

American Catholic Studies Newsletter



**Center for the Study
of American Catholicism**

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A.C.H.A. Survey of Diocesan Archives

Rev. Thomas E. Blantz, C.S.C., director of the committee on American Catholicism of the American Catholic Historical Association, has completed a survey of materials preserved in diocesan archives. In 1978 the committee began to compile a listing of research materials preserved in American diocesan archives. The survey sought information on five classes of records (Correspondence; Baptismal, Marriage and Burial Records; Financial Records; Personnel Records; and Records of Diocesan Agencies and Organizations) and inquired whether such records were preserved, what were the approximate dates, and whether they were available for research. One hundred and twenty-eight dioceses responded; each reply has been reduced to a standard form, and this compilation is available for four dollars (to cover duplicating and postage) to anyone requesting a copy from Rev. Thomas E. Blantz, C.S.C., Department of History, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Ind. 46556.

American Committee for Irish Studies

The American Committee for Irish Studies (ACIS) operating out of the English Department of the University of Miami, Coral Gables, Fla., publishes a newsletter four times annually edited by Patrick A. McCarthy. The newsletter contains bibliographic notices, book reviews, announcements for various Irish study conferences, and other notes of interest in the field of Irish studies. It has also recently published A Guide to Irish Studies in the United States compiled by Maureen Murphy of Hofstra University, which lists Irish courses being taught in over 600 universities in America. Membership dues for ACIS are six dollars for individuals and institutions and three dollars for students. Membership inquiry should be directed to Prof. Thomas E. Hachey, ACIS Treasurer, Department of History, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wis. 53233.

Immigration History Research Center Receives NEH Grant

The Immigration History Research Center (IHRC) of the University of Minnesota has been awarded a three-year challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The NEH will contribute \$225,000 contingent upon the University of Minnesota raising \$675,000 in matching funds. Income from the endowment will allow for three kinds of activities (1) Documentation--searching out and acquiring ethnic materials and preserving them by microfilming and other means, (2) Research--a grants and aid fund for assistance to visiting scholars for work in the IHRC collec-

tions and (3) Interpretation and Dissemination--a symposium fund for conferences on immigration and ethnicity, a publications fund for publication and distribution of conference proceedings, bibliographies, documentary volumes, a newsletter and other materials.

Catholic Child-Saving Agencies-- Information Needed

Patricia Rooke and R.L. Schnell are engaged in a major study examining Canadian child-saving agencies and organizations of the early 19th and 20th centuries. During their research they have come across a number of Catholic institutions and child emigration societies, and are interested in finding what secondary literature there is on equivalent counterparts (e.g., Childrens Aid Societies, Orphanages, Catholic Working Boys Home--indeed anything at all related to the concept of child-saving). Anyone having information on or doing work in this area should contact R.L. Schnell at the University of Calgary, 2920 24 Avenue, N.W., Calgary, Canada, T2N 1N4, c/o the Department of Educational Foundations.

The Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies

The Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies began publication of a newsletter entitled New Dimensions in October 1979 to provide information on the institute's programs and achievements. M. Mark Stolarik is the executive director of the institute. The institute has also published A Selected List of Newspaper and Manuscript Holdings dealing with North American Immigration history and ethnicity. For more information, contact The Balch Institute of Ethnic Studies, 18 South 7th Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19106.

Texas Catholic Historical Society

The rejuvenated Texas Catholic Historical Society held its annual meeting in March of this year in Austin, Texas, examining the theme "The Church in 19th-Century Texas." The society rededicated itself "to discover, to research, to publish and generally to promote the study of the Roman Catholic history of the State of Texas," and to create a central depository for the collection of historical materials pertaining to Roman Catholic history in the State of Texas, namely the Catholic Archives of Texas to be located at Austin, Texas. The T.C.H.S. Newsletter is in its fifth year of publication. Membership fees are \$2.50 and inquiries should be directed to Sister M. Dolores, Catholic Archives of Texas, Box 13327, Capital Station, Austin, Texas 78711.

New York Historical Resources Center

The Historians-in-Residence program at Cornell University is compiling a list of scholars who work on New York local history. They are interested in persons who have a professional degree in New York State local history, or who have completed research, taught courses, prepared public lectures, exhibits or given demonstrations in the local history of New York State. Persons interested should send a brief sketch of their local history interests, including name, mailing address, phone number, professional degree (if any), titles of New York State local history publications or projects, and current research interests. Please direct all communications to Anne M. Klejment, Administrator, Historians-in-Residence Program, New York Historical Resources Center, 502 Olin Library, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853, or call (607) 256-4614.

