THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC DIOCESAN LABOR SCHOOLS
AN EXAMINATION OF THEIR INFLUENCE ON ORGANIZED LABOR
IN BUFFALO AND CLEVELAND

by

PAUL E. LUBIENECKI

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Dissertation Advisor: Dr. John Grabowski

Department of History
CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY

August 2013
We hereby approve the thesis/dissertation of

Paul E. Lubieniecki

candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.*

(signed)       John Grabowski
               (chair of the committee)

David C. Hammack

John Flores

Paul Gerhart

(date)   May 15, 2013

*We also certify that written approval has been obtained
for any proprietary material contained therein.
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The American Catholic Diocesan Labor Schools.
An Examination of their Influence on Organized Labor
in Buffalo and Cleveland

Abstract
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PAUL E. LUBIENECKI

This study illuminates labor education by the American Catholic Church. Through a Church vetted program of specialized labor education, the laity became an integral component in the growth and development of American organized labor in the Twentieth Century. Utilizing the social encyclicals, the laity and clergy educated workers about their rights and created a cadre of labor leaders and an activist Catholic laity.

The development of the labor schools reflect a unique American interpretation of Church doctrine tailored specifically to conditions in the United States. The Vatican’s concern about Americanism caused some of the American Church hierarchy, in the late nineteenth century, to become ambivalent about overt social action on behalf of labor. The laity searched for a way to implement social reform programs like those of the Progressive or Social Gospel movements. Consequently, after the pronouncement of Quadragesimo Anno, the formation of labor education was implemented by committed members of the laity and activist parish priests who chose to interpret the social encyclicals with an American perspective.

During the period of the Great Depression, the New Deal and Quadragesimo
Anno, Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement catalyzed the formation of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists which in turn led to the establishment of labor schools throughout the nation. As the Cold War developed, Catholic lay labor education became a bulwark against communist infiltration of organized labor. Two of the most prominent schools were located in Buffalo, New York and Cleveland, Ohio.

By concentrating on Catholic labor education in Buffalo and Cleveland, this study demonstrates how vital the labor schools were to these communities. The labor schools in Buffalo and Cleveland present examples of the curriculums and policies developed mutually by the laity and clergy to educate workers (both Catholic and non-Catholic) about their rights and duties and how to apply Christian social teachings in the workplace. Legitimized by the social encyclicals and operated by the laity, the labor schools expanded to become a fundamental part of organized labor which endeavored to build a Christian partnership of labor and management to ensure industrial democracy.
Chapter 1
American Labor Pains
An Introduction to
Catholics, Unions and Labor Education

The purpose of this dissertation is to illuminate a neglected and under-appreciated segment in the histories of American labor and American Catholicism: the role of the American Catholic Church in labor education. But this is more than a linear recitation of facts and archival research. These activities were not the singular initiatives of the clergy but the efforts of the burgeoning influence and power of a developing American Catholic laity. My intention in this work is to substantiate and demonstrate how the American laity, by means of a pragmatic agenda, responded and reacted to Americanism and the Catholic Church’s Americanist Heresy through the formation of Catholic labor education programs.¹

The genesis for my work originates with the social encyclicals of Rerum Novarum (1891) by Pope Leo XIII and Quadragesimo Anno (1931) by Pope Pius XI. Not only are these documents revolutionary in content but also are the foundations of future Catholic social doctrine. These influential documents, in concert with world and national events in the period between the two encyclicals, inspires the laity to action. To fully appreciate this evolution and its implications, a study of the conditions of religion and labor in

¹ The Americanist Heresy, sometimes referred to as the “phantom heresy” was an attempt by American Catholics to incorporate the democratic and individualistic values of America into the Catholic Church. This created divisions among clergy and laity in the United States and in Europe. This subject is addressed
America is required.

**Labor in Nineteenth Century America and the Catholic Church**

The Catholic Church in the United States, initially an immigrant Church, reflected the embedded theological and sociological traits of its European roots. Newly arrived Catholics were often viewed as a hostile element in a host country where Christianity was exclusively reserved for the Protestants. Yet, as immigrant Catholics assimilated to their new environment, they adopted the mores of the nation and the separation of Church and State promoted the melding of Catholicism with democracy.

America’s Catholics absorbed the circumstances around them incorporating those elements that integrated Catholics into mainstream American society. Those actions placed them on a perilous track between the precepts of their faith and the characteristics of being an American. Democracy, egalitarianism and individualism positioned the Church in the United States on a cultural and theological relationship away from European influences and Roman authority.

This is apparent to Tocqueville in his assessment of religion in general and America’s Catholics in particular. He describes the nation’s Catholics as “the most docile believers and the most independent citizens.” Tocqueville views American Catholics as sincere in their religious beliefs but they are the most democratic in thought. Religious

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in detail in Chapter 3.


doctrine is accepted without discussion but political principles are open for free inquiry. This American Catholic independence is germane in the forthcoming friction between Roman Catholics of the new world and the old.

To scrutinize the historical relationship between the Catholic Church in the United States and organized labor is to encounter a simultaneous narrative of both animosity and affirmation. Throughout the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries, American organized labor fought for legal recognition and the rights of the laborer. The relative scarcity of skilled and unskilled labor in the nation should have enhanced the position of labor unions in their bargaining efforts with employers which would create a balance of power. Unfortunately, it did not. The laborer was ineffective in securing better wages and a safer work environment which resulted in many decades of strikes and labor unrest. The labor associations and societies that sprang up throughout the nineteenth century were effectively diminished by the courts and a chronically unstable economy.

During organized labor’s struggles in the mid to late nineteenth century, many unions, associations and labor societies simply dissolved. This enabled industrialists and managers to hire unskilled workers, women and children at substandard salaries and appalling work conditions. The development of American capitalism depended on the

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8 Philip Dray, *There Is Power In A Union. The Epic Story of Labor in America*. (New York: Doubleday,
importation of cheap immigrant laborers who were predominately Catholic. As a working class people, they were naturally attracted to labor organizations. This provided a means for union revival, with the establishment of the Knights of Labor and appeals for social reform. Eventually, this lead to the establishment of Catholic labor schools.

As organized labor did decades earlier during the Second Great Awakening, unions and labor associations adopted the language of religion, particularly evangelical Protestantism, to legitimize their framework for unionizing activities. Yet throughout most of the nineteenth century attempts to join religion with organized labor were met by resistance and indifference particularly from the Catholic clergy. With the appearance of the Knights of Labor in the 1870’s, a labor organization with a majority of Catholic members, the situation changed. The American Catholic Church and the Knights were destined to be influential forces on each other. The emergence of the Knights commenced the participatory role of the Catholic Church in organized labor. However the hierarchy of the Catholic Church was not prepared to cordially welcome unions.

Prior to the Third Plenary Council in Baltimore in 1884, Terrance Powderly the leader of the Knights of Labor met with Philadelphia’s Archbishop Ryan to promote the cause of organized labor. During their conversation, Powderly clearly states that the

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workingman can only find aid and assistance in the union and now obliquely challenges the Church to advocate for the worker as well.\textsuperscript{13} He sought legitimization through civil and clerical recognition. The temperament of the nation was shifting in the closing decades of the nineteenth century with labor, and social reform, elevated to suddenly popular and sympathetic issues.\textsuperscript{14}

The American bishops, at the Third Plenary Council in Baltimore, convened to discuss pertinent issues relative to the future course of the American Catholic Church. The labor problem, specifically the Knights of Labor, was the primary topic.\textsuperscript{15} At the Plenary Council, Powderly pleaded with the bishops not to condemn the Knights. He asserted that approximately half of the membership of the Knights are Catholic and that the hierarchy should consider the consequences of any condemnation of the group. Powderly also reaffirmed that the Knights promote a non-violent agenda. Any similarity or connection between the union and socialism was insubstantial.\textsuperscript{16}

Some of the hierarchy and clergy remained unfavorable to the union cause. However, many reconsidered their opposition to the Knights as most immigrants and native born Catholic workers joined the union in opposition to the Church’s dictates.\textsuperscript{17}

When the ballots were counted all but two of the attending bishops voted to recognize the Knights of Labor. Since the vote was not unanimous the Vatican had to decide the

\textsuperscript{13} Browne, \textit{The Catholic Church and the Knights of Labor}, p. 40-41. Per Browne, there is no “evidence of any co-operative action or even an answer” from Ryan, (Browne, p.110-113). However, Ryan supported workers and stressed that they should have the same rights “as capitalists to unite and protect themselves.” See Patrick Ryan, \textit{Archbishop Patrick John Ryan. His Life and Times. Ireland-St. Louis-Philadelphia 1831-1911}, (Keynes: AuthorHouse, 2010), p. 199.


\textsuperscript{15} See John Tracy Ellis’ \textit{The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, 1834-1921} (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1952) Volume I Chapter VI offers a detailed history of this particular assembly and alludes to an escalating power struggle between the American Catholic hierarchy and the Vatican over the imminent direction of the Church in the United States.

\textsuperscript{16} Browne, \textit{The Catholic Church and the Knights of Labor}, p. 205-207.
matter. Baltimore’s Archbishop James Gibbons would make the presentation for acceptance of unions when in Rome to receive his Cardinal’s hat and pallium. Now, America’s Catholics, unions and the Vatican became entwined for the foreseeable future with the “labor question.”

While not officially recognized by the Church at this moment, the result of the Plenary Council vote proved to be a significant victory for organized labor for two reasons. Catholics, the majority of the work force in industries such as steel and coal mining, did not have to fear excommunication for belonging to a union. Additionally, the Church was prepared to apply its influence and power in support of the worker. Gibbons acknowledged that this is a defining moment for the American Church and for the struggles of the American worker.

In his letter to Bishop Gilmour of Cleveland, Gibbons asserts: “We must prove that we are the friends of the working classes. I would regard the condemnation of the Knights of Labor as a calamity to the Catholic Church of America.” After nearly a year since Gibbons’ presentation, the Holy See on August 16, 1888, issued its statement on labor in America and the Knights. Rome did not specifically identify any union but granted conditional approval for Catholics to join such associations provided they do not

18 Browne and Ellis, works cited, provide an interesting insight into the political maneuverings of the Catholic hierarchy in their debate concerning the worker and the Church’s relationship to unions. The bishops asserted that the worker, like the industrialist, had equal rights and the Church needed to maintain a supportive relationship with labor or the Church could loose them. See Ellis, The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons, Vol. I, p. 336-350 and Browne, The Catholic Church and the Knights of Labor, p. 193; also Robert E. Weir, Beyond Labor’s Veil. The Culture of the Knights of Labor, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), p. 96.
19 Browne, The Catholic Church and the Knights of Labor, p. 12.
operate in secrecy nor promote socialism or communism.\textsuperscript{22}

Church recognition, however, did not guarantee civil acceptance. In the 1890’s many state and local governments, through the courts, hampered the unions in their efforts to become a legitimate entity empowered with the ability to organize and strike for better wages, shorter hours and safer working conditions. American labor fights to be part of the political economy but the government and industrial capitalists continued their efforts to oppose labor on all fronts. In March 1891, Samuel Gompers and the A.F. of L. addressed the courts’ assaults on the legitimacy of organized labor. Gompers emphasized that unions were essential to the survival of a republican polity in the United States.\textsuperscript{23} His motive was to show that any attack on unions and unionism was really an attack on the republican system of government. He was not successful in that argument.

The growth of private corporations in America give business, by the late nineteenth century, a broad degree of control over the economic and political milieu. Secure in their associations with the state and as a dominant force in the economy, corporations were able to exert increasing influence over daily social activities.\textsuperscript{24} This ensured that any attempts by organized labor to develop would be met with contempt and hostility.\textsuperscript{25} Yet many American workers, during this time, were too diffused in their background and training and too confused by the constant changes of industrialization to be effective as an organized union movement. An internecine battle tore labor’s ranks that ultimately determined the future structure of labor and its relationship with

\textsuperscript{24} Nicholson, Labor’s Story in the United States, p. 111-115.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p. 30.
employers.\textsuperscript{26}

\textit{The Social Encyclicals}

Within this background the Pope, half a world away, declares in 1891 with his encyclical \textit{Rerum Novarum}, that the state must protect the rights of the worker. The encyclical recognizes the dignity of the worker as an individual and champions the workers’ right to organize in a labor association. With the “blessing” of a pope, who affirms that labor associations are permissible, that a living wage is necessary and that the State has the obligation to protect the weak, particularly women and children, in the work place, organized labor and the Catholic Church in America become a viable force. But it is the emergence of the American laity, not the clergy, over the next several decades which substantiates the potency of the Church in the United States.

Forty years later in 1931, at the height of the Great Depression, when economists, politicians and workers seek solutions to end the economic crisis and unemployment, Pope Pius XI presents a method to solve the problems of the worker through a plan of social reconstruction. Building on \textit{Rerum}, Pius in \textit{Quadragesimo Anno}, details how the clergy and laity can implement Catholic social doctrine in the modern world. He suggests the formation of study clubs as a process for the development and education of lay leadership.

Europeans interpreted this as more Catholic involvement in organized social action. Americans construed it differently. American individuality and egalitarianism, which gradually inculcated into the consciousness of the nation’s Catholics, moved the laity to view the document as legitimizing the establishment of labor schools to train

\textsuperscript{26} Dubofsky, \textit{Industrialism and the American Worker}, p. 66.
Catholic labor leaders. This was the opportunity for American lay Catholics to contradict the negative assertions, made by Europeans and American conservative clergy, that the concepts of individualism and democracy were somehow abhorrent to the life of the Church. America’s lay Catholic community sought a voice in the Church. Catholic labor education was how the laity articulated that strategy and formatted their answer to Americanism and the purported “Americanist heresy.”

**Overview of the Chapters**

The evidence for my assertion that Catholic labor education is the laity’s response to the “Americanist” crisis is contained in the following chapters of this work. The first half of the general body of the dissertation encompasses foundational work that is necessary to fully comprehend the birth of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists and Catholic labor education in Buffalo and Cleveland which comprises the second part of this work. The following chapters offer an evidentiary confirmation of my thesis. It is segmented to follow a chronology that commences with historical events of the mid-nineteenth century and concludes in the last quarter of the twentieth. The history of American Catholicism is impacted by factors and forces that reverberate within Europe. This work must explore those factors to properly establish how American Catholics remain loyal to Rome while simultaneously endeavoring to be independent of Vatican influences.

This is considered in the next chapter on *Rerum Novarum*. Pope Leo XIII produced what was labeled as the first social encyclical which became the Catholic Church’s retort to Marx and the threatening rise of socialism. Fashioned toward a European audience, it reflected the history of European Catholic struggles in the matters

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of worker reform and social change. But the document also exemplified the personality of
an aged Pontiff who wanted to meld traditional Catholic theology to the modern world.

The characteristics of the encyclical, while rooted in European concerns in the
treatment of workers, was equally relevant for American interests. However, the
encyclical’s meaning was construed differently in the new world. The approval for
Catholics to become union members enhanced the document’s reception in the United
States and expanded the role of the American Catholic Church in the labor movement.

Reviewing scholarly works that address the content of the document I discover
limitations. Many scholars ignore the encyclical’s European heritage. Others do not
consider how Vincent Pecci, the future Pope Leo, and his family life, academic pursuits
and priestly career affect the substance of the text. Additionally, the literature does not
acknowledge how differences in Europe and America determine the encyclical’s
implementation. A majority of the studies on Rerum deal with the social application of
the text, not its history.

The scholarship on Rerum Novarum and Pope Leo is constrained because many
scholars deem the subject as dated or more Catholic in nature than scholarly in its appeal.
Therefore, the information is biased in favor of Catholicism. Biographies of Leo are
equally outmoded such as Francis Furey, Life of Leo XIII and History of His Pontificate
(1903); René Fülöp-Miller, Leo XIII and Our Times (1937) or Katherine Burton, Leo
XIII. The First Modern Pope (1962). However, the works offer a crucial and vital
historical insight into the personality of Leo XIII.

Even though the literature is primarily Catholic oriented, I uncovered some
obscure non-Catholic material that emblematic of the sentiment of that time as a counter
balance. Recent literature only offers brief information on the content of the encyclical, and seldom on the Pope, which tend to mitigate *Rerum’s* value. The objective with this chapter is to present a comprehensive narrative that affords a more academic review of the encyclical and its potential for American Catholics and organized labor.

The section on American exceptionalism and the Catholic Church’s Americanist heresy, in Chapter Three, are themes that are not examined as concurrent subjects. This chapter analyzes them together which becomes an innovative approach to the scholarship. Shortly after the proclamation of *Rerum Novarum*, America’s Catholics endeavor to identify themselves within the context of their faith and nation. This section is significant as the construction of this definition determines future action by Catholics, especially the laity, in the United States. What then does it mean to be American and Catholic? What is included in that classification?

Historians such as Frederick Jackson Turner, Louis Hartz and Perry Miller view exceptionalism as part of American “rugged individualism” or a component of new world democracy that differentiates the United States from the world. Religion historian Patricia Bonomi contends that the effects of American democracy, commencing in the early years of the Republic, differentiate American religion from its European counterparts.28

Within this environment American Catholics recognized that assimilation of American values not only promoted the faith but enabled Catholics to participate in the building of the nation. Democracy and individualism, however, were not key components to universal Catholicism and these traits were perceived as a threat to Roman

control and European persuasion. This percolating conflict of ideals should have subsided but an estranged American hierarchy and a theological conflict among European Catholics fueled the flames of the controversy.

