institution, which it did through a process announced in January of 1967 and completed by that November. In so doing, Cahall explains the rationale given to initiate the change in both administrative form and juridical status, and the process of implementing these changes. He concludes that Webster provides an example to be remembered in the ongoing discussions regarding the Catholic identity of universities. In particular, it illustrates a case in which an institution lost its connection to the Catholic Church and tradition.

Our eighth essay, by Francis J. Beckwith of Baylor University, offers helpful insights into another important phenomenon of contemporary Catholicism: the relation and affinity between Evangelical Protestantism and Catholicism. This essay, which is part autobiographical, was written in light of the author’s 2007 reversion to Catholicism from Evangelicalism, and his resulting resignation as president of the Evangelical Theological Society. In presenting his argument that the same society should allow Catholic members (because he thinks a Catholic could then adhere to the society’s original, but subsequently revised, statement of belief), Beckwith gives a unique perspective on this important aspect of contemporary Catholic life. The ninth essay addresses another topic of considerable importance for a proper understanding of the past, present and especially the future of the Catholic Church in the United States: the role of Latinos. In this article, Timothy Matovina of the University of Notre Dame demonstrates why traditional understandings of the history of U.S. Catholicism need to be augmented to recognize better the place of Latinos. He does so by tracing the history of the settlement of Latinos in territories that are now part of the United States, and by discussing the important role of new Latino immigrants who have arrived over the last several decades. Considered together, these Latinos are effecting a significant reshaping of American Catholicism.

In the tenth essay, Christopher Ruddy of the University of St. Thomas (St. Paul, MN) presents an overview and evaluation of Andrew Greeley's work as a commentator on post conciliar American Catholicism. In his commentary on Greeley's immense and influential body of work, Ruddy notes Greeley's fundamental characteristics of being unabashedly liberal while distinctively Catholic. In discussing Greeley's work, he gives particular attention to the polarizing debate surrounding *Humanae Vitae*. Ruddy concludes with some theological reflections on Greeley's contributions to post-conciliar American Catholicism. In the eleventh essay, Patrick Carey of Marquette University offers us a selection from his forthcoming work on the thought of Avery Dulles, in which he gives particular attention to how Dulles's emphases shifted in light of his readings of the signs of the times. Carey gives special attention to Dulles's shifts in emphasis, thereby illustrating his characteristics as a theologian who was well aware of the need for both continuity with the tradition and ongoing development, especially in the conciliar era.

The twelfth and final contribution is a recent lecture by David J. O'Brien of the College of the Holy Cross (Worcester, MA). I will introduce it at greater length as some readers might find aspects of it provocative. O'Brien offers an interpretation of the trajectory of American Catholic history, drawing for this notion upon the work of Peter Steinfels. He rightly notes that having such an overall framework within which to understand our past, present and future is important for understanding our ongoing experience. In agreement with a wide range of scholars, he argues that the Church needs to recover a stronger sense of identity and mission. In what is now a more contested move (given the rise, among contemporary Catholic thinkers, of radical critics of liberal societies characterized by constitutional democracy and a free economy), he suggests that this is best done through the renewal of an Americanist perspective, which in previous decades had encouraged Catholics with lofty aspirations of "making America." In particular, it orders Catholics toward this end of contributing to the shape of America through an identity as citizens in solidarity with others, as distinguished from a sectarian identity.

In encouraging such a perspective, O'Brien challenges Catholics of more recent years for their "retreat from shared responsibility," both in society and within the Church. Against the pre conciliar withdrawal of Catholics to their own subculture, and against the recent tendency toward a Catholic counter-culture centered on disagreement with broader public policies that undermine respect for human life, O'Brien advocates the cultivation of a greater concern for, and participation in, public life. In this context, he argues for the cultivation of solidarity with our fellow citizens, and a policy of respectful persuasion as opposed to one marked by protest regarding disputed moral issues. Regarding the phenomenon of evangelical Catholicism, and granting the different aspects of it, O'Brien notes how contemporary society is one of religious seekers, who are inclined to act based on conviction, not authority. In this context, he argues that the Church will

be most successful if it welcomes such persons, treats them in a way that respects their freedom of conscience, nourishes their spiritual growth, and helps them to find God's will in their daily lives.

His essay, therefore, provides an excellent occasion to think about questions central to the life of the Church. It is our hope that this issue of the *Josephinum Journal of Theology* will encourage readers to become serious students of American Catholic History, and that this ongoing intellectual engagement will help them to foster – in this historical and cultural context – what John Paul II has called a new evangelization.

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