Center for Migration Studies

The Center for Migration Studies recently coordinated a project to obtain information on Italian culture in the United States. This project has been completed and a new directory will be published. The title of the forthcoming volume is Italian Culture in the United States: National Directory of Research Centers, Repositories and Organizations of Italian Culture in the United States, by Silvano M. Tomasi. This volume can be obtained by writing to Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, Via Ormea, 37, 10125 Torino, Italy. The Center for Migration Studies also recently received a \$15,000 grant from the Pope Foundation to help establish an endowment program for the center.

Diocesan Archivists Meeting

In February, representatives of 32 American dioceses and archdioceses gathered in San Antonio, Texas, for the second annual meeting of diocesan archivists. Included in the meeting was a four-day workshop to train archivists. At the meeting the archivists also discussed several subjects of interest to historians and made specific recommendations to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops regarding the access and use of sacramental records and the disposition of archival records when new dioceses are formed. The next meeting of the Diocesan Archivists will be in September 1980 in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Notre Dame Studies in American Catholicism

Once again the center will sponsor a competition to select for publication the best manuscript in American Catholic studies. The award-winning manuscript will be published by the University of Notre Dame Press. Scholars interested in entering this competition for the coming year should send one copy of their manuscript by Sept. 1, 1980 to Director, Center for the Study of American Catholicism, 1109 Memorial Library, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Ind. 46556.

Graduate Assistantships

The Department of Social Foundations, Faculty of Educational Studies, State University of New York at Buffalo is pleased to announce the availability of at least four graduate assistantships in the field of history of education and related areas. These assistantships are available to qualified doctoral students and are awarded on a

competitive basis. The assistantship provides a stipend of approximately \$3,400 and remission of tuition fees. The Department of Social Foundations offers a doctoral program in the History of Education, Philosophy of Education, Sociology of Education, and Comparative Education. Persons interested in this program should contact Prof. Philip G. Altbach, Department of Social Foundations, State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY 14260.

Publications

Many notices of recently published books cross our desk and we would like to share these with you from time to time.

Marrietta Lynn Baba, Mexicans of Detroit, Part of the Peopling of Michigan/Ethnic Studies Series (Center for Urban Studies, Wayne State University, Detroit, 1979).

T. William Bolts, The Catholic Experience in America, (Benziger Brothers, 1980). The book is designed for upper-division high school students and adult study groups.

Rev. Harry M. Culkin, archivist of the Diocese of Brooklyn, Guide to Current Catholic Diocesan Newspapers in Microfilm, (N.Y., 1979). Copies of the guide are available by sending \$3 payable to Father Culkin at Cathedral College, 7213 Douglaston Parkway, Douglaston, NY 11362.

Anne M. Klejment, The Berrigans: A Bibliography of Published Works by Daniel, Philip, and Elizabeth McAlister Berrigan (New York: Garland, 1979). The book contains a list of the Berrigans' work, with completed indexes, an annotated section on works about the Berrigans and an introductory essay on their activities.

Salvatore J. LaGumina, The Immigrants Speak: Italian Americans Tell Their Story (Center for Migration Studies, 209 Flagg Place, Staten Island, New York, 10304). Based on 13 oral histories.

Robert W. Lynn and Elliot Wright, The Big Little School: A History of the Sunday School, Second edition, revised and enlarged. (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1979.)

Gerald McKeivitt, S.J., The University of Santa Clara: A History 1851-1977, (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1979).

Francis Messner, Théologie ou Religiologie: Les Revues De Religion Aux USA (Strasbourg: Cerdic Publications 1978). This study examines the American periodicals of religion and can be obtained from Cerdic, Palais Universitaire, 9 Place, de l'Université, 67084 Strasbourg CEDEX - France.

Charles E. Nolan, Bayou Carmel: The Sisters of Mount Carmel of Louisiana (Kenner: Charles E. Nolan, 1977). Available through Academy Enterprises, Box 73354, Mairie, La. 70033.

William M. Halsey, The Survival of American Innocence: Catholicism in an Era of Disillusionment 1920-1940, Notre Dame Studies in American Catholicism, Number 2 (Notre Dame, Ind., University of Notre Dame Press, 1980).