The Catholic Americanist controversy, sometimes referred to as the “phantom heresy,” is a dramatic account of miscomprehensions and confrontations among Catholics on both sides of the Atlantic in defining what it means to be American and Catholic. This subject is purely American Catholic in form and substance but also complicated. Catholic historians such as Thomas McAvoy, The Great Crisis in American Catholic History, 1895-1900 (1957); Gerald Fogerty, The Vatican and the Americanist Crisis: Denis J. O’Connell, American Agent in Rome, 1885-1903 (1974) and Jay Dolan, The American Catholic Experience (1985) who write about the Americanist heresy, contribute a very good range of interpretative scholarship on the subject.

This topic is part of a neglected and complex section of American Catholic history so many historians, and other Catholic writers, tend to bypass the matter or deem it as a minor topic. The scholarship is not as current as should be expected. Catholic priest and historian Richard Gribble in his 1998 work Guardian of America, The Life of James Martin Gillis, describes the Catholic controversy as important to understand but “beyond the scope” of a work not singularly dedicated to the subject.

29 A heresy is defined as “a wilful and persistent dissent from orthodoxy”, see Gerald O’Collins, SJ and Edward Farrugia, SJ. A Concise Dictionary of Theology (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), p. 103. The Americanist controversy involved the insertion of American ideas and democratic values Church. While no doctrines were nullified, some considered these concepts as heretical to Church authority therefore, it was a phantom heresy. See Chapter 3 for a complete treatment of the subject.


31 Richard Gribble, CSC, Guardian of America, The Life of James Martin Gillis, (New York: Paulist Press,
significant material that I discovered is from the time that the controversy occurs in 1890-1900. Journal articles written by the participants in the “phantom heresy” are located in obscure sources and provide an invaluable source of first hand information on this matter.32

The consequences of this “phantom heresy” dictated the behavior of the Church in America for the next few decades. The hierarchy became unwavering in their loyalty to the Vatican and Catholic intellectual progress was stifled. However many Catholics viewed themselves as “American Catholics” rather than “Roman Catholics.”33 Within this shadow, the laity subtly developed into a force majeure as they embraced individualism and democracy for themselves in their Church. The labor schools became the laity’s response to Rome that mirrors that individuality.

Chapter Four addresses the evolution of Catholic social engagement. American Catholics attempt to formulate a response to the labor issues that are percolating for the last several decades. The period between the two social encyclicals of Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo Anno is the opportunity for the nation’s lay Catholics to further develop and express themselves as contributors to the nation and as collaborators in the development of the Church.

The intent of this particular chapter is to scrutinize how Americans in general, and Catholics in particular, develop a socially conscious awareness to the plight of workers and the turmoil in society due to the effects of the Industrial Revolution. Pope Leo’s encyclicals direct the laity to be leaders. The American laity view this instruction as a

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process that validates Catholic participation in political, social and labor reforms. America’s Catholic consider this proactive approach as compatible with their faith and Constitution.

With the conclusion of the First World War, the American Catholic Church rapidly proceeded to secure its standing as an equal partner with the Protestant majority in the rebuilding of the social and moral order. America’s lay Catholics deemed that their service in the war confirms their loyalty to the nation. The nation’s Catholic bishops united to establish relief efforts and prove their commitment to the country. Both laity and clergy believed that their efforts entitled Catholics to be an effective voice in deciding the future course of the nation. America’s Catholics resolved to enter the modern world as peers in the remediation of the nation’s labor and social problems. A far-reaching opportunity to do this arrived with the challenges of the Great Depression.


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*‘Americanism’ in France,” North American Review, March 1900.*


The scholarship on the Bishops’ 1919 statement, the most profoundly radical and engaging document of the American Church, is inadequate. This is probably because the text might be perceived as too liberal by doctrinally traditional elements in the American Church. The two most prominent sources that discuss this document are Joseph McShane, *Sufficiently Radical*: Catholicism, Progressivism and the Bishops’ Program of 1919 (1986) and Elizabeth McKeown, *War and Welfare. American Catholics and World War I* (1988). Additional references to the bishops’ statement are located in various literature on Catholic social doctrine or American Catholic history. However, the 1919 document generally receives only a brief mention.35

The Protestant churches were also profoundly concerned about the difficulties of the worker and the Social Gospel movement is also examined in this chapter for its relevancy to burgeoning Catholic social doctrine. The literature on this movement is somewhat dated but the more recent sources such as George M. Marsden’s, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (2006), Christopher H. Evans, ’The Kingdom is Always but Coming. A Life of Walter Rauschenbusch* (2004) or Janet Forsythe Fishburn’s *The Fatherhood of God and the Victorian Family. The Social Gospel in America* (1981) offer their interpretation of non-Catholic scholarship on this subject. William Hutchinson in *Religious Pluralism in America. The Contentious History of a Founding Idea* (2003), conveys the theological conflict embedded within this Protestant movement. Reviewing original and seldom read material from the “fathers” of the Social Gospel movement: Gladden and Rauschenbusch, provides a profound insight into the purpose and direction of the movement.

*Quadragesimo Anno*, Chapter Five, examines Pius’ social encyclical which

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further develops the principles within *Rerum Novarum*. The document was written essentially for an Italian and European audience wrestling with the rise of fascist ideology. However, many Americans read *Quadragesimo Anno* from a different perspective, one that propelled the nation’s Catholic laity into action. The result was the Catholic Worker Movement which birthed the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists and the Catholic labor schools. It was imperative to review Pius’ work as it was the epicenter for the American laity in their eventually formation of a response to Americanism.

The most authoritative scholarship on *Quadragesimo* is by Oswald Von Nell-Breuning, S.J. who directly participated in the authorship of the document. His book *Reorganization of Social Economy. The Social Encyclical Developed and Explained* (1936) supplies both an historical and theological perspective into the encyclical. In addition, Fr. Virgil Michel’s *Christian Social Reconstruction. Some Fundamentals of the Quadragesimo Anno*, (1937) presents a more academic explanation of the principles and concepts and their implementation in daily life. The works of Michel, a renown American theologian during the 1930’s, influence lay Catholic social activists such as Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. He later praises the ACTU and Catholic labor education as the “only true way of realizing the desires of Pius XI and *Quadragesimo Anno*.”

It is vital to understand the historical context and components of the document to appreciate its consequences for America’s lay Catholics. The significance of the encyclical is its emphasis on how the individual, industry and the state operate singularly

and collectively for the common good. My qualitative analysis of the entire document, from a more historical viewpoint, conveys a fuller explanation of why the encyclical is important. Consequently, the chapter on *Quadragesimo* is more comprehensive and inclusive than is found in other scholarship.

With the social encyclicals as a cornerstone and the historical evolution of America’s lay Catholics as a foundation, the topic of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists is the focus of Chapter Six.\(^{38}\) The ACTU traces its roots to the Catholic Worker Movement, the American interpretation of *Quadragesimo Anno* and appalling events among Catholic workers during the Great Depression.\(^{39}\) The ACTU’s purpose is to activate the laity as an industrial apostolate to correct injustices within the labor movement and business.

The ACTU was conceived and operated by the laity. A primary function of the ACTU was to educate the worker about his rights, duties and obligations as both a worker and a Catholic in the workplace.\(^{40}\) This was not a separate Catholic union nor ever intended to develop into one. Rather, as a lay organization utilizing the tools of education, it assisted Catholic laborers in Christianizing the workplace and to accomplish social reconstruction.\(^{41}\) This dissertation then provides confirmation, through the analysis and examination of the historical record, that labor education initiated by the ACTU, was the burgeoning lay Catholic definition of what it meant to be American and Catholic in

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\(^{37}\) *The Labor Leader*, December 12, 1938, p. 2.


\(^{39}\) The suicide of an unemployed worker and violence by striking workers motivated several lay Catholics to proceed with the formation of the ACTU. See Chapter 6 for further treatment of the incident.


\(^{41}\) “Christianizing the workplace” means the application of Christian principles and the teachings and the doctrines of the Catholic faith at the workplace and in the union. Oberle, *The Association of Catholic*
the union hall and the parish hall.

In this work, I submit fresh insights into the historical foundations and practice of the ACTU. Historical accounts of the ACTU are located in multiple sources but the amount of available information is limited due to either apathy of the subject matter or the lack of preserved material. Those historians who do offer abridged narratives of the ACTU place it within the context of Catholic social action or Catholics’ involvement in the labor movement particularly the pre-World War II period.

The ACTU was a national organization but many scholars confined their discussion of the Association to New York or Detroit as these cities operated larger more prominent affiliates. This ignored the localized impact and unique operation of the ACTU in cities such as Buffalo, Cleveland or Pittsburgh. Those historians who focused only on New York or Detroit neglected the ACTU’s significance on the larger scope of Catholic involvement in the labor movement.


*Trade Unionist*, p. 9-11.
most histories of American Catholicism disregard this specific area in general.

The most referenced works for this dissertation are Mel Piehl’s *Breaking Bread. The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America* (1982) and Neil Betten’s *Catholic Activism and the Industrial Worker* (1976). The more recent scholarship that develops the topic of the ACTU in detail is located in *Debating God’s Economy. Social Justice in America on the Eve of Vatican II* (2008) by Craig Prentiss. These scholarly works are relevant in support of my argument concerning the role of the laity in the American Catholic Church.

Another historical narrative is Douglas Seaton’s *Catholics and Radicals* (1981). It contains a more extensive history of the ACTU than is found elsewhere. However, there are various historical and factual errors. Also his interpretation, based on my analysis of the material, is faulty. John Cort, the ACTU’s co-founder, offers his review of the work to counter the mistakes.\(^\text{42}\) Labor priest and activist Msgr. George Higgins, is equally critical of Seaton’s errors. Higgins refutes the historian’s assertion that the ACTU is operated by the hierarchy, not the laity, to influence the labor movement.\(^\text{43}\)

These works basically utilize corresponding resources. Primarily, Richard Ward’s 1958 dissertation, *The Role of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists in the American Labor Movement*, is the main source for information on the ACTU. Written during the apex of the ACTU in the 1950’s, it includes personal interviews of the founders and leaders of the group. The source is valuable but dated as it does not address the unforeseen future direction of the ACTU. Ward’s material is also skewed toward the New York city ACTU group. Additionally, the scholars writing about the ACTU consult

\[^{43}\text{Msgr. George Higgins and William Bole, Organized Labor and the Church, Reflections of a Labor}\]
similar archival materials in New York and Detroit and content from the Catholic Worker and Labor Leaders newspapers and the journal Commonweal. These different studies appear indistinguishable in their form and substance.

This dissertation’s chapter on the ACTU endeavors to be distinctive from the standard accounts. I also utilize Ward’s work and the available literature. In addition, I refer to sources previously not considered in an historical account of the ACTU. As a result, my work adds a current perspective to the literature based on original research that is a more detailed historical narrative than is found in other scholarly works.

A reliable source for the historiography of the ACTU is Stanley Vishnewski’s memoir The Wings of Dawn (1980). Vishnewski, as a member of both the Catholic Worker movement and the ACTU, is an eyewitness at the inaugural meetings of the then Catholic Association of Trade Unionists. Sitting through the initial meetings of the Association, he records the meetings’ minutes.

Other sources are the Paulist Press pamphlets on the ACTU and unions. Material by John Cort, co-founder of the ACTU and editor of the journal Commonweal, is indispensable for this chapter. Historians reference some text from Commonweal but a considered reading of the journal, over the course of his thirty years as its editor, supplies more of this labor leader’s personal thoughts on the Association and Catholics in organized labor than I uncovered in other scholarly works on the ACTU.

Archival research on the ACTU at non-traditional sites completed the project. I located material not previously applied in the narrative of the Association. That newer

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44 Historians tend to skim over the early two years of the ACTU and its close affiliation with the Catholic Worker Movement. This neglects the organization’s change in name and status. This is addressed in Chapter 6.
information characterizes an organization that wrestled with challenges to remain viable as a national association as local chapters desired some semblance of autonomy. Additionally, the leadership struggled with its mission over the years. The one constant that flourishes was the ACTU’s educational program.

**Buffalo and Cleveland as Case Models**

With the ACTU as a framework, the following chapters on Buffalo, New York and Cleveland, Ohio, complete the historical narrative of this project. Both locations operated Catholic labor schools but Buffalo never joined the ACTU while Cleveland was a charter member. However, the Great Lake cities of Buffalo and Cleveland were specifically chosen as a case study for three reasons.

First, both cities offered analogous histories, population demographics and industrial developments. The cultural and industrial histories of these cities, then and now, concentrated on the value of the Great Lakes as a resource and transportation system. Furthermore, the industrial growth of Buffalo and Cleveland maintained parallel paths evident by the near simultaneous growth of corresponding heavy industries. The laborers employed at these factories were primarily immigrants with each city integrating comparable ethnic enclaves. The roots of labor and the working class were evident in both venues.

Second, Buffalo and Cleveland are rich in local Catholic history with both cities established as dioceses on the same day: April 23, 1847. The influx of predominantly Catholic immigrant labor created an alluring environment for the dominance of many

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45 The Vatican established three new diocese on that day: Albany, NY; Buffalo, NY and Cleveland, Ohio. The growth of Catholicism in those areas required more direct oversight and management to meet the needs of the faithful and maintain Catholic continuity.
labor organizations by Catholics. Since the formation of each diocese, the ensuing bishops implemented plans for the future direction of the local Church and these specific features created unique characteristics which became apparent with the growth of the Catholic laity in the labor movement and labor education. In each city Catholic labor education proceeded along divergent paths; an analysis of the differences provided a variety of criteria useful for continued research.

The third basis for examining Buffalo and Cleveland in this dissertation is that they are often overlooked as sources for scholarly research. Both cities contain a rich secular history having an important role in the American labor movement yet that history is seldom explored. Also, the historical narratives of the Catholic Church in Buffalo and Cleveland demonstrates the vitality of a missionary Church that grows to become an integral part of the local society. These specific Catholic histories are seldom noticed. This dissertation endeavors to reveal a neglected but rich narrative of both religious and secular history.

In my estimation, many historians too often view American history, and the corresponding developments of the nation, as a subject exclusive to larger East coast or Midwest cities or New England or the “frontier.” The motive for the selection of these two Great Lake cities is the anticipation of redirecting the historian to the opportunities that significant American history is accomplished throughout the nation particularly in the Great Lakes.

The sources utilized in the accounts of the two cities was primarily original

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46 The Diocese of Buffalo currently states that seventy percent of the population is Catholic and the Diocese of Cleveland maintains that over forty percent is Roman Catholic.
47 Labor education in Buffalo was a source for maintaining harmonious relationships between labor and management. In Cleveland, the labor schools developed into more management forums. Chapters 7 & 8
archival material. The Buffalo labor school was established by Msgr. John Boland who was a highly regarded but forgotten labor priest. His personal papers and correspondence, in addition to the *Catholic Labor Observer* the diocesan labor newspaper, afforded an invaluable view into the labor history of Buffalo and how Catholics advanced the programs of labor education. The untold story in Buffalo was how the Catholic labor school maintained industrial harmony adjusting to the various challenges of the 1950’s and 1960’s.

Cleveland as a charter member of the ACTU subscribed to its organizational policies. The city’s position within the Association, and as a “blue collar labor town,” brought the ACTU’s national convention to the city on several occasions. This, as well as the establishment of the labor school, enhanced the local chapter’s position with workers. Eventually, Cleveland’s labor school was integrated into St. John’s college operated by the Diocese. But over the decades, the labor school adjusted to the changing needs of the workers and industry which created a more multifaceted organization.

**Labor Historiography**

This dissertation is also a study of American labor history so an analysis of labor historiography is required. Many labor historians often ignore religion as an integral component of labor and the working class. The history of labor, like other fields, is open to interpretations and marked by relationships and discontinuities. This is most evident

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48 Msgr. Boland is often overshadowed by more notable labor priests such as Fr. John Ryan, Msgr. George Higgins and Fr. Charles Rice. See James Hennesey’s *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* or Jay Dolan’s *The American Catholic Experience* for further treatment of these labor priests.

49 See Chapter 8 on the history of the Cleveland labor school and its relation to the ACTU.

50 *The Labor Leader*, August 26, 1940, p. 1 & 3. Cleveland was selected to host the ACTU conventions to counter the Communist convention held there several years earlier and as a show of support for the other labor organization conventions conducted there. See Chapter 8.
in the historiography of religion and American labor.

By the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, academic historians are breaking away from traditional analysis of history and evolving into a “new school” of historian. This new group of scholars, including David Brody, Melvyn Dubofsky, Herbert G. Gutman and David Montgomery, separate themselves from the focus on unions and collective bargaining. That emphasis defines labor history since its origins, during the Progressive Era, under the influence of the University of Wisconsin’s John R. Commons and his students. These “new labor historians” break from the “Commons school” in both subject and interpretation.

Some historians, in my opinion, offer histories that discuss the narrative of the labor problem more from the workers’ perspective than as a mere historical narrative. Anthony Bimba in The History of the American Working Class (1968), details the struggles and the violence that workers encounter in their efforts to establish unions.

Historian Irving Bernstein in The Lean Years. A History of the American Worker 1920-1933 (1960) and The Turbulent Years. A History of the American Worker 1933-1941 (1970), portrays American labor history and the working class, in a series of disturbing contrasts. Bernstein explains how this cause and effect relationship shapes labor and unions. Many unions in the 1920’s-1930’s exist only by permission of the company as many state courts continue to rule in favor of business not labor. Bernstein asserts that workers are more concerned about the issue of Prohibition than wage

52 Irving Bernstein, The Lean Years. A History of the American Worker 1920-1933 (Boston: Houghton
differentials.\textsuperscript{53}

Yet other historians such as Christopher L. Tomlins’ *The State of the Unions. Labor Relations, Law and the Organized Labor Movement in America, 1880-1960* (1985), and Nelson Lichtenstein in *State of the Union. A Century of American Labor* (2002), argue that the unfavorable legal and political climate, and not the workers, determine the direction of organized labor. Workers focus too narrowly on achieving better wages, hours and working conditions which hinder their advancement. Unions’ internal strife, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, create conditions that have more to do with the craft union structure, exclusive membership and a business union approach to the labor movement than protecting the laborer. This combination of self-interests and disorganization weakens organized labor.