Personal Notices

Christine M. Bochen of Nazareth College recently completed a dissertation, "Personal Narratives Written by 19th-Century Converts to Roman Catholicism: A Study in Conversational Literature" at the Catholic University of America.

Saul E. Bronder of St. Vincent College in Latrobe, Pa., recently completed a dissertation at Columbia University on "Archbishop Robert E. Lucey of San Antonio: Irony in Contemporary American Catholicism."

Rev. James T. Connelly, C.S.C., is now archivist for the Indiana Province of the Holy Cross Fathers. His new address is Province Archives Center, P.O. Box 568, Notre Dame, Ind. 46556.

Reinhard R. Doerries has an article, "Church and Faith on the Great Plains Frontier: Acculturation Problems of German-Americans" in the German magazine Amerikastudien-American Studies, Volume 24, No. 2.

Michael Gannon was honored by the University of Florida Alumni with the association's first biennial alumni professorship.

Prof. David A. Gerber of the State University of New York at Buffalo recently received a Fulbright Research Fellowship to study in Australia.

J. Norman King of the University of Windsor is doing work on Thomas Merton's theology of nonviolence.

Richard MacMaster of James Madison University is currently working on the Irish influence on formation of a Catholic minority in the U.S. from 1815 to 1846, especially the influence of Daniel O'Connell's emancipation and repeal movements.

Sr. Mary Lucy McDonald of the Sisters of Mercy is studying contributions of women in ministry evident in religious community archives.

Daniel Patrick O'Neill has recently completed a dissertation at the University of Minnesota entitled, "Saint Paul Priests 1851-1930: Recruitment, Formation and Mobility."

Michael Perko, S.J., is working on a dissertation at Stanford University on parochial schooling in Cincinnati for the period 1830 to 1875. He recently delivered a paper entitled, "The Building Up of Zion: Parochial Schooling in Cincinnati, 1830-1875" at a symposium on Cincinnati neighborhood schools sponsored by the Cincinnati Historical Society.

Susan Perschbacher of the University of Chicago is completing her doctoral dissertation on the conversion experience of Isaac Hecker and its reflection in the structure and mission of the community he founded, The Paulists.

K. Dieterick Pfisterer of the University of Erlangen is working on religious thought in America and Canada.

Prof. Mel Piehl of Valparaiso University recently completed a dissertation on "The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America" at Stanford University.

William Portier of Hyattsville, Md., is completing his doctoral dissertation at St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, on "America's As Providential Nation in Isaac Hecker's Theology of History."

John Prior, C.F.C., is currently doing research in three areas: the life of the founder of the Irish Christian Brothers--Edmund J. Rice; the history of the church in Waterford and Dublin, Ireland, 1768-1844; and the history of the Christian Brothers in the U.S. as well as in Ireland.

T. Radzialowski of Southwest State University in Marshall, Minn., is studying immigrant slavic workers, the relationship of Catholic religious orders and immigrant women, and the relationship of immigrants and blacks.

Karl G. Schmude, associate librarian of the University of New England (Australia), is currently studying Australian and American Catholic church history and culture.

Richard Sorrell of New Jersey is doing work on French-Americans, and the influence of Catholicism upon this ethnic group. At present he has two works under way: "Novelists and Ethnicity: Jack Kerouac and Grace Metalious as Franco-Americans" and "Religion and Militant Survivance: The Franco-American Experience in New England, 1870-1930."

Sr. Mary Majella Sullivan, R.S.M., is studying the early history of the Sisters of Mercy of Brooklyn.

Joseph A. Varacalli recently completed a doctoral dissertation at Rutgers University on "The American Catholic Call for Liberty and Justice for All: An Analysis in the Sociology of Knowledge."

Timothy Walch of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission is currently working on Irish American writers during the period 1800-1920. He is also working for the establishment and improvement of archival programs in Catholic institutions.

Lawrence D. Walker of Illinois State University has completed a project "Longevity of Priests born in the 19th Century" which studies the life spans of priests in Trier, Germany, St. Louis, Brooklyn and New York.

Joseph M. White recently completed a doctoral dissertation at the University of Notre Dame on "Religion and Community: Cincinnati Germans 1814-1817."

Margaret Ripley Wolfe of East Tennessee State University is working on an urban study of Kingsport, Tenn., 1916 to the present, and on urban immigration in America.

Research Travel Grants

The Center for the Study of American Catholicism recently awarded research travel grants to Charles Fanning and Daniel P. O'Neill. Prof. Fanning will be researching his study on the literary self-image of the American Irish. Prof. O'Neill plans to continue research on his study of the priests of the Archdiocese of St. Paul, 1851-1930.

The next competition for research travel grants will be held on June 1, 1980. Those interested in

applying for the June competition should do so as soon as possible. Application forms are available from the Center for the Study of American Catholicism.

Working Paper Series

During the past three years, the center has been producing a working paper series emanating from the American Catholic Studies Seminar. As of spring 1980, 22 working papers are currently available for purchase. This includes the fall 1979 and spring 1980 series as well as the earlier papers. Anyone interested in obtaining a list of the working paper series may do so by writing directly to the Center for American Catholicism, Room 1109 Memorial Library, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Ind. 46556. The cost per paper will be \$2.

Chicago Study Wins

Charles H. Shanabruch has been named winner of the 1979 competition for the best manuscript in American Catholic Studies. His manuscript, entitled "Toward an American Catholic Identity: The Chicago Experience," examines the impact of immigration from 1833 to 1924. It traces the development of ethnic associations and the struggle of the Roman Catholic church to maintain unity of faith in the midst of diversity. By focusing on both religion and ethnicity, Shanabruch's study explains an important aspect of the dynamics of urban development.

Shanabruch received his Ph.D. degree at the University of Chicago in 1975 and is presently the economic development coordinator for the Beverly Area Planning Association in Chicago.

This is the fourth volume to be published in the series, Notre Dame Studies in American Catholicism. Information on these volumes can be obtained directly from the University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Ind. 46556.

American Catholic Studies Seminar

The seminar met three times in the spring semester of 1980. These were the final sessions examining the theme of family and religion. In February, Prof. William D'Antonio of the University of Connecticut spoke on the topic of "Religion and the Family: Exploring a Changing Relationship." In March, Prof. Albert J. Raboteau of the University of California, Berkeley, delivered a paper on the theme of "Religion and the Slave Family." In April, Prof. James F. Smurl of Indiana University/Purdue University at Indianapolis spoke on the topic of "The Family and Social Justice: C.F.M. and Culture."

Research Projects

Theological Roots of the Anti-Semitism of Father Charles E. Coughlin and Others in the U.S.: 1934-1954

In describing the period of the 1930s in America, Sydney E. Ahlstrom states: "Americans of every type sought and found scapegoats and panaceas; racist attitudes and ethnic animosities intensified; class antagonisms sharpened. Political and religious views gravitated to the extremes; and demagogues, often with the Cross of Christ on their banners, began to gather their followers."¹ One of these

"demagogues on the Right" whom he includes in a list of seven is Fr. Charles E. Coughlin,² famous radio-priest of the pre-World War II period. Authors have written about Father Coughlin from a political and sociocultural point of view,³ but little has been discussed in terms of the theological framework out of which he might have been operating, and the intellectual underpinnings of his thought. A key question for an understanding of this period is: "What kind of a theological framework did Father Coughlin adopt which led him to make some of the rabidly anti-Semitic pronouncements which he articulated, particularly in the years 1938-1942?"

In searching for the theological roots of the anti-Semitism of Father Coughlin, one is struck by the fact that he quoted very few theologians in his speeches and writings. Of primary concern to him were the papal social encyclicals. Second to these were the writings of Fr. Denis Fahey, C.S.Sp. (1883-1954), professor of philosophy, theology and Church history at the Holy Ghost Missionary College, Kimmage, Dublin. Arnold Lunn, convert to Catholicism and author of Now I See was known to say to Father Fahey after returning from America and a visit with Father Coughlin: "Father Coughlin is a man of one book-- your book!"⁴

Who, then, was this Irish theologian who seems to have had such a substantial influence on the United States via Charles E. Coughlin, and on other Americans as well? He was born in County Tipperary in 1883, attended Rockwell College, and entered the Holy Ghost Congregation in 1900. After a novitiate year at Grignon-Orly near Paris, he returned to Ireland and received his B.A. from the Royal University in Dublin. After completing his philosophy in England and France in 1908, he was sent to study in Rome. He was ordained there in 1910, received a doctorate in philosophy from the Angelicum in 1911, and a doctorate from the Gregorian University in 1912. With the exception of the years, 1916-1919 when he was in Switzerland for reasons of health (during which time he helped as a chaplain at an internment camp during World War I, and did a year of studies at Fribourg), the rest of his years were lived in Ireland.