Labor historians such as Joseph Raybeck, *A History of American Labor* (1959); Philip Taft, *Organized Labor in American History* (1964) and Gus Tyler, *The Labor Revolution, Trade Unions in a New America* (1968), discuss in positive terms, the formation of the CIO as an agent of change in organized labor. Almost overnight the CIO begins to redefine the role of labor in American life. Not only does the CIO plunge into the organization of industrial unions, unlike the cautious AFL, it makes serious efforts to organize workers historically neglected by AFL unions, especially women, African-Americans, and Latinos.

Much of the scholarship of post-1945 labor examines how the industrial relations system, established under the New Deal, operates during the ensuing decades and why it eventually decays. More particularly, many historians debate the possibilities

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p. 80-81.
and limits of what David Montgomery in his 1979 book *Workers’ Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology and Labor Struggles* designate as the “the New Deal formula” in labor relations. He finds that government and labor meld as the state subsidizes economic growth, encourages collective bargaining and links the union movement to the Democratic Party.

The union zenith peaked in the early 1950’s. Yet at the very moment that the AFL-CIO was created in 1955, unions began a long slide downward. The weakening of organized labor also impacted and altered Catholic labor education. Many of the ACTU chapters, reflecting the deterioration in union activity, ceased operations. That descent intensified during the economic crises and political defeats of the late 1970’s and 1980’s.

A general reading of labor history from authors such as John Commons, Mary Beard, Irving Bernstein, Anthony Bimba, David Montgomery and others do not speak of the importance and function of religion and certainly *Rerum Novarum* as a potent factor in America’s unions. Joseph McCartin and Tracy Roof offer recent and solid labor histories during the period of the ACTU. However, they do not include any narrative concerning the importance of the Church or Social Gospel Movement in promoting workers’ rights. Melvyn Dubofsky addresses the history of worker radicalism but not the religious forces of social justice in promoting unions.

These historians, by not recognizing the effects of the encyclicals and Catholic involvement in labor, underestimates the role of religion in the labor movement. Neglecting this segment of the historical record is to bypass a pivotal point that

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eventually impacts the membership of any union.

Some labor historians do examine the role of religion in labor. Philip Taft’s Organized Labor in American History, addresses the relationship of the Catholic Church and the Knights of Labor. He asserts that by allowing Catholic workers to freely join unions, membership in organized labor increases and the Church gains prominence. The Church positions itself to champion for workers’ rights, better working conditions and a living wage.

Josiah Bartlett Lambert’s If Workers Took a Nation, discusses the importance of the social encyclicals in support of the workers’ right to strike. He analyzes how evolving Catholic social doctrine and Protestant social thought are integral components in defense of workers and their rights. Eric Leif Davin provides details on how Catholic and Protestant concepts of social justice are pivotal components in organized labor. He argues that religion, ethnicity and industrialized urban areas are able to partner with organized labor because of the social justice values and social reforms that were offered.

This dissertation adds to the study of religion and labor in correcting some historical inaccuracies and revising the current narrative. Examining the influence of the American Catholic laity in labor education proves that the laity, not the clergy, provided a fundamental need to the worker. Educating the worker about their rights and duties at the work place is the culmination of lay action that supports the laborer at work

58 For example, Ahlstrom contends that the ACTU formed “with the direct aim of supporting the CIO.” This is not correct. The ACTU never pledged affiliation to any union or organization and endeavored to be independent while supporting industrial harmony. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People,
and in the union. This bottom up initiative places the laity in a position of collegiality with the clergy.

**Historiography of American Catholicism**

Labor historiography, in my study, appears unencumbered in comparison to the historiography of American Catholicism. The problem with the scholarship of American Catholic history is that it is written mostly by Catholics. American Catholic historiography mirrors not only the conditions of the nation, but also the status of Catholicism in the United States during that period as perceived by the particular author. Catholic biases and agency are apparent. This might be interrelated to those Catholic historians who predominantly study and toil at Catholic institutions of higher education. Consequently, I encounter some historical content that is more skewed than detached. Furthermore, the tensions between the pastoral and the institutional demands are not always easy to resolve so the history of the Catholic Church in America is full of internally related conflicts.

Too many histories authored by the laity morph into apologetics while those written by clergy further elevate their role in America’s development. Adding to the confusion at times, American Catholic history or studies on Catholic social doctrine or theology are often spliced together to resemble identical academic endeavors categorized as history. The wealth of material regarding the historical account of the American Catholic Church is overwhelming. Accordingly, many of theses historians tend to write grand works that are extracts of the whole or shorter histories that synthesize the highlights.

This variability of American Catholic historiography is likely due to an
inadequacy in the general history of American religion that disregards or vilifies Catholics in the United States. Some Protestant leaders in the past believed that the Catholic Church, with its strong institutional controls and its reactionary view of history, could never adapt to American conditions and this reverberates in the literature. The early religious historiography of the United States, written by Protestants, focused on how religious “outsiders”, that is Roman Catholics, attempted to preserve their distinctive identities within a largely Protestant culture. This influenced how Catholic historians presented American Catholic history insisting that their religious loyalties did not prevent them from being genuinely American.

Although Catholics were influenced by new world democratic values and Protestant culture in the inaugural decades of the nation, they also endeavored to maintain a separate identity. In some ways they had no choice, they were constantly reminded of their “otherness” by discrimination against them in the workplace, in the voting booth and even by their own clergy. This scrutiny of religious history in America reverberates into the twentieth century with Ray Allen Billington’s Protestant Crusade (1938) which portrays Catholics as victims of nativists and not influential. Other historians continue this theme such as William Warren Sweet’s The American Churches (1942).

However, by the later part of the century historians re-examine the place of Catholics in the United States. Sydney Ahlstrom’s A Religious History of the American

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59 See these early accounts of the religious history of the United States: Robert Baird, Religion in the United States of America (1844) and Daniel Dorchester, Christianity in the United States (1888).

*People* (1972) asserts that the American Catholic Church has a longer history in the nation than other denominations. Catholics in the United States, according Ahlstrom, experience a “more decisive break” from their colonial phase than other groups. Consequently, America’s Catholics are able to evolve and participate in a free democratic society. This transformation of American Catholic cultural thought and attitude becomes an “enigma to popes and curial officials in Rome.”

At the time *Rerum Novarum* and the Americanist crisis occupied Catholic thought, American Catholicism discovered its first official historian in John Gilmary Shea, a layman. Shea wrote histories of American Catholics to demonstrate how they were an integral part of the nation. His *History of the Catholic Church in the United States* (1892) follows a deferential route that was narrow, institutional and ecclesial ignoring the interaction of the Church with society in general.

He is followed by Peter Guilday (1884-1947) considered by many Catholic scholars as the most significant historian of American Catholicism in the first half of the twentieth century. He is best known for his biographical studies. Guilday is responsible for the revival of interest in American Catholic history. He blends history with religion and argues that history, written properly, will prove that Roman Catholicism is the true church, providing an important defense against the critics of Catholicism.

Guilday was very cautious about what he wrote and disregarded anything that was detrimental to the history of the church and its leaders. Such caution was indicative of the environment that prevailed in the years following the condemnation of modernism when Church leaders looked upon scholars with suspicion. This created, in

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the first half of the twentieth century, scholarship of American Catholic history that was fashioned on institutional, biographical, apologetical, and promotional characteristics.

Catholic historians admit that America was a Protestant nation. Yet insisted that a pluralism of faith and practice was natural in the American context. They continually insisted that this implied that Catholics loved their country and were loyal to the nation’s institutions. American Catholic historians insisted that Catholics shared the same values with all Americans of every faith. History became a major vehicle through which Americans learned what it meant to be American. For America’s Catholics, historical narratives were a major component of national self-consciousness and a source of commonality.

These themes, particularly the concept of Catholics as loyal Americans, gained momentum in the post-World War II and Cold War period. John Tracy Ellis becomes the personification of American Catholic history for the post-World War II generation of scholars. Writing in the Cold War era of the 1950’s he manifested a defensive attitude that was common among Catholics at that time but he also wrote about American Catholic history from an unusual approach.

Before the 1950’s, no prominent American Catholic historians will admit that there have been any significant failures in the record of his church or country. He does not believe that church history is only meant to edify and that offensive episodes are to be kept out of sight. He argues for truthfulness in the writing of history and is often critical of the Church and its leaders.

Ellis’s scholarship comprises two genres. The first is the traditional biographical
approach to Catholic history that emphasizes the institution and hierarchy. *The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, 1834-1921* (1952), is a vital source for both the plot and evidence of the Church’s support of organized labor. The second type of historical writing reflects his interest in social and cultural history. In *American Catholicism* (1956) he frequently identifies the contributions that Catholics make to the United States.

However, his style is more flattering than unbiased narrative as he attempts to paint the best possible picture of American Catholic history. Even though he does not hesitate to criticize the church and its leaders, he often lapses into an apologetic style of scholarship. Writing on the eve of the forthcoming changes of Vatican II, Ellis resembles a Progressive era historian as he champions history as an agent of transformation.

The American Catholic historiography of the 1950’s maintains a traditional stance. The literature emphasizes a Catholic chronicle of success based on the histories of clergy, religious communities, dioceses and the study of lay organizations. In this dissertation, literature from this era such as Browne’s *The Catholic Church and the Knights of Labor* (1949); Mary Harrita Fox’s *Peter E. Dietz, Labor Priest* (1953); Michael Hynes’ *The History of the Diocese of Cleveland* (1953) and James Moynihan’s *The Life of Archbishop Ireland* (1953) are crucial resources. They prove to be informative and candid sources of Catholic history. However, there is an apparent undertone that expresses a pride and unapologetic deportment for the importance of America’s Catholics.

During the 1950’s some scholars “discovered” that religion was a most essential component of American culture. While American religious history was more of a
Protestant phenomenon the literature admittedly was changing to be more inclusive of other faiths. As I review the general historiography of American Catholicism for the 1950’s, two works emerge as valuable although authored by non-Catholics. *The Emergence of Liberal Catholicism in America* (1958) by Robert Cross, a Protestant layman, offers a history of America’s Catholics that is not defensive nor apologetic.

The other significant religious document in the postwar era is Will Herberg’s 1955 work *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*. It explores how the highly diverse ethnic nationalism of previous immigrant generations transmutes into a tripartite denominational system. Herberg argues that the “triple melting pot” model lends full legitimacy to members of the nation’s two historic minority faiths: Catholics and Jews. America’s Catholics evolve to be recognized as a genuinely American religious community because it is one of the three great religions of democracy.\(^6^2\)

Much of the historiography of American religion was Protestant focused but, as Catholic historians entered the field, the analysis of American religious history better reflected the religious pluralism and diversity of the nation. The religious history of American Catholicism was also “re-discovered” at this time. The scholarship that evolved was effected by the social changes of the 1960’s and the impact of Vatican II. This was apparent with two significant works by “new historians.” Philip Gleason’s *The Conservative Reformers. German-American Catholics and the Social Order* (1968) and David O’Brien’s *American Catholics and Social Reform. The New Deal Years* (1968), presented new scholarship that did not focus on the tradition of episcopal or institutional history.

O’Brien and Gleason are laymen trained as American historians not as church historians. American Catholic historiography is adapting to a new understanding of the Church that emerges as a result of the Second Vatican Council. Both avail themselves of this new opportunity of historical inquiry in this changed environment. Gleason and O’Brien are not writing for the approval of the hierarchy. Neither writer exploits the apologetical concerns of earlier historians. Both are writing in the post-Vatican II era, when America’s Catholics are less self-conscious and defensive about their place in American society.

O’Brien offers a type of activist scholarship in the tradition of the Progressive historians who seek to integrate their scholarly work with political and social reform. O’Brien’s interests are in the relationship between Catholicism and American society, especially his desire for the renewal of American society by the application of Catholic social teachings on justice and peace. Two of his additional works, The Renewal of American Catholicism (1972) and Public Catholicism (1988) demonstrate that historians of American religion neglect the story of American Catholicism. O’Brien also advises that historians of American Catholicism fail to present Catholicism as part of American cultural history.

Philip Gleason is more precise in his description of Catholic church history and Catholics in America with his book Catholicism in America (1970). He depicts the Catholic church as being a highly successful institutional “immigrant” itself caught in the conflicting pressures to conform to American ways and yet upholding old world traditions. Gleason contends that the Catholic Church, like other institutions, must change to meet the new needs of its members.
But John Tracy Ellis and Thomas McAvoy, consensus historians of the 1950’s and 1960’s, emphasize the institutional and political unity of the Catholic tradition. The uniqueness of the American experience, the stability of American institutions and the emphasis upon adaptation to the American situation constitute staple themes for these Catholic scholars. John Tracy Ellis in *American Catholicism* (1956) views the experience of the church in this country as unique. He reflects on the spontaneous development of indigenous attitudes and institutions and regards the Church’s policy of adjusting to the given conditions of America as not only necessary but desirable.  

Thomas McAvoy’s *A History of the Catholic Church in the United States* (1969) contends that the initial spread of Catholicism is hindered by nativist efforts. The subsequent waves of Catholic immigrants create new problems for those attempting to assimilate into the American mainstream. McAvoy theorizes, from a Catholic perspective, that Protestant efforts to hinder the integration of Catholics into the mainstream of American life actually enables them to eventually become a political and cultural force in the nation. Catholics are forced to adapt to conditions that propel them forward. But McAvoy is still writing a history that is an affirmation of the faith and a proponent of the American church’s successes. It is an Americanist position that does not address the dissent among the hierarchy or laity on the best methods to acculturate Catholics.

Andrew Greely counters them and offers a very different viewpoint in *The Catholic Experience. A History of American Catholicism* (1967). Greely presents a

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63 Ahlstrom argues that Catholics were changing and experiencing “movements of discovery and renewal” brought about by war, social change and even affluence. In their “rush to modernity” American Catholics were likely shaken by change because of the rigidity of doctrine and institutions. See Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972, [2004]),
sociological interpretation of American Catholic history that examines the realities of Catholics from a perspective that is not camouflaged. He argues that scholars reveal the Church’s failures in other lands, but in America they see an unmarred record of growth, prosperity and virtue.

For example, Greely states that Catholics view the American Church as remarkably successful and any difficulties are invariably the product of alien intrusions. The challenges of trusteeism result from foreign priests. The condemnation of Americanism similarly derives from the inability of Europeans to comprehend the “genius of the American church.” Greely suggests that these are events are not necessarily accurate and that the Catholic historian and the Catholics community, re-evaluate the ideas of Catholicism in America to offer a more balanced representation.

The historiography of American Catholicism evolves in the 1960’s and 1970’s with the development of the new social history which favors the study of individual communities not just individuals. For historians of American Catholicism this is articulated into studies of immigrant groups and their effect on the Church. Richard Linkh, *American Catholicism and European Immigrants 1900-1924* (1975) examines how immigrants adjust the policies of the Church in the early Twentieth Century.

This continues the immigrant narrative into the 1980’s with other works most notably Robert Orsi’s *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (1985) and Delores Liptak’s *A Church of Many Cultures* (1988).

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p. 1016-1017.

Trusteeism was an issue in the early decades of the Nineteenth Century over ownership of the parish and its assets. The laity believed they owned and controlled the property while the clergy and individual dioceses disputed that. Eventually the state courts intervened and favored the dioceses. For further treatment see Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*, (Garden City: Double Day & Co., 1985) and Sr. Felicity O’Driscoll. *Political Nativism in Buffalo: 1830-1860*. Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Catholic University, Washington, D.C., 1936.
and *Immigrants and Their Church* (1989). General histories of Catholicism devote more scholarship to this area during this time. This “new history”, written from a bottom-up reference, becomes the paradigm for future ventures in historical writing.

The 1980’s witnessed distinct objectives in the scholarship of American Catholic history which accentuate the inclusive and participatory nature of Catholics in a pluralistic society. The emphasis was on the assortment of social forces within the traditional institutional dimensions of American Catholicism. Original viewpoints surfaced as the roles of the laity, women and the dynamics of ethnicity and race, as competing factors at the national and parochial levels, dominated the scholarship. Examining specific themes, such as immigration, or a review of the ways in which Catholicism has been a common as well as a distinct part of American cultural and religious history was the focus for these historians.

This is evident in Jay Dolan’s *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (1985). He clarifies how the multifaceted nature of American Catholic history is now more easily integrated into the general history of the United States. This is found in the areas of immigration history, intellectual and cultural history. He also depicts the history of American Catholicism on a larger canvas by considering external and cultural reasons for change, as well as internal Catholic dialogue. The increasing significance of the middle class in the late Nineteenth Century is one example of such an external force; another is the influence of economic and cultural forces on American Catholics in the post-World War II era.

Dolan offers a narrative that explains American Catholic history as integral to American history from a lay perspective. His work is recognizable to both Catholics and
non-Catholics. While his book is important to this dissertation it continues the model of Catholic historians incorporating an overabundance of material in pursuit of an absolute narrative of Catholic history.\footnote{For example, Dolan devotes only a couple of paragraphs to the history of the ACTU. Consequently, the history of the organization compels the reader to dismiss the ACTU as a minor entity without merit.} I believe that this daunting task cannot be done sufficiently in a one tome work. The history suffers and the reader receives an incomplete account.

Yet the traditional methodology of American Catholic history remains and likely will not disappear. What Dolan does for the laity Fr. James Hennesey’s general history, *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (1983) accomplishes for the clergy. His well researched and intellectual historical narrative positions the clergy in a more dominant role while depicting the laity as assistants in the Catholic formation of America. Gerald Fogarty’s *The Vatican and the American Hierarchy From 1870 to 1965* (1982) is a valuable resource for this dissertation. Both are excellent illustrations that traditional church history can be engaging and revelatory.