In a 26-page unpublished document written a few years before his death which he entitled "Apologia Pro Vita Mea," he laid out the influences upon him and upon his thought as it developed over the years. Living at the Seminaire Française in Rome during the years of the "Modernism crisis" had a profound impact on him. Fahey saw Pius X as his personal saint, and also had extraordinary reverence for Cardinal Pie of Poitiers. He was strongly influenced by Cardinal Billot, S.J., and Henri L'Floch, C.S.Sp., rector of the seminary. He concluded his time in Rome convinced that St. Thomas Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor, must be adhered to in purity of form. He made a promise to St. Peter that he would "teach the truth about His Master in the way he and his successors, the Roman Pontiffs, wanted it done."⁵

Fahey's own books and manuscripts are extensive. The most substantial volumes which set forth his "theology of history" are The Mystical Body of Christ and the Modern World (1935 - first edition), and The Mystical Body of Christ and the Reorganization of Society (1945). Other works include The Rulers of Russia (1938), The



Kingship of Christ and Organized Naturalism (1943), Money Manipulation and the Social Order (1944), and The Kingship of Christ and the Conversion of the Jewish Nation (1953). His key theme was always the kingship of Christ. He saw the world as divided into those who were for Christ and those who were against him. The counterpart of "the Mystical Body of Christ" was Satan's program of organized naturalism, a kind of "mystical body of Satan." The Jews and Freemasons were especially identified as helping to carry out the demonic programs. Control of money and government were their primary goals. As manipulators of the international money scene, and instigators of revolutions, Jews infiltrated positions of power. Fahey accepted as authentic the famous forged document The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. In his personal library (over 200 books and pamphlets which were in Fahey's room when he died, and which have been kept in a special place in the library at Kimmage by Fr. Maurice Curtin, C.S.Sp.,) more than 70 per cent are on Jews, Freemasons and money manipulation. Many of these are annotated in Fahey's own hand.

Among these are the published works of Fr. Coughlin. In the Fahey Papers there is correspondence from Coughlin indicating that Father Coughlin and his Social Justice Publishing Company had disseminated 350,000 copies of Fahey's book The Rulers of Russia.⁶ In November 1938, Coughlin even phoned Fahey from Detroit to Dublin to verify a document for one of his speeches. In the vestibule of the Shrine of the Little Flower, the center of Coughlin's movement, Fahey's books were for sale along with Coughlin's--and very little else besides.⁷

Fahey's influence on the American scene is more extensive than his communication with Coughlin. His correspondence includes letters from Myron C. Taylor, later Roosevelt's special representative to the Vatican during World War II, a letter from the Rev. Gerald L.K. Smith, Protestant evangelist who was cofounder with Coughlin and Dr. Francis Townsend of the Union Party which attempted to defeat Roosevelt in 1936, and notes and letters from a host of lesser-known figures. In a small brown leather notebook Fahey itemized the numbers of copies of his books mailed to various places in the world (and the receipts), and a not insignificant number were sent to America. Although this list is incomplete, it does indicate something of his correspondence and influence.

There are considerable letters from a young lawyer in New York, Thomas Kavanaugh, whose parents were given a copy of one of Fahey's books by Coughlin and who began a running correspondence with the Irish theologian as a result of it. It is Kavanaugh who gifts Fahey with an annual subscription to the Brooklyn Tablet, and who arranges, at the time of Fahey's death, for a Requiem High Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York for "American Friends of Fr. Denis Fahey, C.S.Sp." to which the Irish Ambassador to the U.S. and other prominent figures were invited.

Another area of Fahey's concerns which led him to communicate with America was the motion picture industry. In Dublin, he was the founder and inspiration of a right-wing conservative group known as the Maria Duce. Among the publications of this group was a newspaper entitled Fiat. It became embroiled in any number of issues in Ireland. In

addition, it was particularly adamant regarding the insidious influence of Hollywood on the world. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Fahey devoted a good part of his time to a crusade against the antisupernaturalism of Hollywood where Jews and Communists trivialized the holy in such films as "The Song of Bernadette" and "The Keys of the Kingdom." In this he was in league with Myron C. Fagan, the director of the Cinema Educational Guild (C.E.G.) in Hollywood. In addition to personal correspondence between the two men, there is an interesting newsletter sent to the members of the C.E.G. in which one of the key points is that "Father Denis Fahey and the top officials of Ireland's 'Catholic Cinema and Theatre Patrons Association' have PUBLICLY attested that the C.E.G. is the Gibraltar upon which they build their fight against Communism."⁸

An unusual set of circumstances allowed me to be the first person (along with the archivist) to sort through a trunk-like box of papers of Father Fahey's which had not been touched since shortly after his death when the two priests who began the task left it unfinished. The results of my research at the archives of the Holy Ghost Provincial House in Dublin, and the opportunity to interview nine persons (lay and clergy; Catholic and Jew; opponents, adherents, and those who appreciated Fahey personally but did not accept his ideas), includes 1,400 xeroxed pages of documents and 14 hours of taped interviews. Preliminary research, and a review of all this material leads me to propose that Fahey's influence on certain aspects of the American scene (Coughlin's thought being a major area), may well be the link to a better understanding of the anti-Semitic attitudes in the United States during that period.

I plan to develop the dissertation as follows: (1) an introductory section describing the American religious scene during the period under consideration; (2) a discussion of the life and overview of the work of Denis Fahey, C.S.Sp.; (3) an exploration of Fahey's "theology of history" exploring his sources and methods, and analyzing his basic approach and conclusions; (4) his influence on the American scene through (a) his relationship with Charles E. Coughlin, (b) correspondence with diverse individuals such as Myron Taylor, The Reverend Gerald L.K. Smith, Thomas J. Kavanagh, and others, and (c) communication and cooperation with Myron C. Fagan and the Cinema Educational Guild of Hollywood; (5) implications of this for a deeper understanding of the anti-Semitism which pervaded many sectors of religious life in the U.S., 1934-1954.

Denis Fahey, C.S.Sp., was a complex individual. He is remembered by colleagues, students and friends as a devout and holy man; he felt deeply about poverty and social justice; he was ahead of his time in ecological concerns; he was an intellectual in one sense, though not an original writer. The overriding concern of his life was the kingship of Christ. He seems to be the product of a kind of Catholic fundamentalism, plus a deep commitment to authority in the church as he understood it (including "the infallibility of papal encyclicals"), resulting from his experiences in Rome. He took seriously, and frequently quoted (as did Coughlin) the statement: "He who is not with Me is against Me" (Matthew 12:30). He was personally convinced that the Jews, as a people, were committed to de-

feating Jesus Christ as the Supernatural Messiah, and establishing a Natural Messiah who was in league with the forces of Satan. His correspondence with Rabbi Abraham Gudansky of the Dublin Hebrew Congregation, whom he refused to meet on any occasion, bears this out.

Reading through the issues of Father Coughlin's weekly newspaper *Social Justice* (1936-1942), as well as Coughlin's books and published radio speeches, leads me to propose that Coughlin used Fahey's framework to justify his own approach. Fahey did massive research, though he seems to have selected material with blinders on. Coughlin was not a scholar nor an intellectual, but more of a popularizer and politician. Fahey's material served Coughlin well--and in this way it was filtered by the radio-priest to millions of listeners in the U.S. and around the world every Sunday afternoon.

by Mary Christine Athans, B.V.M.
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1. Ahlstrom, Sydney E., *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 920.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 928-929.
3. Cf. Sheldon Marcus, *Father Coughlin: The Tumultuous Life of the Priest of the Little Flower* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1973); Charles J. Tull, *Father Coughlin and the New Deal* (Syracuse New York: Syracuse University Press, 1965); David H. Bennett, *Demagogues in the Depression: American Radicals and the Union Party, 1932-1936* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1969), and David O'Brien, *American Catholics and Social Reform: the New Deal Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).
4. Interview with Michael O'Carroll, C.S.Sp., Blackroot College, Dublin, March 13, 1979.
5. Fahey, Denis, "Apologia Pro Vita Mea," n.d.
6. Charles E. Coughlin to Denis Fahey, March 29, 1940.
7. Marcus, *op. cit.*, p. 62.
8. Fagan, Myron, Newsletter to members, Cinema Educational Guild, Hollywood, Calif.: January 1951, (Fahey Papers).