As the Catholic Church celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* in 1991, the scholarship briefly focused on the issues of Catholic social teachings and doctrine. The rediscovery of the social encyclicals facilitated a reawakening of the Church’s place in social justice matters, albeit momentarily. Works such as Mary Hobgood, *Catholic Social Teaching and Economic Theory, Paradigms in Conflict* (1991); Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor. A Hundred Years of Catholic Social Teaching* (1992) and Rupert Ederer, *Economics as if God Matters* (1995) analyze Catholic social thought and its place in economic reform. Others consider the role of the

As I review the current literature on American Catholic history, on its procession into the early decades of the twenty-first century, two features become evident. The scholarship appears to mirror the disposition of the nation. That is, contemporary historiography gives the impression that it is leaning more toward a traditional and doctrinal approach rather than an academic stance. The historical accounts are reverting to amalgamations of theology and dogma with embedded elements of political rationalization.

General histories of American Catholicism authored in recent years by historians such as Michael Perko, *Catholic & American. A Popular History* (1989); Jim Cullen, *Restless in the Promised Land, Catholics and the American Dream* (2001) and Clyde Crews, *American & Catholic. A Popular History of Catholicism in the United States* (2004) and Patrick Carey’s *Catholics in America. A History* (2008) revert to a more deferential model that are inclined not to place the laity on par with the clergy. They are selective in content and bypass major themes. These narratives tend to be less informative as scholarly tomes replacing solid academic efforts previously mentioned such as Dolan, Hennesey or McAvoy.

The writing of American Catholic history makes a radical departure from the paradigms that exist in the first half of the twentieth century. Episcopal biographies and
apologetics are replaced in the 1960’s and 1970’s by new themes, sources and methodologies. American Catholic historiography is remade as the post-Vatican II historian engages the laity, asks new questions, researches other disciplines and offers fresh interpretations to eliminate static academic thought. Institutional studies also continue to be written but many acquire a new look as they ask new questions of the past.

A very valuable aspect of this new style of history is its emphasis on themes or issues. Scholarly discussions of theology and doctrine are often misconstrued as historical evidence. As scholars of American Catholic history discover innovative historical themes it is my expectation that the scholarship will be reinvigorated and the historiography of Catholics in America will cease to be defensive but enlightened.

Historiography teaches us that the historical narrative is complex and never yields to simple interpretation. It also reveals that historians bring a fixed preconception of what the subject should be. The research, writing and interpretation of the historical subject becomes a process. But too often in that activity the historian seeks to impose constrictions rather than consider a multiplicity of alternatives.66

In this dissertation, I attempt to write a narrative that offers a fresh perspective and review of mature and forgotten material. But there is also an invitation to the reader to discover and assess the value of the material in a self-reflexive manner. This is a new method for this type of study which offers a novel and, in my estimation, a bold manner in which to evaluate the subject.

With this dissertation, I submit an interpretation of the evidence, based on a
synthesis of original research and scholarship, that is both innovative and challenges static notions of the American Catholic church, the historiography and its relationship with organized labor. It reflects the actions of the laity not previously considered. Motivated and empowered by the social encyclicals, they initiated Catholic labor education. This was an American lay response to the challenges presented decades earlier by the Americanist heresy. It was also a vehicle for the laity to operate effectively in the American Catholic Church in spite of the hierarchy and clergy annexing leadership roles and suppressing lay intellectualism.

American history is the story of individualism and democracy. These two areas are suspect by Europeans and this distrust carries over into the parish halls of American Catholicism. It is the courage of an evolving laity that takes these two very American concepts and applies them to the daily life of the Church in concert with organized labor. This is how American lay Catholics exercise their individuality and democracy in the American Church.

Religion is a participatory experience and this dissertation invites the reader to engage in this process through the examination of the encyclicals and historical accounts. The information, data and facts are from the past yet with recent labor struggles in Wisconsin and Michigan, the implementation of the social encyclicals is more relevant today than ever for the laity, laborers and the Church.67

67 In more contemporary times, Wisconsin became embroiled in the fight for organized labor’s right to collective bargaining. The Wisconsin Catholic Conference of Bishops preferred not to support labor and declared themselves to be neutral. They claimed, erroneously in my judgment, that Catholic social teaching permitted such actions as it was permissible to “come to different conclusions.” The director of the conference urged people to “go read the encyclicals for themselves.” Michigan, a predominantly unionized state, legislated “right to work” laws which prompted the Michigan Catholic Conference to remain silent. For a detailed report see Kristen Hannum, “Labor Pains,” U.S. Catholic, August 2011, p. 12-17 and Michael Sean Winters, “Shame In Michigan,” National Catholic Reporter, Dec. 12, 2012.
Chapter 2

Rerum Novarum

Leo XIII and the Church Embrace the Modern World of the Worker

During the closing decades of the nineteenth century the Industrial Revolution created universal social, economic and labor discord as life for the laborer was a deleterious existence. Although many in the Catholic hierarchy backed the industrial capitalists, they recognized that the hazardous working environment and ensuing social and moral conditions demanded an improvement in the standard of living for the worker.

But where should the catalyst for such corrections come? Would social legislation and the acceptance of organized labor unions create a better environment for the laborer? Or, should the Church directly intervene to address and alleviate the plight of the worker?

In the 1870’s, some Catholic leaders considered government intervention in the economy as a cure for social problems although Baltimore’s liberal Cardinal, James Gibbons, struggled to explicitly comprehend the serious flaws in America’s social conditions.\(^a\) The American Catholic Church was still a mistrusted religion in an unsympathetic environment. Accordingly, some of the Catholic magisterium and the laity were hesitant to become involved in reform movements as they were likely associated with Protestantism.\(^b\) However, the social and labor dilemma was not just an American

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phenomenon; labor troubles and the corresponding social issues were a trans-Atlantic reality.

European society during this time was notably marked by class differences that were not as acute in the United States. But the worker problem in Europe was stained with elements of socialism as the philosophy of Marx infiltrated some labor groups. For Marx, communism was the ultimate trend of human life and the positive abolition of private property was strategic to returning man to his social self. Furthermore, he regarded Christianity and the Catholic Church as an enemy, one that impeded this progress. Marx’s words resonated vociferously with a sympathetic appeal among many poor laborers. Was it possible that the imperiousness of Marx, and the apprehensions of the European labor problem, could infiltrate the American workers’ consciousness? Was religion in general, or the Catholic Church in particular, capable of addressing these concerns?

Pope Leo XIII, with his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, acknowledged the plight of the workers and formulated a response to the burgeoning turmoil. This papal document evolved as a retort to the social and labor crisis in Europe which percolated throughout the nineteenth century. The intention was to counter the surge of socialism and dampen the rhetoric of Marx but in the United States, its connotation took on an American accent. The Encyclical was the reflection of a Pope but also an expression of a man profoundly concerned about the welfare and social conditions of his day and how his Church could change the world. Through *Rerum*, Leo moved the Church into the modern world and placed it in a position to be a voice for the worker and the marginalized.

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Vincent Pecci, the Reluctant Cleric

The pontificate of Leo XIII, one of the longest lasting twenty-five years, was a blend of orthodoxy and contradictions as he maneuvered the Church away from the feudal trappings of society into the contemporary world. However, his reign eventually became a paradox to the American Catholic hierarchy. Born into a family of minor nobility near Rome on March 2, 1810, Vincent Pecci was the sixth of eleven children. His parents cultivated a sense of honor, education and the fine arts among the siblings due to their status. The future Pope’s mother operated charity houses for the poor and neglected while his father administered their property holdings while mayor. The temporal and spiritual influence of Pecci’s parents imprinted an indelible characteristic that shaped his behavior toward the Church, society and the disenfranchised.

Pecci’s education started at the Gregorian University in Rome where he studied philosophy and theology receiving his doctorate in the latter by 1832. While his academic credentials pointed toward the priesthood he contemplated his future in the diplomatic corps, primarily with the Vatican. The writings of a young Pecci illustrated no strong desire for the priesthood or even the consideration of a vocation. He did promise his mother, on her deathbed, that he will accede to her wishes and be ordained a priest but that event occurred nearly fourteen years later.

Difficulties in Belgium

71 Pope Leo XIII was often titled as the “Pope of the Working Man” yet as Pope, he often did not speak directly to his carriage driver since he was part of the household staff. While this Pope favored America’s Catholic presence in the world he eventually rebuked the American Catholic church for seeking to incorporate democratic principles into internal ecclesiastical affairs. See Chapter 3.


73 Raymond Schmandt, “The Life and Work of Leo XII,” Leo XIII and the Modern World, Edward Gargan,
Ordained to the priesthood in December 1837, Pecci was first assigned as a papal delegate or civil governor of Benevento in the Papal States at the age of twenty-six. His administrative abilities were promptly recognized and he was elevated to the position of Papal Nuncio to Belgium in 1843 receiving the Archbishop’s miter. In Belgium, he came in contact with the Industrial Revolution. As an eyewitness, he observed the poverty and misery of the industrial worker and how it dehumanized the laborer. The Archbishop quickly ascertained that the mission of the Church was to bring the worker back to Christianity.\(^74\)

Pecci also experienced how a modern democratic nation-state was capable of utilizing power and a political agenda to revitalize its citizens. He recognized that Catholics could exist and participate under such a “liberal” regime. The world was transforming under the new ideas of politics and economics and the Nuncio resolved that the Church had to engage in that process.\(^75\)

The thirty-three year old ambassador was subjected to the full weight and burdens of the office as he navigated between the delicate and difficult strategies of the Belgian Catholic hierarchy and the Protestant King of Belgium. At issue was the struggle for freedom of religious education dividing Belgium Catholics into liberal and conservative factions.\(^76\) The hierarchy and clergy disagreed with the laity, and the Jesuits, over the institutional structure of education; the King did not wish to be a party to this argument. Archbishop Pecci, however, was viewed as weak and indecisive in this matter by deferring to Rome. His failure to resolve this conflict resulted in the Archbishop’s recall


\(^75\) Jay P. Corrin, *Catholic Intellectuals and the Challenge of Democracy*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre
in 1845 where he was assigned as the Ordinary for Perugia. His diplomatic career was ruined as this appointment was tantamount to an ecclesiastical exile.

**Emerging Social Ministry of Cardinal Pecci**

The Archbishop, and later Cardinal, incurred the antagonism of the papal secretary of state, Cardinal Antonelli due to this matter yet Pecci was still highly regarded by Pope Pius IX. For the next thirty-one years, Cardinal Pecci devoted his ministry to the pastoral and intellectual needs of his diocese and placed a great regard on the education of the clergy. The people of his diocese, and more importantly the Pope, viewed the Cardinal as progressive in social policy but conservative in ecclesiastical matters. This future Pope contemplated the development of the world and regarded capitalism, and its plunder, as a distraction from the precepts of the Church. But he considered socialism as a modern threat to the theology of the Church. This inclination continued throughout his future pontificate.

Cardinal Pecci’s ministry mirrored a conservatism that might be interpreted as contradictory to his policy of advocacy for the worker and the neglected. However, the Cardinal’s pastoral concerns never diminished. Pecci often protested against the secularization of education and the interference of the state in ecclesiastical affairs. The Cardinal’s attitude toward state intervention eventually changed especially in matters of social justice.

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76 Furey, *Life of Leo XIII and History of His Pontificate*, p. 35.
79 His predecessor Pius IX, values Pecci’s theological acumen and defense of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council. Pius’ *Syllabus of Errors* is attributed to the efforts of Pecci’s insistence that the Church produce a point by point condemnation of religious and secular errors.
Cardinal Pecci issued a series of pastoral letters throughout his tenure that advocated for the worker, the poor, the oppressed and the forgotten. His Lenten pastoral letter of 1877 attracted attention not only in Rome but throughout Europe. Titled “The Church and Civilization,” he supported both the Syllabus of Errors and defended the Church against those who claim that it opposed modern civilization and progress. He denounced the abuses of the current economic order and encouraged reconstruction of the social order. Pecci called for a reconciliation between the Catholic Church and modern civilization. He asserted that the Church regards work and the laborer with distinguished admiration and criticized those who were responsible for the unwarranted struggles of the worker, especially the toil of children.

Pope Leo XIII

This pastoral document drew Pecci out of obscurity and, soon after its publication, the Pope promoted the Cardinal to the office of Papal Chamberlain. Some perceived this as compensation for tolerating Antonelli’s hostility over the decades; others thought it was the Pontiff’s intention to direct the College of Cardinals to consider Pecci as his chosen candidate. Most, however, believed that this was the Pope’s method to silence and control the Cardinal who was labeled as “too liberal.” Within a few months of the appointment, the reign of Pope Pius IX ends.

The resulting Conclave of 1878 was the first to mirror, in many aspects, the modern world. No longer did the great European powers and families exercise direct

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80 The Syllabus of Errors was issued in 1864 and addressed the secular and rationalistic currents that were undermining the Church’s authority. Composed of ten sections, it condemned, among other items, liberalism, socialism, communism and secret societies and defined the relationship between the State and the Church. A comprehensive synopsis is found at the New Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 13, p. 854-856.


influence on the election of a Pope. At this Conclave many of the Cardinals were not from the nobility but from families of the urban middle class or an affluent tier of the rural peasantry.\textsuperscript{83} Because of the Industrial Revolution, worldwide transportation systems enabled all the Cardinals to assemble for this vote; a first for the College of Cardinals.

The College of Cardinals split into liberal and conservative camps and were uncertain as to a future course for the universal Church at the dawn of a new century. Many sought an inactive pope who could maintain the status quo or return the Church to its former power. Others believed that the Church required a man who knew the modern world and could converse with it. The Cardinals’ selection was an opportunity for the hierarchy to evaluate their position and chart a course for the Church. Pecci’s age (69) and a sick frail life, implied a brief unconvincing Pontificate and another imminent future Conclave.\textsuperscript{84} After only three votes Cardinal Pecci, the exiled Archbishop of Perugia, was elected Pope.

Cardinal Pecci selected the name of Leo due to his admiration for Pope Leo XII (1823-1829) who reigned during a time of transformation in Europe and realized that the Church must adapt itself to a changing and emerging society.\textsuperscript{85} The pontificate of Leo’s predecessor was viewed as that of a hermit but Leo XIII was signaling that the Catholic Church was to be a participant in a developing world.

Europeans, particularly English Cardinal John Henry Newman, regarded Leo XIII as a man of tenacious purpose with a sense of reconstructive power. Leo also

\textsuperscript{83} Holland, Modern Catholic Social Teaching, p. 112.
\textsuperscript{84} Wallace, Leo XIII and the Rise of Socialism, p. 85-88. The life and election of Leo XIII was extraordinarily similar to John XXIII’s life and election in 1958; both were considered as compromise candidates.
understood the importance of dialogue with other nations. Europe at this time was besieged by liberal extremism, anti-clericalism and hostile nationalism.⁸⁶ Leo desired friendly relationships with all nations and governments, especially with America.⁸⁷ Noting a reversal in the Vatican’s policy with respect to the world, the French paper *Le Monde* commented on the new Pope: “Where Pius IX opened an abyss, Leo XIII traversed it with a bridge.”⁸⁸ Many however were uncertain of the future direction of his pontificate and did not view this election as decisive. Would this man, considered as theologically conservative, continue the traditional agenda of his predecessors? Some that attended the Pope’s coronation ceremony described it as a “parade of vanished realities of an institution that was dead.”⁸⁹ With the surrender of the Papal States, between 1858 and 1870 and the loss of Rome itself in the latter part of that year, the papacy was politically impotent. Pope Leo XIII was determined to restore the Papacy to relevancy and banish its anachronistic image.

**Pope Leo XIII and Neo-Thomistic Theology**

From the time of his academic training, Leo was drawn to the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas and the resultant Thomistic structure of theology. The reintroduction of Thomistic philosophy during his tenure was significant. The Pontiff will utilize the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas who developed a synthesis of faith and reason in the Middle Ages. Applying Thomistic theology, Leo aspired to establish that faith and reason were compatible in the modern world of the nineteenth century.⁹⁰ His critics assumed this atavist characteristic portended uncertainty for the

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⁸⁶ Corrin, Jay P. *Catholic Intellectuals*, p. 62.  
⁸⁸ Holland, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, p. 112.
Church’s future. But Leo proclaimed that this “old philosophy” did not condemn the progress of the modern world or the physical and natural sciences rather, it enhanced them. The Pope distinctly affirmed that any new scholarship, that was substantiated by research and experimentation, could not damage the Church’s mission in the world.

Leo’s efforts were meant to demonstrate how the Church was a viable institution in the contemporary age of science and discovery.

The Pope now clearly set the future course of the Church. He insisted that religion and the Church can coexist in the modern world and also guide society.

Reverting to and implementing Thomistic theology and philosophy, the Pope established the Church’s position on modern thought from a strategic advantage. Leo placed modern Catholicism on a solid philosophical and theological foundation based on the principles of Thomism that stressed justice within the social order. That became the direction for his pontificate with important implications: Leo resurrected the Catholic church from a feudal slumber and fashioned a Church to be both pastoral and militant in its application of theology in correcting social obstructions.

*The Foundations of Rerum Novarum*

Imbued with this theological wisdom, Leo merged his pastoral experiences with his observations of the social conditions to produce his most significant encyclical. This pastoral letter was universal in its application as a rebuttal to the inchoate philosophies of the nineteenth century. It was an affirmation of the dignity of the individual and as an

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91 John Molony, *The Worker Question, A New Historical Perspective on Rerum Novarum*, (Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 1991), p. 17. This work is the most comprehensive history of the drafting, re-writing and final text of the encyclical detailing the in-house discussions on the direction of the document. See also Paul Misner’s “The Predecessors of Rerum Novarum within Catholicism” *Review of Social Economy* (Winter 1991), p. 444-464 for additional account of the personalities involved in the authorship of the
action plan for the Church entering the twentieth century. Leo was not defining new dogma or postulating new doctrine; he was applying theology in support of the daily affairs of life.

The Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, was written during the middle part of his pontificate when the Pope was 80 years old. It reflected the remarkable character and progressive thinking of Leo XIII. With this document, Leo maneuvered the Catholic church out of the posture that remained from the Council of Trent into a contemporary milieu. Prior to *Rerum*, the customary behavior of the laity and clergy were activities either in political defense of the Church’s freedom or the corporal works of mercy. As a universal pastor, the Pope realized the exigency of the Church: Catholicism must be more involved and participate in the daily events of the people or the Church will be irrelevant.

The antecedent to this document, to address the Church’s position on social reconstruction, developed over several decades. It materialized amid the political turbulence of Europe, the consequences of the Industrial Revolution and the manifestations of Socialism and Communism. Ultimately, the Encyclical became the product of a European and American Catholic hierarchy that comprehended the anticipated collapse of society if the dilemma of the worker was not rectified.

*European Catholics and Labor Unrest*

The Industrial Revolution created wealth for the capitalists and required a substantial number of workers to maintain high levels of production. Men, women and children in England, Belgium, France and Germany became part of an industrial society of long hours, wretched conditions and social instability that impaired individuals and
families. Socialists in Italy promised to assist the worker as religion did not adequately respond to the labor problem. In Germany, the Kulturkampf stood in the way of effective state action to solve the social problem. Worker associations and syndicates formed in France which had a broad appeal to the laborer but were largely secular and anti-Catholic.

Within this environment, a new class of the laboring poor surfaced. This group was initially unnoticed by the Church yet dissidents recognized them as potential accomplices to their ideologies. European Catholic reformers, both clergy and laity, sought answers and direction to these social and labor problems.

Archbishop Affre of Paris, the Workers’ Martyr

By the late 1840’s the French bishops were alarmed at the increase in the number of poor produced by the rise of industrialism. In their discussion, they emphasized that the Church traditionally defended the poor but the consequences of the Industrial Revolution and capitalism produced circumstances unique to the temporal and spiritual needs of the individual.

Led by Denis Auguste Affre, the activist Archbishop of Paris, a consensus emerged that the Church must address the issues of poverty and propose a practical action plan to alleviate the matter with an optimistic attitude toward the future. He deemed man’s shortcoming as the root cause of the social problem and insisted that workers not be treated as merchandise or a commodity but afforded rights. While the laity and

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93 This was the struggle between the German government under Bismarck and the Roman Catholic Church over control of education, marriage and Church appointments lasting from 1871-1887.
94 Wallace, Leo XIII and the Rise of Socialism, p. 204.
95 Moody, “Leo XIII and the Social Crisis,” in Leo XIII and the Modern World, p. 72. See also Murphy,
commoner welcomed his advocacy, many of the French clergy were in opposition to Affré’s movement toward social justice. The Archbishop’s death, on a peacemaking mission to the street barricades of the 1848 Paris riots, deprived the French of their most ardent leader for workers’ rights. However, his words were not forgotten by Leo XIII. 

**Archbishop von Ketteler of Mainz, Founder of Social Catholicism**

The cause for labor justice and social values simultaneously evolved throughout Europe. In Germany, Archbishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler of Mainz, addressed the economic conditions and the industrial phenomenon that operated against the common good. The Archbishop insisted that the Catholic Church could no longer ignore the social and labor troubles of the faithful. Her mission was to be involved in the problems of the factory worker. Often labeled as the “founder of social Catholicism,” he was a friend of then Cardinal Pecci who considered him as the “first in Europe to take up the cause of the worker and agitate the social question in the name of the Gospel and point out the bases of solution.”

Ketteler’s ground-breaking book titled “The Labor Problem and Christianity,” (1864) addressed the labor crisis and proffered a remedy. He criticized the omnipotence of the capitalist system and its negative impact on the wage earner. The Archbishop declared that it was unjust and unnatural for the capitalist to retain surplus revenues and not distribute those profits to the worker “who contributes his flesh and blood and health” to the business enterprise. The wages of the worker, as well as the survival of families,

“*Rerum Novarum,*” *A Century of Catholic Social Thought.*


was at the mercy of economic forces. Ketteler condemned the relegation of human labor to the status of a commodity that was “offered for sale like any other commodity for the price of the wage which must provide their bread.”

The Archbishop stated that it was the Catholic Church who had the authority to teach, to comfort and to organize groups that can solve these labor problems. He also stressed that the State and worker’s associations, jointly, were the effective instruments to solve social and labor conflicts. Ketteler was candid about the rights of workers and that working conditions should be humane for men, women and children. He insisted on the diminution of work hours and a just wage for all. Ketteler maintained that the State be proactive in the protection of the worker against exploitation, fraud and mistreatment.

This work, and a series of sermons by the Archbishop, attracted wide attention and generated open discussion among many clergy, laity and even the European ruling class. While provocative in nature, he rejected revolution and violence to secure workers’ rights. Ketteler emphasized that religion and living a Christian life were central to the existence of the worker who sought harmony, not class conflict, between employer and employee in the struggle for a living wage. Ketteler did not perceive himself as a notable theological thinker or doyen of a new movement. Rather, his pastoral concerns motivated him to speak for the laborer. Unfortunately he discovered, to his displeasure, that many Catholic religious and lay leaders expediently ignored the despair of the worker.

Ketteler proposed a progressive seven point program to guide the German

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Church’s efforts in support of the worker with its application to the universal church. It included specialized education and training of the clergy in matters related to social and labor concerns. Each diocese should assign priests to a worker’s apostolate in industrialized areas and factories and there was to be an expanded role for the Church in organizing worker associations and monitoring workplace conditions.\textsuperscript{104} This encouraged some and empowered others to develop a Catholic labor movement in Germany but the Kulturkampf prevented any long term Catholic labor solutions.\textsuperscript{105} However, these concepts were later manifested in \textit{Rerum}.

\textbf{Cardinal Manning of England- A “Socialist in Disguise”}

In Great Britain, the Archbishop of Westminster Cardinal Henry Manning, also contemplated the nature and resolution of the worker and social crisis. A convert from Anglicanism, he observed the slums and squalor that generated around him where the Industrial Revolution originated. The Cardinal expressed consternation as thousands of workers in London toiled fifteen to eighteen hours a day, six days a week and yet did not earn enough to provide for themselves or their families.\textsuperscript{106}

Manning, in 1874, published his address to a worker’s council entitled “The Dignity and the Rights of Labour.” He, like other European prelates, demanded that the State intervene to protect the rights of the workers as employers treat them as subalterns and cheap labor. Manning was determined that the English Catholic Church become a voice for the worker and advocated for substantial reforms.\textsuperscript{107} The Cardinal did not

\textsuperscript{103} Murphy, “Rerum Novarum,” \textit{A Century of Catholic Social Thought}, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{104} Ederer, \textit{The Social Teachings of Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler}, p. 486-489.
\textsuperscript{105} This was the struggle between the German government under Bismarck and the Roman Catholic Church over control of education, marriage and Church appointments.
\textsuperscript{106} Molony, \textit{The Worker Question, A New Historical Perspective on Rerum Novarum}, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{107} Religious intervention in labor matters was not a novel concept in England. The Methodist Church ministered to miners and factory laborers but with insignificant impact, if any, to improve working
hesitate to recognize the legitimacy of the strike as frequently it was the only weapon the workers could utilize against the despotism of industrial capitalists.\textsuperscript{108} “Labor is a social function and not merely a commodity” he proclaimed often.\textsuperscript{109}

Manning believed that the character of society resided within the family but capitalist exploitation of children and women threaten to destroy individuals and families. Manning, like von Ketteler, demanded a shorter work day and a living wage. Similarly both met with opposition from industrialists, politicians and their own clergy. Many Catholic reformers, both liberal and conservative, viewed socialism and any act of social reform, as sinful. These actions confirmed Manning’s and Ketteler’s premise that the Church was still hostile to the worker. For his efforts, Manning was branded a “socialist in disguise.”\textsuperscript{110}

\textbf{American Clergy and Support for the Worker}

Swayed by European events, the composition of \textit{Rerum Novarum} also contained an American influence. As early as 1841, Bishop Francis Kenrick of Philadelphia, called for “societies of workers in which there is an agreement to demand at least minimum just payment.” He claimed that a worker needed his earnings to support his family and that associations were necessary for this.\textsuperscript{111} This was significant as it echoed the American Catholic Church’s first recognition that organized labor was vital in the cause of securing a living wage. Kenrick’s position was not unnoticed by labor or the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{108} Manning recalled that the State, through the Factory Acts, mitigated some of the insidiousness of the work environment but in the intervening fifty years since that time the laborers’ conditions worsened. Cronin and Flannery, \textit{The Church and the Workingman}, p. 93.
\item\textsuperscript{111} James Healy, S.J., \textit{The Just Wage 1750-1890. A Study of Moralists from St. Alphonsus to Leo XIII},
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The most substantial and noteworthy contribution was Cardinal Gibbons’ 1887 petition to the Vatican not to condemn the Knights of Labor and unions. Gibbons conveyed how monopolies and corporations were motivated only by profit and exercised a “heartless avarice which pitilessly grinds not only men but women and children.”112 Industrial capitalists and businesses, not working men, women and children, were protected by the law. Gibbons stated the obvious in that workers had no self-defense and it was their right to protect themselves through organized labor.

The Cardinal emphasized that the Knights were not antithetical to religion nor hostile to the law. To ignore the worker was unjust and any condemnation of unions was unacceptable to the American Catholic worker.113 Gibbons clarified organized labor in America in his petition to the Vatican: “Our Catholic working men sincerely believe that they are only seeking justice and by legitimate means. They love the Church and they wish to save their souls but they must also earn their living and labor is now so organized that without belonging to the organization it is almost impossible to earn one’s living.”114

**The Church Responds**

In the late nineteenth century, pressure on the Church to acknowledge organized labor accelerated on both sides of the Atlantic. Leon Harmel, a French textile manufacturer, led “workers’ pilgrimages” to Rome in 1885, 1887 and 1889, to show working class support for Catholicism and the papacy. Overwhelmed by the numbers and poverty of these laborers, the Pope met with them in person at St. Peter’s Square.

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After this, Leo XIII was now addressed as the “Pope of the workingmen,” a title that remained throughout his pontificate even prior to the issuance of the encyclical.\(^{115}\)

Cardinal Manning in 1889, publicly backed an unpopular dockworkers strike in London. He was denounced by British politicians and clergy for meeting with those workers. These events proved to be a final motivation for the Pope to write his encyclical. The conflation of these initiatives: Gibbons’ appeal to recognize unions, Manning’s fight for worker rights, Ketteler’s demand for a living wage and improved work conditions and the support of many lay social Catholics convinced the Pope to draft an encyclical on the social and labor problems confronting the world.

Leo believed that religion and conscience did have a bearing on society and industry. It was the duty and authority of the Pope to assess the moral quality of human acts and to uphold moral standards. With this justification, he intended to produce a pastoral document that spoke of justice, charity and good will in the process of healing the problems of society by addressing the labor question.\(^{116}\) Leo’s papacy was to lead the Church into the modern world and provide solutions. The Pope’s intention with this Encyclical was to be socially conscious and pastoral rather than an endorsement of any particular political or economic system.\(^{117}\)

**Drafting the Encyclical and its Authority**

Papal encyclicals are written to address topics of concerns to the Church but are

\(^{114}\) Ryan and Husslein, *The Church and Labor*, p. 155.

\(^{115}\) Furey, *Life of Leo XIII and History of His Pontificate*, p. 510. At this time it is a rarity for any pontiff to meet with groups such as this.


\(^{117}\) Leo’s extended pontificate was marked by his prolific writing. He produced over eighty-five encyclicals on various major and minor matters with fourteen devoted exclusively to the conditions of modern society and solutions to remedy existing evils. Joseph Husslein, S.J., *Social Wellsprings, Fourteen Epochal*
specialized instruments for exercising papal authority. They not only impart knowledge of a “sacred truth” but shape the boundaries of what constitutes knowledge. The Church then, becomes the authority to disseminate that knowledge. Catholics are the intended audience of any encyclical but they are issued, without distinction, to all people of all faiths. The core of the document is its spiritual significance but the sumptuary context is perceived as a stumbling block due to doctrinal differences or dislike for authority.

The historiography varies as to when Leo decided to write *Rerum Novarum* and who participated in the authorship. This is significant because the final document mirrors the theological and social thought of the contributors. The roots of Leo’s perspective on economic and social justice were destined to be Thomistic due to his revival of neo-Thomistic thought. In 1889 the Pope requested Jesuit priest Matteo Liberatore, a predominant participant in the Thomist revival, to write the initial draft. This Jesuit previously published a series of articles on the moral principles of political economy which became the theme of the encyclical.

Liberatore was a corporatist and his draft exhibited approval for unions of employers and workers who join, under the guidance of the Church, for moral good.

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120 Cardinal Camillo Mazzella, SJ., had a great influence over Leo during the waning years of his pontificate and it is believed that he wrote significant parts of the encyclical although some, like John Moloney, view his contributions as minimal with Liberatore as the principle author. Mazzella’s brand of ultramontanism (Catholic religious philosophy that places strong emphasis on the prerogatives and powers of the Pope in asserting the superiority of Papal authority over the authority of local temporal or spiritual hierarchies including the local bishop) was believed to have shaped the direction of the papacy and the authorship of this encyclical. See *Varieties of Ultramontanism*, Jeffery von Arx, ed., p. 103-105.
121 Holland, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, p. 143.
He also argued for State intervention to protect and ameliorate the conditions of the worker and not to interfere in the affairs of workers’ associations.\textsuperscript{123} Similar principles echoed the language of Cardinal Manning years earlier. The initial draft was submitted to Dominican Cardinal Francesco Zigliara in July 1890 for revisions.

The Cardinal’s contribution was to glean and organize an immense amount of material representative of the various schools of social theory and consign it to mirror a highly Thomistic doctrine.\textsuperscript{124} Liberatore’s version centered on the worker while Zigliara concentrated on the Church. The Cardinal placed an emphasis on religious goals and the spiritual obligations of the worker. In his draft, Zigliara proposed a shift in attitude and action between Church and State.\textsuperscript{125}

Cardinal Gibbon’s previous visit to the Pope, in defense of the Knights of Labor, impressed the Pope to fashion his encyclical on the worker and make it universal in its application.\textsuperscript{126} The Pontiff understood the direction of social development and ascertained that it was an authentic trans-Atlantic event. To exclude the distinctive American characteristic from his work might create a document acceptable to some but rejected by many. The Pope’s secretaries, Msgr. Alessandro Volpini and Msgr. Gabriele Boccali, were assigned the task to rewrite the text broadening its appeal. Throughout the process Leo oversaw the revisions and editing.

The composition of \textit{Rerum} was accomplished by men who lacked a profound knowledge of the industrialized working world and who did not comprehend the effects of the capitalist system or trade unions on the laborer. They did understand that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{123} Furlong and Curtis, \textit{The Church Faces the Modern World}, p. 31.
\item \textsuperscript{124} Wallace, \textit{Leo XIII and the Rise of Socialism}, p. 268.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Molony, \textit{The Worker Question, A New Historical Perspective on Rerum Novarum}, p. 80.
\end{itemize}
capitalism, or any economic or political system, not grounded on Christ and religion was filled with greed, chaos and suffering and that socialism wanted to reduce the worth of the person. 127 Even with their deficit of direct familiarity with the industrialized world of the worker, they produced a revolutionary document to correct the misery of the laborer.

*Rerum Novarum*

On May 15, 1891, Leo XIII proclaimed through his pastoral letter, *Rerum Novarum*, that the Catholic Church can no longer remain passive while the dignity of the individual was in jeopardy as men, women and children were degraded in the factories and mills. His encyclical was the long sought response to Marx and socialism. The Pope recognized that the most effective weapon against socialism was to eliminate poverty completely and the most effective means to accomplish this was a readjustment in the workers’ standard of living and their position in society.128

*Rerum Novarum*, whose title means “of new things,” (the new things being the Industrial Revolution), was branded as the “magna carta of social Catholicism.” Leo’s work charted a future course for the Catholic church into unfamiliar territory. The Pope’s intent was clearly demarcated from the opening passage. He acknowledged that the world was in a state of flux as there was a spirit of revolutionary change that transcended politics only to influence practical economy. Conflict was inevitable in the areas of industry, science and in the widening gap between the rich and poor. This emerged as there was a growth of labor organizations and moral deterioration.129

There are several apparent themes as the Pope offers remedies to the labor

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129 The text of the encyclical can be located in various works. For this manuscript, refer to *Proclaiming Peace & Justice. Papal Documents from Rerum Novarum through Centesimus Annus*, Michael Walsh and
problem in four critical sections of the encyclical: socialism rejected and the importance of private property; the role of the Church; the role of the State; and the duties of workers and workers’ associations.\textsuperscript{130} Within the introductory paragraphs, the Pope explains the economic problems caused by industrial conditions and, with the abolishment of the workingmen’s guilds, the laborer has “no other means of protection.” Further, the Pontiff states that with religion “stripped from government and the law,” working men “are now left isolated and helpless, betrayed to the inhumanity of employers and the unbridled greed of competitors.”\textsuperscript{131}

\textit{Socialism Denounced}

Leo censures socialism as a false remedy for “inciting the needy to envy the wealthy.” He maintains that “socialist argue that the remedy for this evil is the abolition of private property.” Socialism’s solution is the abolition of private property and the creation of common property administered by the State. Wage earners suffer when privately owned goods are transferred into common ownership.\textsuperscript{132} The Pope cites this as unjust given that private property is part of the natural law of Thomistic theology.