Trusteeism and the Survival of European Communal Traditions?— The Case for A New Perspective: Notes Based on the Experience of Buffalo's St. Louis Church, 1829-1856

In recent years, Patrick Carey has gone a long way toward changing our thinking about trusteeism.¹ Charging the older historiography of trusteeism with an unquestioning espousal of an episcopal perspective, which condemned lay trusteeism as mere lay subordination, Carey has called on historians to take lay trustees on their own terms, examining their motivations and goals without an *a priori* commitment to censure. While aware that trusteeism correlates with class, ethnic and political divisions among Catholics, Carey has sought to locate its roots in ideology. Specifically, he finds the impetus to trustee militance in a twofold process: (1) the gradual absorption among Catholics of the American republican tradition, with its stress on individual conscience, citizens' rights, localism, democratic self-government and anti-elitism; and (2) the subsequent conscientious efforts of American Catholics to change European-fashioned, hierarchical and bureaucratic formal church law and practice to meet American republican requirements.

Much of Carey's work has been done in the formative period of institutional American Catholicism, from the ascendance of Father John Carroll in the mid-1780s to the Baltimore Council of 1829. Perhaps it is for this reason that I have had difficulty

attempting to apply Carey's schema to explaining the long conflict over trusteeship at Buffalo's St. Louis Church between 1829 and 1856. The controversies which Carey examined for the 1785-1829 period involved almost entirely Catholic laymen who were of white, native American-stock or were, in a minority of cases, relatively assimilated, pre-Famine Irish-Americans. In both cases there were similar influences at work, for both groups were in an historical position to be engaged by American social and political values; the Irish, though of foreign background, had been especially prepared to receive republican ideology by long years of politicization in opposition to British colonialism. Yet the trustee conflicts of the four decades before the Civil War largely involved recent, continental immigrants, mostly Germans of various backgrounds. This was the case with the St. Louis struggle, at the center of which were German-speakers from the eastern province of Alsace in France. At a time when social historians such as Herbert Gutman and Timothy L. Smith have been pointing out the resilience of European folk and communal traditions in American immigrant communities during the era of mass immigration (i.e., 1820s through 1920s), one might legitimately question a view of trusteeism which led us to see recent German immigrants as self-conscious forwarders of American republican ideology.

It is not necessary, however, to take the matter to its furthest logical conclusion, and deny that American republican traditions played a role in influencing lay trustees in the era of mass immigration before the Civil War. What is doubtful is not the salience of ideology conflict, but rather the ability of Carey's perspective to enable us to understand fully the origins, functions and meanings of continental European immigrant, lay trustee involvement with American republicanism. Based on a reading of secondary accounts of early and mid-19th-century trustee conflicts, consideration of the background to Franco-German and German ethnocultural Catholic traditions in America, and in-depth research in the admittedly limited, single-case of Buffalo's St. Louis Church, I wish to advance an hypothesis with which historians may choose to experiment. My argument is: (1) an important impetus to lay trusteeism originated in the desire to preserve, in the New World, European communal traditions of lay involvement in parish affairs; over the years, in America, these traditions were altered and misremembered or misconstrued; (2) at the root of the desire to preserve and secure such forms were the necessities of group reorganization and the maintenance of identity and group coherence amidst the disorganizing circumstances of emigration and resettlement in a foreign land; (3) defense of the preservation of old, though altered, forms ultimately appropriated American republican ideology, which was less the inspiration for trusteeism than its justification in a new social, cultural and political environment; and (4) ethnic distrust and rivalry for resources and power within the Church (particularly between Irish and continental Catholics), and class inequalities in wealth, social prestige and power exacerbated, but did not necessarily determine the direction of, trusteeism by reinforcing ideological, religious and cultural conflict with objective social divisions.

Founded in 1829, St. Louis was Buffalo's first Catholic parish, created to accommodate the young



city's slowly increasing Catholic population. Though the parish was ethnically heterogeneous, German-speakers predominated, probably outnumbering Irish and French coreligionists two, or even three, to one. The Germans themselves were a mixed, indeed multinational, group composed of Swiss, Alsations and south and west Germans from the various states of the Rhine Valley. During the parish's first two decades, Alsations appear to have been the most numerous of the German-speakers, and may well have been the majority of the parish population. While the mass migrations of the 1840s and 1850s led south and west Germans to emerge as the parish majority, and while Alsatian immigration to Buffalo showed a relative slowing down during the same years, Alsations appear to have remained the largest of the parish's individual plural groups. By the most intense phase of the St. Louis conflict, in the mid-1850s, Alsatian parishioners were also the longest in residence in Buffalo of the groups in the parish; the oldest in age and the best represented in business and the professions. Alsations were thus strategically placed to wield authority in parish affairs, and their prominence and power were themselves reinforced by the exodus of many of the early Irish, French and German families and their descendents, who had clashed with St. Louis trustees and their allies over the language of church affairs, governance and finances and disobedience to priests and bishops.