\textit{Dignity of the Individual}

In the following section, the Pontiff conspicuously elevates humanity above the State: “Man is older than the state. Before any state came into existence, man had already received from nature the right to make provision for his life and livelihood.”\textsuperscript{133} Leo tacitly warns the State that it does not have the right to encroach upon religion, the family

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\textsuperscript{130} Holland and Mich (and others) have divided the content of the encyclical by varying methods. This writer finds Fr. Matthew Habiger’s offering the most effective. See his work: “The Antecedents and Central Claims of \textit{Rerum Novarum},” \textit{Social Justice Review}, May/June 1991, p. 77-81. I view the Encyclical as a living document and accordingly analyze it in the present tense.
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\textsuperscript{132} \textit{RN}, 3-5, p. 18.
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or the individual. The Pope considers the family to be “a true society, equal with the state” with its own special purpose.

The State is a limited and secondary institution, to the family, which should not be subservient to socialism. Socialism, according to Leo, denies individuals their rights and creates disorder because the “doctrine of common ownership… harms those it is meant to help; it denies to individuals their rights; it throws the administration of public affairs into disorder; its disturbs the peace.” However, a solution exists to improve conditions and maintain the rights of the individual; it is found in the Catholic Church.

**The Church in Support of the Worker**

The remedy to the labor and social crisis is the active role of religion and the Church progressing toward an amelioration of these troubles. The responsibility of the Church, as specified in the Encyclical, is to speak on social issues as “continued silence on our part would be seen as neglect of duty.” The Pope believes that change is possible but only with the Church’s support: “we do not hesitate to insist that whatever men may choose to do will be in vain if they leave out the Church.”

Leo originates a new paradigm for the Church in the modern world. Change is the responsibility of the individual and the society but only effective when united to the Church. He realized that it is not enough to preach the Gospel. This Pope recognizes that sin and suffering are the daily existence of humanity in the marketplace and the workplace. Throughout his priestly life he is cognizant of how the impecunious worker declines while others accumulate wealth. Leo mandates that this obnoxiousness must

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133 *RN*, 7, p. 19.
134 Holland, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, p. 80.
135 *RN*, 10, p. 20.
136 *RN*, 13, p. 21.
change and that the Church’s pragmatic mission in the modern world is to address the ills of society and provide an answer that is neither utopian nor cynically pessimistic.\textsuperscript{139}

Within this context, Leo articulates what must be done to correct the current condition of labor: shorter working hours, days of rest, eradicate child labor, provide a living wage and establish worker’s associations. The Pope requires protection for workers from the “brutality of those who make use of human beings as mere instruments for the unrestrained acquisition of wealth.”\textsuperscript{140} He clarifies that man’s ability to work is limited so there must be less work hours to benefit the health of the worker. Leo stresses the importance of rest and recuperation for the worker as “the greater the burden of labor the greater must be the provision for rest and recuperation: what work has taken away rest must restore.”\textsuperscript{141} To deny this was unwarranted.

The Pope deems it unjust when women and children are in the workplace employed at positions traditionally occupied by a “strong healthy and adult man.” On this matter, Leo exemplifies his contemporary generation. He does not specifically call for the elimination of child labor but urges not to exploit children or destroy their opportunities for education. He suggests that children enter the work force only when they are mature. Additionally, the Pope states that women should not engage in work not suitable for them as women are more “adapted to domestic tasks” namely, the care of the family.\textsuperscript{142}

\textit{A Just Wage for the Worker}

\textit{Rerum} is a transformative document in many areas but the Pope’s pronouncement

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\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{RN}, 14, p. 22.
\item \textit{RN}, 14, p. 22.
\item Murphy, “\textit{Rerum Novarum},” \textit{A Century of Catholic Social Thought}, p. 15.
\item \textit{RN}, 43, p. 32.
\end{enumerate}
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of a just wage becomes the most contentious element. Leo anticipates that his words on this subject are likely to be ill received. He cautions all parties to consider his argument. He rejects the prevalent trans-Atlantic concept that wages are fixed by free consent and that a worker is free to accept any remuneration or none at all for the work performed.\textsuperscript{143}

The Pope views the just wage as a matter between employer and laborer to “make any bargains they like and in particular agree freely about wages.”\textsuperscript{144} However “the wage ought not to be in any way insufficient for the bodily needs of a temperate and well behaved worker.” Leo asserts that if the workman is “force[d] to accept harder conditions imposed by an employer or contractor, he is the victim of violence against which justice cries out.”\textsuperscript{145}

\textit{The Right for Workers to Organize}

The Encyclical now addresses the relationship between employee and employer and the subject of labor unions. While this section occupies the last portion of \textit{Rerum}, it becomes the most remembered part of the document as it legitimizes the rights of workers to organize. There are now new consequences for both the Church and the State.

Leo indicates that since the Middle Ages, guilds exist to benefit, strengthen and assist its members. The Pope claims it as a natural right because as “man is led by his natural propensity to associate with others in a political society, so also he finds it advantageous to join with his fellows in other kinds of societies.”\textsuperscript{146} The Encyclical emphasizes that these associations should be free of interference from the State but the

\textsuperscript{141} \textit{RN}, 43, p. 32. \\
\textsuperscript{142} \textit{RN}, 43, p. 32. \\
\textsuperscript{143} Prentiss, \textit{Debating God’s Economy}, p. 27. \\
\textsuperscript{144} \textit{RN}, 45, p. 33. \\
\textsuperscript{145} \textit{RN}, 45, p. 33. \\
\textsuperscript{146} \textit{RN}, 49, p. 35.
State must protect these labor associations from intrusions by employers.\textsuperscript{147} The Pope, writing to a Catholic audience, accentuates that these labor groups should “not be in the hands of secret leaders,” an obvious reference to the Knights of Labor, but must benefit the worker both physically and spiritually.\textsuperscript{148} There is also an external component for the worker as he is expected to act for the good of the community.\textsuperscript{149}

In this portion of the Encyclical, Leo recognizes that workers form groups and refers to organized labor as “workingmen’s associations” and even more specifically as “unions of workers.”\textsuperscript{150} According to labor activist priest Fr. John Cronin in \textit{The Church and the Working Man}, the Pope wants to allow workers the right to determine what form and type of associations they desire to join or establish provided that they are “supported by the bishops… and under the authority and guidance of the clergy… [who will] work assiduously for the spiritual interest of the members of the associations.”\textsuperscript{151}

Consequently, the Pope does not use the specific term “trade union” in his encyclical.

\textbf{Duties of the State}

Regardless of the type of association, the Pope requires the State to protect the rights of those members.\textsuperscript{152} The duties and obligations of the State are intertwined throughout the Encyclical as a subtext. This is due, possibly, because of the Pope’s interest in political affairs, as a former diplomat and the recent circumstances of European, Italian and Vatican events.\textsuperscript{153}

Leo articulates a positive and somewhat limited role for the State. The interests

\textsuperscript{147} RN, 50-52, p. 35-36.
\textsuperscript{148} RN, 53, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{149} Gilson, \textit{The Church Speaks to the Modern World}, p. 224.
\textsuperscript{150} RN, 49, p. 35 and 53, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{151} RN, 54, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{152} Cronin and Flannery, \textit{The Church and the Workingman}, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{153} Holland, \textit{Modern Catholic Social Teaching}, p. 185
of all humanity are equally important and the State’s duty is to benefit every class: “The one purpose for which the state exists is common to the highest and the lowest within it. By nature, the right of the unpropertied men to citizenship is equal to that of the wealthy owners… for they are among the true and living parts which go to form the body of the state.”\textsuperscript{154}

Emphasizing this point, the Pope denies secular, economic and political class divisions. The Encyclical is not to be construed as an endorsement of any particular form of government. Instead, the Pope stipulates that the State’s highest duty is to act “for the common good, but that which comes first of all, is to keep inviolate the justice which is called distributive by caring impartially for each and every class of citizen.”\textsuperscript{155} He plainly illuminates the obvious: that the labors of the working class allow the State to grow rich and therefore the obligation of the State is to care for the poor and those who sustain the State. The Pope affirms that this social good is also a moral good.

Leo demands that the State limit its actions and must not absorb the individual or family. He declares that the power of the State comes from the Divine and therefore the State is to be guided by moral principles.\textsuperscript{156} Specifically, the State is compelled to intervene to protect private property, restrain the advocates of violent revolutionary change and protect the workers’ spiritual and mental interests. The Pope essentially underscored the vital role, and function, of the State in safeguarding workers and their

\textsuperscript{154} RN, 34, p. 28-29.
\textsuperscript{155} RN, 34, p. 29. Distributive justice intends for the good of each individual as a member of the community. In a democratic age, every citizen is affected in that the just distribution of burdens or privileges is a matter of concern to each. Special care is due to the weak and the powerful are bound to renounce all privileges that infringe on basic rights and the good of the community. From \textit{New Catholic Encyclopedia}, Vol. VIII, p. 70-71. See also John Ryan, \textit{Distributive Justice. The Right and Wrong of our Present Distribution of Wealth}. (New York: MacMillian Co., 1942) for detailed examination of history and analysis of this Catholic social principle.
\textsuperscript{156} Holland, \textit{Modern Catholic Social Teaching}, p. 186.
right to form labor associations for protection.\textsuperscript{157}

The Pope reiterated that rights must be held as sacred and that:

“special regard must be had for the poor and weak. Rich people can use their wealth to protect themselves and have less need of the state’s protection; but the poor have nothing of their own with which to defend themselves and have to depend above all upon the protection of the state. Because the wage earners are numbered among the multitude of the poor, the state owes them particular care and protection.”\textsuperscript{158}

\textit{The Right to Strike}

Commonly discounted in the scholarship of the Encyclical is the right to strike. Leo acknowledges that low wages and dreadful working conditions are a cause for labor strikes and unrest. He also recognizes that these incidents are harmful to both the employer and the employee which can cause economic struggles and even violence. The Pope encourages the State to intervene in these matters at an early stage to avoid conflict as “everybody should be seeking a remedy.”\textsuperscript{159}

What is not stated is equally prominent here. The Pope does not deny workers’ the right to strike, but requires all parties to seek a peaceful solution to “reasons usually given by workers when they go on strike.”\textsuperscript{160} The Pope’s understands why labor strikes occur but it is to be a last remedy to resolve any work related issues. This simple acknowledgement places the Church at the forefront of worker’s rights and solidifies Her position as an advocate in labor’s struggles.\textsuperscript{161}

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{157}] RN, 37-39, p. 30-31.
\item[\textsuperscript{158}] RN, 38, p. 30.
\item[\textsuperscript{159}] RN, 40, p. 31.
\item[\textsuperscript{160}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{161}] Moral theologians assert that strikes are just when it does not breach a just labor contract and strikers may not impose unjust demands. See New Catholic Encyclopedia Vol. XIII, p. 733-739. Also, Fr. Donald McLean’s The Morality of the Strike (1921), written as an adjunct to the powerful Bishops’ Program of Social Reconstruction in 1919, argued that labor’s struggles were righteous but not all strikes were just as there was a connection between labor and the welfare of the public. Industrial peace was achieved through
\end{itemize}
**Duties of the Employer and Employee**

The composition of the Encyclical is fashioned as a universal pastoral letter that delineated the responsibilities and duties of the Church and State. It is also a guide for the worker and employer particularly on the role of workers’ associations. However, as the Pontiff’s audience is predominately Catholic, there is an emphasis on the spiritual aspect of labor organizing. These unions should be “self-governing unions of Catholics,” and that they provide religious instruction to its membership and “arm them against false ideas and corrupt men.”

Additionally the Pope, while fostering workers’ rights and their necessity to form protective labor organizations, expresses the requirement of employers to “suitably reconcile with the rights and duties of workers.” He suggests that associations of workers and employers form to secure jobs and, in a truly enlightened and progressive manner, make common funds available to those suffering from industrial accidents and illness and as a type of pension.

This Encyclical’s principles become the foundation for modern Catholic social thought. It was a radical departure from the usual theological treatises due to its proactive nature and significant requirements upon the Church, the State, the employer, the worker and unions. The Encyclical’s elevation of the dignity of the individual and demands for a living wage, humane working conditions, the protection of children and women in the work place and the right to organize placed the Church in opposition to the industrial capitalists.

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162 RN, 58, p. 39.
163 RN, 57, p. 38.
164 Fr. Matthew Habiger, “The Antecedents and Central Claims of *Rerum Novarum,*” *Social Justice*
Reception of Rerum Novarum

The proclamation of Rerum Novarum, while extolled by Catholics and Protestants on both sides of the Atlantic, also became a source of disputation. Confusion generated over its context and application in the industrialized society as Catholics in the United States construed the work differently from those in Europe. Leo’s condemnation of socialism and defense of private property associated the Church with the traditionalists. The Pope’s demands that the State support workers and care for the poor was a curious and intricate agenda to accept in the late nineteenth century.

Rerum decrees that workers establish labor associations yet they should do so within the precepts of the Catholic faith and with a conspicuous appreciation for religion. The unique power of this document moves beyond the remediation of the labor problem. It is the fundamental message that the dignity of the individual is dominant over the systems of economics, capital and the state. These specific points are balanced between tradition and modernity.

Leo XIII, Marx and Capitalism

Undeniably the Encyclical was the Pope’s personal response not only to the labor question but to the riotous commotion of socialism in Europe. Leo and Karl Marx each understood the importance of the working class in the whole of the economic process of production. It was their disparate solutions to the social and labor issues that further stimulated the ideological conflict. Marx discerned the sharpening of class antagonisms as a necessary process in the social crisis which will bring about the “dictatorship of the proletariat and ultimately a classless society.”\(^\text{165}\) Leo denounced the Marxian concept of

\(^{165}\) Marx conveys the provisional formation of a socialist condition as a nostrum to the class hatred and
a classless, God-less society as a devaluation of the individual. The Pope sought to end the class warfare between employer and employee; between the haves and the have-nots.\textsuperscript{166}

However, while the critics of \textit{Rerum Novarum} concentrated on the condemnation of socialism they neglected to consider that Leo was not explicitly embracing capitalism as an alternative system. The Encyclical addressed the ignoble consequences of the Industrial Revolution located in the working conditions of the laborer. Critics in their evaluation of the Encyclical misinterpreted what the document actually stated. In many instances they ignored the meaning and nature of the problem under discussion. There was no moral indictment of capitalism yet \textit{Rerum Novarum} sharply criticized this economic system for its creation of the impoverished working masses by the wealthy few. \textsuperscript{167}

\textit{European Response to the Encyclical}

Reaction in Europe differs as Catholics and Protestants commended the document for its support of workers although national interests, based on conservative or liberal attitudes, reflected their interpretation. Many considered it as ambiguous a statement on the worker similar to Marx’s treatment of the proletariat. Conservative Catholics regarded structural reforms and institutional changes to improve the worker’s condition

\textsuperscript{166} Leo is criticized for his rejection of socialism in two areas. First, he misinterpreted the socialist concept of community property and considered it as a refutation of “paternal authority.” Then, he rejected egalitarianism based on Thomistic theology. Inequality, Leo insisted, was an essential component for social stability and an inherent part of human nature due to sin. See Mary E. Hobgood, \textit{Catholic Social Teaching and Economic Theory. Paradigms in Conflict}. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), p. 111.

as perilously close to revolution.\textsuperscript{168}

European journalists varied in their assessment of the pastoral letter. While generally favorable, those on the left were skeptical of the Vatican’s motives and the sudden shift in policy of defending the worker. Moderate papers viewed it as liberal or conservative, and ultraconservative journals disparaged the Church’s extraordinary defense of the poor. Conversely, socialist newspapers found “nothing worth noting” in the Encyclical.\textsuperscript{169}

Italians fretted over the terminology of a “living wage” and searched for clarification on the right use of money. Their appraisal of the document favored a more secular than religious application. The Italian socialist movement continued to expand after the publication of the Encyclical as industrial capitalists resumed their exploitation of labor.\textsuperscript{170}

Yet German workers praised the document in its call for a just wage and the organization of trade unions.\textsuperscript{171} Germans, even socialists, judged the pastoral letter as a positive initiative to resolve the social question as the Pope was “ahead of princes and presidents in doing so.”\textsuperscript{172} The affirmative German response to \textit{Rerum Novarum} likely echoed the legacy of the late German prelate Cardinal Ketteler and his efforts to champion the rights of the worker.

Obstinately in France, \textit{Rerum} met with controversy if not outright opposition. The bishop of Nancy, Charles Juring, issued his own pastoral letter denouncing

\textsuperscript{168} Bruce Duncan, \textit{The Church’s Social Teaching: From Rerum Novarum to 1931}. (North Blackburn: Collins Dove, 1991), p. 88.
\textsuperscript{171} Molony, \textit{The Worker Question, A New Historical Perspective on Rerum Novarum}, p. 126.
\textsuperscript{172} Burton, \textit{Leo The Thirteenth}, p. 168.
progressive European Catholics. Other bishops in France reconstructed the Encyclical in less accurate terms and suitable to the requirements of their diocese. Ultimately, the French Catholic paper *L’Univers* published the original text of the document in parallel columns with the French magisterium’s opinions.173

Two months after the Encyclical’s publication, England’s Cardinal Manning authored an apologetic commentary in the *Dublin Review*. He outlined the principle concepts of the document in succinct language that enabled the scholar and the laborer to grasp the context of the pastoral letter. Interestingly, Manning stated that this was not a new pronouncement by the Pope in support of the worker. He claimed that Leo, as Bishop of Perugia, issued “pastorals even stronger and more explicit on the sufferings of the workers and the callousness of employers.”174

Manning disagreed with the Encyclical’s critics who allege that the document was vague and did not offer detailed solutions. The Cardinal declared that *Rerum* provided “broad prescriptive remedies to serve all humanity as it addressed a diversity of nations, people and civilizations making it impossible to customize a solution for every nation.”175 Others in England judged the pastoral letter as nothing more than socialism.

European Catholics, overall, interpreted the document as a call for social reform to counter the cultural, political and economic threat of socialism.176 The key elements of the Encyclical’s European temperament were respect for private property and that the State be subservient to the individual and the family. The anti-socialist character of *Rerum Novarum* was not so much the sign of a general, theoretical incompatibility of

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175 Ibid., p. 161.
176 Neil Betten, *Catholic Activism and the Industrial Worker*, (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida),
Catholicism with socialism instead, it signaled the temporary circumstances of the Church in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{177}

The French Revolution, with the destruction of Church property and cataclysmic devastation to the European Western Church, still haunted the Vatican. With the loss of the Papal States and the requisite political influence, this was the Vatican’s method to reconstitute itself in the world forum, mainly the European theater, as an authoritative voice. But the document also reinvigorated Catholic involvement in social concern throughout the Old World. Many Catholics construed the context to mean social reconstruction by the Church. Some Catholics considered it to be more germane to a Europe that was poisoned by the “teachings of a materialistic philosophy rather than a young and prosperous America.”\textsuperscript{178}

\textbf{A Different Interpretation in the United States}

In the United States, the reading and interpretation of \textit{Rerum Novarum} differed from its European perception or what was intended by the Vatican. The initial American response was favorable even among Protestants. Social Gospel advocate, Washington Gladden, declared Leo to be “the most enlightened and the most progressive pontiff who has ever occupied that throne: the whole policy of the church under his administration has been tending toward a reconciliation with modern civilization.”\textsuperscript{179} He admired the Pontiff’s “large intelligence and quick human sympathy.”\textsuperscript{180} Yet the nativist bigotry of


the American Protective Association disparaged it as a conspiracy to control labor.  

Cardinal Gibbons wrote a congratulatory letter to Leo on the publication of the Encyclical as it resonated with an American attitude and Catholic appreciation for the document’s directives:

“You speak to all the Catholic world, but your word is in the present circumstances exceptionally timely for the United States. More than anywhere else, perhaps, the workers among us feel the need of association…”

Gibbons, later in life, asserted that *Rerum Novarum*’s support for labor associations was pivotal to implementing the document’s teachings in the United States.

**American Clergy and the Encyclical**

For America’s Catholics, the document had profound and lasting implications in many areas. The most conspicuous positive application of *Rerum Novarum* in the United States concerned organized labor. Unions believed that they achieved not just recognition by the Catholic Church but protection. Yet the American Church’s reception of *Rerum Novarum* was more anomalous as uncompromising attitudes toward unions were still being “transformed.”

The document was a source of encouragement for those clergy and laity who toiled to raise the awareness of the Church and the nation to the concerns of workers and the poor.

However, the Encyclical was at first largely ignored by those to whom it was directly concerned: workers and employers. Economic affairs were part of the natural law not moral concerns; certainly not by the Church.  

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184 Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor. A Hundred Years of Catholic Social Teaching*, (Maryknoll: Orbis
of the world and how workers were perceived. But this process will evolve slowly over
the next several years in the United States.

James Roosevelt Bayley, the Archbishop of Baltimore who preceded Cardinal
Gibbons, considered “secret societies, that is, the miserable associations called labor
organizations,” as communistic and that “and no Catholic with any idea of the spirit of
his religion will encourage them.” He argued that labor unions have done more harm
than good and were “not of opposition to capital, but to government itself.” This
opinion, of trade unions as rebellious conspiracies against the social order, was common
among most of the clergy just before the Encyclical was proclaimed.

Catholic Bishop William Stang, of Fall River, Massachusetts, expressed his
opposition to the increase of state powers and intervention in the affairs of men and
industry unless the common moral good was harmed. Stang supported the American
capitalist system. While he admitted its defects, the bishop viewed it as a source of
livelihood for employer and employee: “Our biggest capitalist became rich by hard
work and not by mere luck as some imagine, and while they grew rich themselves, the
enriched thousands of their poor fellow citizens and made hundreds of thousands
comfortable in life.” The Bishop commented that the position of the worker constantly
improves.

His support of business enterprise should have placed him in opposition to the
precepts of Rerum Novarum. But he recognized that economic reforms were needed.
Stang considered that a just wage should be paid as outlined in Rerum and that unions

185 Aaron I. Abell, “The Reception of Leo XIII’s Labor Encyclical in America, 1891-1919,” Review of
186 Kevin E. Schmesing, Within the Market Strife. American Catholic Thought from Rerum Novarum to
were now a force for good. “Unionism has to be recognized and respected,” he asserted as they “can no longer be ignored or treated with contempt.”

After May 1891, the American Catholic Church, particularly the prelates, were more accommodating of organized labor than before. Bishop James Spaulding of Peoria declared that the “mission of the Church is not only to save souls but also to save society.” This became the new vision of the American church moving into a new century.

**Application of Rerum Novarum in America**

Early adaptive American treatment of the Encyclical was best perceived in the iron mills and coal fields in the Pittsburgh area. The predominant dilemma for workers here were unions and wages. Strikes and lockouts were widespread in the late nineteenth century and many workers requested assistance from the clergy or their unions. But most laborers were apprehensive about union membership and Church support. As one worker stated: “I had always a fear of joining them because I thought the Church was opposed to the organization and further more, from what I could make out of hearsay, I honestly did not like some of their ways of doing business.” Yet many of the clergy utilized the Encyclical’s dictum to accept organized labor and encourage workers to join unions.

Application of the Encyclical’s principles cast a “strong white light on all these points that were now raised in the industrial world.” The implementation of *Rerum Novarum* to American organized labor was to guide the worker and capitalist to establish

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188 Ibid., p. 35.
and fortify industrial relations since the Encyclical outlined the duties and responsibilities of both capital and labor. Based on the Encyclical, Catholics in Pittsburgh prepared to establish industrial organizations of both employers and employees to promote responsive industrial relations. Historically, the American Church tacitly backed the employer but now embarked to solidify Her place with the worker.

For Americans, the perception of the Encyclical’s message was simple: the right for labor to organize and the call for a living wage. It was Leo’s insistence for a living wage that added dignity and meaning to the laborers’ work. The ubiquitous experience of the industrial nineteenth century world was that workers must be held to the prevailing poverty wages of their employment contract. The fair wage issue was the predominant problem that American workers grappled with as wages were pared down. Many factory workers, miners and glass workers were paid according to the dictum of a “fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work.” This wage formula favored the employer not the employee. Industrial capitalists paid labor less than was deserved because of the worker’s ignorance, immobility, and lack of organization among other groups of workers.  

Many theologians, both Catholic and Protestant, accepted this and considered it morally just to pay a paltry starvation wage since this was what the worker accepted. The cultural thought was that charities would make up the difference through donations of food and clothing. This had been the custom for centuries. The purpose of Rerum was to provoke change and bring dignity to the worker. This came through moral support

190 Ibid, p. 856-861.
by the Church, protection by the State, strength through labor associations and a living wage to sustain the laborer.

Organized labor then, could not develop and evolve as a partner in shaping the social environment without wage equity.\textsuperscript{193} \textit{Rerum} became a dominant support in the structure of organized labor in the struggle for a living wage.\textsuperscript{194} This made \textit{Rerum} a radical document because it overturned centuries of tradition and regressive customs that elevated institutions instead of individuals.

\textit{The Future of the Encyclical}

\textit{Rerum Novarum} adopted an American Catholic flair in its adaptation. With that underlying principle, the Encyclical’s meaning in the United States turned away from the concerns of socialism and focused on organized labor and a living wage. These were the pertinent issues for the American Catholic. But the effort to implement these changes came not from the clergy but from the laborer, the laity. John Common’s \textit{A History of Labor in the United States}, considered Catholic laymen and not the hierarchy as being pivotal in the need for trade unions. It was the layperson, the common wage earner, who demanded an end to the terrible working conditions. It was the worker, not the Church’s hierarchy, who initially demanded a living wage and improved conditions that came through trade unions and social legislation.\textsuperscript{195}

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\footnote{\textsuperscript{194} The themes of the Encyclical are further developed years later by Fr. John Ryan who becomes absorbed with the social content of the document and its call for industrial democracy and a just living wage. Fifteen years after \textit{Rerum}, Fr. Ryan publishes his own groundbreaking work \textit{A Living Wage} (1906) that implements Leo’s principles. Joseph A. McCartin, \textit{Labor’s Great War: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy and the Origins of Modern American Labor Relations, 1912-1921}, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), p. 201.}
\end{footnotes}
The Encyclical’s effect was how it activated change in the work place and in society. That change came in the form of workers and employers who agreed to establish industrial councils to promote better relations between them.\textsuperscript{196} The American Catholic laity had a social vision where religious and social needs coincided. The laity realized that implementation of the Encyclical’s tenets, most notably the right to unionize, enabled Catholics to assimilate into the mainstream of not only American culture but trans-Atlantic society. This provided American Catholics with a moral Catholic foundation in a predominantly Protestant world.\textsuperscript{197} This was part of the success of the Encyclical.

Utilization of \textit{Rerum Novarum} in the United States could be construed as a method for the American Catholic Church to legitimize Her position in society, particularly middle-class society. This empowered the American Church to move away from a defensive posture to that of “Church Militant.” Unfortunately, the enthusiasm of American Catholics to march forward with the Encyclical waned in the years after its proclamation. Remediation of labor troubles was not a prevalent issue for many of the clergy and laity as they struggled over acceptance of unions. It was a daunting psychological task to divorce the concept of unionism from socialism when the Church still preached an anti-socialist dogma.\textsuperscript{198}

Labor historian Herbert G. Gutman, argues that the American working class leans heavily on religion, both as a source of moral legitimacy and as a reservoir of personal strength in times of adversity.\textsuperscript{199} \textit{Rerum Novarum} is that moral force to elevate the

\textsuperscript{197} Furlong and Curtis, \textit{The Church Faces the Modern World}, p. 207.
\textsuperscript{198} Dolan, \textit{The American Catholic Experience}, p. 334-336.
\textsuperscript{199} Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., \textit{Religion in a Revolutionary Age}, (Charlottesville: University
position of the worker and defend the dignity of the individual. But Americans find it
difficult to recognize the importance of Leo XIII’s doctrinal and ethical underpinnings
that Catholic social thought convey to trade unionism.

Many consider the components of religion and faith to be out of date or out of
place in the relevance of such an important matter as labor or capitalism. It is Leo’s
insistence on the worker’s right to fulfill his religious obligations as a reminder of a basic
tenet of the Church’s teaching: religion is a crucial element in the defense of the dignity
of the person. *Rerum Novarum’s* objective is to Christianize the workplace and
therefore transfer those “holy ideas” to the social conditions of the day. Leo gives the
worker a metaphysical and spiritual significance that is in opposition to both socialist and
capitalist concepts. The Encyclical is a structure to connect the Church with the modern
age. At the start of the twentieth century, the full impact of the Encyclical for America
was pending; its realization occurs decades later with labor education under Catholic lay
leadership.

Chapter 3

Exceptionalism and the Americanism Heresy:
Antecedents To A Catholic Response

The narrative of American Catholicism in the nineteenth century, for both the hierarchy and laity, was that of a Church pursuing its own course in the New World. The Vatican’s inability to fully comprehend American democratic principles deemed this independence as a challenge to the sacrosanct authority of Rome straining the relationship between the Americans and the magisterium. Some European and Roman clergy expressed apprehension over the United States’ prominent role in world affairs. They were perturbed that America’s emergent influence would undermine conservative social mores and traditional lines of authority. Exacerbating the matter further was the certainty of Americans, including Catholics, of their self-designed exceptional status in terms of national origin and national destiny. These issues reached their apex in the years just following the proclamation of Rerum Novarum.

While the American Constitution promoted democracy and religious freedom, the Industrial Revolution encouraged individualism and destabilized respect for authority. Democracy and individuality in the United States, valued as cultural constructs by many, were both a catalyst and a source of conflict in legal, moral and religious arenas. American Catholic Church authorities encountered the resistance of an immigrant population who valued their newly obtained freedoms and were reluctant to have them

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devalued. Imbued with these characteristics, the American Catholic laity, by the end of the nineteenth century, evolved into a strategic social, political and economic body. The developing issue was how can a bourgeoning laity proceed within the American Catholic Church. This matter became a disquieting arrangement for America’s prelates. American exceptionalism, that being the self-created behavior of American distinctive rights growing out of a peculiar social, political and economic history, is often considered by various scholars. However, the historical account of the Catholic Americanist “heresy” and its consequences are frequently neglected nor even considered as relevant to the history of American Catholics by many. A current analysis of this material will provide a distinct insight into the composition of America’s Catholics in the late nineteenth century.

My contention is that American exceptionalism and the Catholic Americanist problem are fundamental to the formation of the Catholic Church and the laity in the United States. Through a comprehensive examination of these important issues, I offer a new perspective and add to the scholarship of a discounted subject. It will provide the answers to who are the laity during this era and what will be their defining role and vocation?

Hierarchical Control and the “Americanists”

The American hierarchy, who wanted to be a source of stability in the late

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nineteenth century, were obsessed with lay adherence to Church authority. Moreover, the bishops also cultivated their own ecclesiastical structure, apart from Rome, with an “American accent.” The paradox for the American bishops was that, while in control from a theological perspective, they struggled with their local clergy for parochial authority. Clerical independence, and a subjugated laity rather than episcopal control, was the norm in the American Catholic church at the end of the 1800’s. Additionally, the crucial issue of control and authority in the American Catholic Church centered on the purported “Americanist controversy.” Sometimes known as Americanism, it was the insertion of American ideals into the Catholic Church. The matter was both local and foreign in its context and eventually required intervention from the Pope.

As American Catholics enhanced their socio-economic status and interests within parishes, dioceses and fraternal organizations, the consciousness of common problems gave them a distinct attitude. The perception was that, in some areas of Catholic doctrine, Americans were at variance from the European church. The historiography then, revealed that this source of ecclesiastic tension had manifold origins in multiple areas and was not simply the result of misunderstandings, misinterpretations or a separatists’ position.

This was more than a conflict of conservative and liberal trans-Atlantic elements in the Catholic Church over the inclusion of American principles into the Church. This crisis, and its resolution, ultimately shaped the future of the American Catholic Church for the next several decades. It determined the intellectual and operational structure of the

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This subject is addressed further in the chapter.

laity. More importantly, it became an opportunity for the laity to determine how to exercise their role in the Church.

**Religion and American Exceptionalism**

An assessment of the material maintains that the “Americanist controversy,” that is Americanism, was the evolutionary result of American exceptionalism in thought and cultural structure since the earliest settlements. As the American Catholic Church marched into the modern era and a new century, its self-evaluation was more vocal and democratic than anticipated by Rome. Catholics in the United States diligently sought an affirmation, by Rome and America’s Protestants, that the nation’s Catholics were a viable entity with a mission. Yet how American can Catholics become and remain Catholic? What was their mission? These answers were located within American exceptionalism and the consequences of the Americanism controversy.

Throughout most of America’s history, society was bound by a widespread acceptance of certain principles and beliefs that mutated into the notion of American exceptionalism. Americans, despite their many differences, agreed on the following propositions: the right of all citizens to own private property, the limits and use of the government, the natural rights of all people as guaranteed in the Constitution and the idea of some form of natural law. Americans considered these distinctive features as an exclusive birthright reserved utterly for them.

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(John 1943), p. 278.

207 For this work, I define American exceptionalism, as stated previously, as self-created behavior of American distinctive rights growing out of a peculiar social, political and economic history. Further treatment of the topic follows in this chapter.


This heritage traced its lineage to the Puritans who appraised America as the new Jerusalem and the “city set on a hill.” The destiny of Christ’s people in America, primarily the Puritans and later all Protestants, became the destiny of mankind.\textsuperscript{210} The Puritan employment of Biblical typology emboldened Cotton Mather to proclaim New England as the holiest country in the world. The New World, like the promised land of Canaan, belonged to God. It was part of the soteriological narrative which implied that the New England way, the American way, was free of secular failure. This self-identification as God’s chosen was understood in terms of a divinely ordained mission that will spread as America expands.\textsuperscript{211}

Prior to the American Revolution, the Great Awakening reinvigorated the colonies spiritually but when the War for Independence commences many of the colonist viewed the event as a secular or political event rather than a religious matter. The Christian assumption, that God favors the English nation and its American colonies for special privileges and responsibilities, did not diminish. While religion pervaded daily existence in the eighteenth century, dissent against established religion became a political act of defiance toward the crown and religious authority.\textsuperscript{212}

Religious dissenters in colonial America, particularly denominational groups, set in motion a program to reconstitute themselves. Church authority and governance established itself on the exceptional qualities of voluntary associations and the majority

vote. This affect of democracy in action differentiated American religion from its European brethren which eventually percolated into all American religious groups, especially Roman Catholics.

Many devout Americans: Protestant, Catholic and others, supported the Revolution and believed that God providentially orchestrated the war to save Americans from tyranny, or perhaps even to hasten the millennium. The War for Independence acquired a religious and moral purpose. This American mission, a foundational part of American exceptionalism, sustained itself in various manifestations throughout the nineteenth century in civil, economic and religious affairs.