Early interpreters of the St. Louis conflict were prone to date the parish's problems from the church's 1838 incorporation by its trustees (and apparently without the entire approval of Bishop John DuBois) under a state law, which sought to provide a legal basis, through lay trusteeship, for continuity and security of church governance and property. This law, which had been passed in 1784 when Catholicism in New York State had barely begun to emerge from a century of repression, was conceived solely with Protestant forms and practice in mind, and was thus destined to create conflict if efforts were seriously made to apply it to Catholic parish affairs. It was not surprising then that much of the public debate between St. Louis trustees and their bishops revolved around the rights and obligations the law imposed on trustees, who claimed it was their legal responsibility to control parish finances and property. Yet beyond the facts of the statute's provisions lay a larger reality: incorporation under this law was completely voluntary; no religious body need, of legal necessity, take advantage of its existence unless desirous of the convenience of doing so. Obviously, St. Louis trustees and the parishioners, who elected them and whom the trustees represented, chose to incorporate.

What needs to be explained is not so much St. Louis's disobedience to successive bishops, but this decision to incorporate, a decision not made by other subsequently established Buffalo parishes which had lay trustees. (Not all Buffalo parishes had trustees.) Furthermore, it is necessary to explain, too, the fervor with which this decision was defended and obedience to the 1784 law insisted upon in the face of bitter intraparish divisions; removal of the parish priest on several occasions by bishops Hughes and then Timon; and in 1854, unequivocal criticism of the parish's position by Papal emissary Archbishop Gaetano Bedini. Ultimately, even excommunication of the trustees did not lead to the parish's capitulation, though a compromise, which left St. Louis trustees with the unique powers they retain to this day, was accomplished in 1856.

In searching for an explanation for this series of events, I have been brought back continually to the strategic position of the parish's Alsations and to the rhetoric employed by the trustees and their allies in defense of their position. They spoke little of

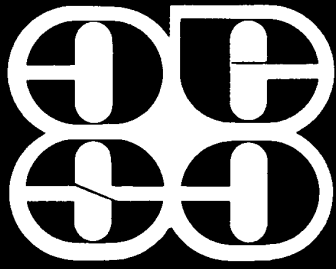
the mere convenience of incorporation. Instead, they emphasized obedience to legal obligation and the responsibilities of self-government. (The stress of these apparently republican sentiments, it should be noted, was never on rights, that most American of our historic preoccupations, but instead on the duties owed legitimate authority, a concern hardly at odds with the Catholic tradition). Yet, just as often, and most memorably perhaps in the petition 410 of them sent Pius IX in 1852, they said that for years they had simply been defending privileges they claimed the parish's founders and leaders had enjoyed in their Alsatian homeland.

This claim appears disingenuous to the extent that the legal hegemony the trustees sought bore little resemblance to the episcopal-and clerical-controlled parish governance in Alsace. But a great amount of French and Franco-German (i.e., Alsatian) historical literature does indeed reveal the existence of considerable lay involvement, through an elaborate structure of active parish governing committees, in French (and particularly Alsatian) communes from the early Middle Ages to the very eve of the modern emigration. Such a tradition is known to have taken root in French North American communities (Quebec, Detroit and New Orleans), and its legitimacy within them is attested to by the fact that it did so under circumstances of comparative (for North America) episcopal oversight. In contrast, early Anglo-American trusteeism lacked such legitimation, taking root in an episcopal vacuum and influenced by the Protestant practice which everywhere surrounded it. Though much less retrievable for the historian, it appears to me at this time, a tradition of lay involvement in parish governance and finances also is known to have existed in the German Rhineland states; this may well explain the ability of St. Louis' Alsations to make allies among Badenians, Bavarians and Würtembergers, members of the other large plural groups in the parish.

Again, the point is not to claim that there was a complete congruence between what laymen claimed to have once enjoyed and the roles they sought to shape for themselves in their new homeland. Instead, we may see the initial act of incorporation as an effort to provide security for a familiar communal form, which could serve important functions for immigrant Catholics. Over the ensuing decades, as immigrants gradually transformed themselves into American ethnics, it was to be expected that the form should take on new social meanings and that new arguments should be marshalled in its defence. But, as the words of the St. Louis trustees and their allies remind us, lay trusteeship remained for them richly endowed with both Old World memories (however inexact) and nostalgia for distant attachments.

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