**American Exceptionalism as a Secular Trait**

Other scholars discerned American exceptionalism as the consequences of evolutionary events not a deific vocation. Historians such as Louis Hartz and Daniel Boorstin recognize America as a unique nation and society that advances not by a “divine right” but due to discarding feudal European influences. Hartz asserts that America’s development is distinctive: it is individualism and capitalism; it is Americanism. Boorstin, in particular, conveys the American purpose and character as one that shuns European political theories, class distinctions and utopian ideologies to focus on tangible solutions to realistic problems. American distinctiveness, that is American exceptionalism, derives from the contradictions produced by a culture which is created

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216 Daniel J. Boorstin’s *The Genius of American Politics* and *The Americans: The Colonial Experience* elaborates further on this subject.
from the interaction and tensions of Old and New World patterns.  

America at the fin de siècle, maintained a mind-set of “manifest destiny.” Although it was only one of many attitudes that defined the nation at this time, it was a predominant thought that permeated most civil and religious ideas.  

Frederick Jackson Turner’s “Frontier Thesis” (1893) efficaciously constructs an American character that perceives the United States as the anchor of world democracy. Accordingly, Turner’s concept of frontier democracy stimulates reformist ideals and actions. Analogous to this assertion, religion historian William Warren Sweet claims that westward expansion fosters a uniquely American spirit of religious individualism that is constantly a part of the nation’s attitude. Consequently, non-Americans did not often understand nor appreciate this viewpoint.

The predominance then of this American distinctiveness, explicitly the idea of independent American democratic thought, subtly entangled itself with American Catholicism. During the nineteenth century, the application of America democracy in secular matters seduced American Catholics into the perception of fundamental democratic equality that applied even to the practice of their faith. At the conclusion of the century American democracy and independence, in secular and religious matters, was

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218 This American characteristic progresses coincidentally as the United States expands into an industrial leviathan. The nation’s imperialistic momentum of the 1890’s extends the “American gospel” throughout the world by its neocolonial adventures. America’s imperious quest for colonies, the capitalists’ thirst for economic expansion abroad and a military based foreign policy, leave an American foot print through out the world in various cultural segments. Many historians have presented their incisive analysis of American imperialism over the last hundred years, for this work, the following have provided a more astute insight: William Appleman Williams, Roots of the American Empire (1969), and The Tragedy of American Diplomacy (1972); Walter LaFeber, The New Empire (1963) and The American Search for Opportunity, 1865-1913 (1993); Albert Weinberg’s Manifest Destiny (1935); Frank Ninkovich, The United States and Imperialism (2000).

219 Sweet continues this theme into the Twentieth Century with his work The American Churches: An
congruent with American exceptionalism.

American Catholics: Assimilation or Separation?

By the late nineteenth century the nation could not ignore American Catholics any longer. They emerged, and struggled, to find their own American personality that incorporated the doctrines of the Constitution and the dogmas of the Church. Through their experience of faith and democracy in the United States, it was only plausible for America’s Catholics to likewise continue the Puritan parable of living in a new world who were also ordained to be God’s instruments participating in a mission.²²⁰

This was especially true for Irish-Catholic immigrants who viewed their journey to America in Biblical terms. They were here to “scatter the blessing of the Catholic religion over distant lands.”²²¹ It was these Irish Catholics who will dominate America’s clergy. Catholic numbers continued to swell due to immigration throughout the 1800’s. The decades of the 1870’s and 1880’s witnessed the Catholic population assimilate into mainstream American life as successful business owners, politicians and members of the burgeoning middle class. If Rerum Novarum suggested a sense of empowerment and a plan for the future, economic and political maturation brought equality for many American Catholics.

A debate that starts in the early decades of the nineteenth century, came to a flashpoint by the end of the century. At a chaotic time of social and economic change, some Catholics believed that transplanting a European version of Roman Catholicism to the United States ensured a tractable and invariably stable Church. Others felt that the

²²¹ Kerby A. Miller, Emigrants and Exiles. Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America, (New York:
inexorable progression of the Church could only occur through an indigenous American Catholicism. This was an intricate deliberation at home and abroad. This discussion centered on the best method to understand the position of the Catholic in American culture and the role of the American Catholic hierarchy within the universal Church.

The United States was evolving into a more pluralistic society. Unfortunately, many native born Americans refused to acknowledge this development. Most regarded Catholics in the United States as foreigners because of their immigration status and an inane belief that Catholics were loyal only to a foreign power: the Pope. Some Protestants castigated Catholics as “un-evangelicals” who were on the fringes of American culture while others even considered Catholics as the problem to the country’s social ills.²²² How then were America’s Catholics to assimilate? Should America’s Catholics remain distinct or fully integrate into the social structure of the nation?

Since the days of the early Republic, the American Catholic hierarchy realized that Catholic assimilation was vital to sustain the faith and to promote Catholicism as an integral part of the nation’s development. The debate over American Catholic integration and acculturalization in the Republic eventually moved the clergy in directions away from the limitations of Roman oversight. But this discussion also created friction among the hierarchy.

New York state manifested this national dialectic within the hierarchy. New York City’s Archbishop Hughes, in the 1840’s and 1850’s, believed that Catholics should

²²² The two prevalent histories of religion in America in the 19th Century: Robert Baird’s Religion in the United States of America (1844) and Daniel Dorchester’s Christianity in the United States (1888), both portray Catholics in this manner. See also See John Higham, Strangers in the Land. Patterns of
segregate and constitute a distinct society within the country. Hughes judged “Americanization,” that was assimilation, to be “disastrous to the cause of the Church.”\(^{223}\) The Archbishop did not want the Church to be subservient to a “denominational and sectarian system” that made “Catholics indifferent to their religion or apostates from it.” Hughes’ perspective was that America constituted a Protestant nation antagonistic to Catholics. The Archbishop declared Protestantism to be a quasi-religion and instigated a crusade to maintain a Catholic presence in America where the “Catholic religion is not subject to the errors of deceit.”\(^{224}\) He considered the best method to achieve this was through the establishment of separate Catholic institutions and facilities.\(^{225}\)

On the opposite side of New York state, geographically and philosophically, was Buffalo’s Bishop John Timon.\(^{226}\) While navigating through the bigotry of the Protestant nativists, he endeavored to incorporate Catholics into all aspects of culture and commerce. Timon believed that the only method to integrate Catholics into the fabric of urban existence and socio-economic life was to “Americanize” the Catholic Church. He accomplished this in Buffalo, through Catholic affiliation of hospitals, schools and social service agencies, available to all peoples regardless of religious creed.

In his diary, Timon wrote that Catholics “ought not to fear their place here but be members and commingle in the fruits of commerce as guaranteed by the law of the


\(^{226}\) Hughes was born in Ireland and as a young boy, observed the harsh treatment of the British against the Irish. Timon, an American by birth, was born in Pennsylvania and counted Methodists and other Protestants as his friends.
land and God.” He continued with his strongest assertion for the place of Catholics in the nation: “there should be no hyphen in the words American Catholic.” The American Catholic hierarchy, regrettably, adopted Archbishop Hughes’ model for separation rather than Timon’s desire for assimilation. This eventually impeded the social, political and economic development of American Catholics in the nineteenth century.

**America’s Catholics As An Exceptionalist Church**

From the Revolutionary era and the time of the early Republic, America’s Catholics worked diligently to keep foreign influences out of their Church. The first Catholic bishop in the nation, John Carroll, wanted an American Catholic church that was instilled with the spirit of republicanism and the Catholic Enlightenment. He was eager to fashion a uniquely American Roman Catholic Church but was also committed to a traditional understanding and treatment of Roman Catholicism in the United States.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the American Catholic Church constructed its own character in an expanding pluralistic nation. The status of the Church in the United States was that of a mission territory. Accordingly, the hierarchy operated cautiously but astutely exercising independent thought as dictated by circumstances and conscious. Various matters at mid-century placed the American episcopate at odds with the Vatican. The American prelates, in the 1850’s, opposed Rome’s investigation of the American church and the possible appointment of a Papal Nuncio who might exercise near absolute control. Archbishops such as McCloskey of

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New York and Spalding of Baltimore even questioned the prudence of the Vatican’s publication of the Syllabus of Errors.\textsuperscript{230}

The American magisterium, in the nineteenth century, continued to exercise its separate and self-determining ecclesiastical authority.\textsuperscript{231} At the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore (1866), the American bishops’ intention was, according to Archbishop Spaulding, to present a strong and united bond of purpose in the aftermath of the Civil War.\textsuperscript{232} In the new order that arose from the tragedy of the War, the hierarchy’s objective was to form American Catholics into a cohesive body of faith and purpose in the rebuilding of the American nation.

Throughout the century, the American hierarchy consistently upheld the position of the Pope. But, they also maintained the collegiality of bishops, in balance with the Vatican, in matters of faith and doctrine.\textsuperscript{233} In the closing sermon of the Baltimore Plenary Council, the American bishops confirmed their obedience to the authority of the Pope but also expressed that they too have the “whole weight of this authority, of this teaching power, [which] resides in each no matter how humble the minister” and “no matter how remote the distance… he (the local bishop) can speak as having authority received in the name of Jesus Christ.”\textsuperscript{234} This concept of collegiality was somewhat novel yet more appropriate after the Second Vatican Council of the early 1960’s.\textsuperscript{235} But

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\textsuperscript{230}Issued in 1864, it listed religious doctrines condemned by the Roman Catholic Church as erroneous and to be a bulwark against liberalism.
\textsuperscript{233}Vatican Council I (1869-1870) proclaimed the controversial doctrine of Papal infallibility in matters of faith and morals. Vatican Council II (1962-1965) would affirm the collegiality of bishops.
\textsuperscript{234}Unsigned, \textit{Sermons Delivered During the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore, October 1866}, (Baltimore: Kelly & Piet, 1866), p. 197-199.
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the American bishops were behaving like Americans: living in a democracy and acting in a
democratic manner free of foreign influence.

The history of Catholicism in America exhibited a rejection of foreign intrusion and a
vigorous dialogue among the magisterium. It reverberated in the surge of patriotic
emotions of an increasingly powerful nation. Cardinal Gibbons and Archbishop Ireland
were typical of the optimistic American in their convictions of American superiority in
the world and in the universal Church. Both men were critical in their assessment of
European governments and society as each believed that the American Church’s purpose
was to influence the world. They, like other prelates and the laity, felt that America’s
Catholics have a mission at home and in the world; one that was singularly Catholic.

America’s Catholics trust that they, like their Protestant brethren, had a divine
purpose in the New World. It was natural then that American Catholics wanted to apply
elements of the Puritan myth, that being the “New Jerusalem,” to themselves.

Archbishop Ireland eloquently presented his vision of this illusion in his speech “The
Mission of Catholicism in America” at the 1889 National Conference of Catholic
Laymen in Baltimore. Divine Providence, he proclaimed, demanded that America
become Catholic as only the “Catholic Church will preserve… the liberties of the
Republic.” The Archbishop also called for Catholic action to correct the social
injustices of that time. Accordingly, he wanted to craft an American identity that was

237 At the end of the 19th century, the American Catholic Church totaled 134 bishops, archbishops and cardinals. The total lay population amounted to nearly ten million. In 2012, that number increases to sixty-six million adherents and 566 members of the hierarchy. See *The Official Catholic Directory* (New York: P.J. Kennedy & Sons), various years.
more Catholic centric.

**The “Americanist Heresy”**

The last two decades of the nineteenth century were characterized also by friction among America’s Catholic episcopate. Conservative and liberal elements clashed over the application of the traditions and values of the Church in America. Furthermore, many were annoyed over America’s position as a missionary territory which meant Vatican permission for nearly any significant matter. Rome desired to curb that discussion and the independent spirit of the American bishops. The Vatican engaged in reconciling American ecclesiastical decrees with universal Church law. At issue, in the United States and in Rome, was the idea and degree of control.

These turbulent years, and the response to the many challenges, directed the course of American Catholicism in the next decades. This chaos was absorbed, and categorized, as the controversy of the “Americanism crisis.” The genesis of this affair was a distortion of Catholic events in the 1890’s. The historical narrative was at times perplexing. Therefore confusion is permitted as particular circumstances appear to be either political or theological while situated within European or American episodes.

American Catholicism, at the end of the nineteenth century, emulated the struggles of nationalities to establish their power structure within their Church and the nation. Throughout the history of the American Church, the Catholic hierarchy, mainly Irish by birth or ethnicity, was dominated by a nationalistic clergy who denounced

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German-American Catholics for resisting Americanization and assimilation.\textsuperscript{241} This ethnic clash became the opening chapter in the controversy.

The liberal Archbishop John Ireland of St. Paul, Minnesota in speaking to German-American Catholics, stated that Americanization was a positive principle to be embraced by all immigrants in the United States. While not condemning the use of the German language in schools or the liturgy, he advocated for the adoption of English and American values. “Americanization,” he extolled, “is the filling up of the heart with love for America and for her institutions. It is the harmonizing of ourselves with our surroundings, so that we will be to the manor born, and not as strangers in a strange land.”\textsuperscript{242} Ireland did not express concern or remorse if German-American Catholics misinterpreted his remarks as a proponent of an “ultra-Americanism.”\textsuperscript{243}

The American hierarchy’s liberal faction of Archbishop John Ireland of St. Paul, Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore, Monsignor Denis J. O’Connell, rector of the American College in Rome, Bishop John J. Keane, rector of the Catholic University of America, Archbishop John J. Kain of St. Louis and Bishop John Lancaster Spalding of Peoria and Archbishop Patrick Riordan of San Francisco, considered Americanization of the church to include education and cooperation with other secular agencies in political, social and industrial reform.\textsuperscript{244} These liberals were active in cultivating the interests of the Church in such areas as civil rights and ecumenism utilizing American democracy to advance this agenda. Gibbons and Ireland were particularly outspoken in their support

\textsuperscript{242} Colman Barry, OSB, \textit{The Catholic Church and German Americans}, (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1953), p. 119.
\textsuperscript{243} Ibid., p. 117.
of these reforms. They enthusiastically involved the Church in the political and cultural activities of American daily existence.  

Rochester’s Bishop Bernard McQuaid, New York’s Archbishop Michael Corrigan and Cleveland’s Bishop Richard Gilmour constituted the conservative bloc of the hierarchy. The conservatives often expressed their reservations about the compatibility of Catholicism with American secular identity. To them, accommodation represented capitulation to the “enemy.” These conservatives urged adherence to the traditional forms of Catholic life and fight against the forces of Americanization. McQuaid, in speaking against the Americanization of the Catholic Church, believed that the American Church must teach the great truths of the faith to ordinary Catholics “clearly and authoritatively and without compromise.” This implied separation from other religions and remaining disconnected from American political and social developments. This strategy employed the “Archbishop Hughes style” of assimilation, which defended confrontation and militancy to earn Catholics the grudging respect of the nation’s Protestants.

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245 Ireland, an ardent supporter of Republican politics, went to New York and publicly supported the Republicans in the state campaign of 1894. This incident displeased the local Ordinary, Archbishop Michael Corrigan and his militant suffragan, Bishop Bernard McQuaid. See McAvoy, “Americanism and Frontier Catholicism,” p. 284. Also Ireland was sometimes labeled “the biggest Republican in America,” see Moynihan, The Life of Archbishop Ireland, p. 53.


247 Not an admirer of the hierarchy’s liberal element, he intentionally reprimanded Archbishop Ireland’s support of political factions especially in the 1894 state elections. From the pulpit, McQuaid decreed that “it is the policy of the Catholic church in this country that her bishops and priests should take no active part in political campaigns and contests” as the clergy becomes “tools” of a political party and Protestants view Catholic bishops as part of the Tammany Hall scandals. Pope Leo XIII rebuked McQuaid for the publicly acerbic comments made by a bishop about the Archbishop. Archives Rochester Diocese, (ARD) Bishop McQuaid Papers: John Ireland file and Correspondence from Pope Leo XIII.

Another chapter in the Americanist crisis was the Father Edward McGlynn affair of 1886. McGlynn’s defiance of his ordinary, New York’s Archbishop Michael Corrigan, while campaigning for Henry George as mayor of New York city, was a violation of canon law. For his actions, McGlynn, amid public protests, was first suspended from the priesthood, then removed as pastor of St. Stephen’s Church, and finally excommunicated in the Summer of 1887. An additional deleterious impact for the Catholic church, at this moment, occurred when Terence Powderly, the leader of the Knights of Labor, also campaigned for George.

Archbishop Gibbons was in Rome petitioning for Papal approval of the Knights when this matter surfaced. Gibbons requested that the Vatican should reinstate McGlynn, who he labeled as a “friend of the people,” even though the Archbishop felt that Corrigan was justified in his actions. Gibbons intended to smooth over the McGlynn affair so as not to impair his main purpose: Vatican support for the Knights. Pope Leo instructed Gibbons to contact McGlynn for the purpose of avoiding further scandal and to comply with Rome’s wishes that the priest cease his political activities.

But the entire affair further intensified the discord between Corrigan, his conservative colleagues, and Gibbon’s more liberal bloc. Ironically, these events further motivated the laity toward social activism and correction of contemporary injustices. During McGlynn’s censure, he established the New York Anti-Poverty Society and spoke

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249 George previously was condemned by the Archbishop and others, for being a socialist due to his advocacy of a single tax on the unearned increase in property value.
out on social reform. This attracted significant numbers of lay Catholics to his cause.\textsuperscript{253} Many American Catholics were now viewing their primary concerns as more practical than theological. They sought better working conditions and protection from socialism rather supporting the hierarchy in their internal conflicts.\textsuperscript{254}

\textit{Vatican Intervention Ends the “Heresy”}

If the American hierarchy was divided over internal issues they certainly were united in their efforts to hinder the Vatican’s appointment of a permanent Apostolic Delegate to the United States. The bishops were apprehensive that such an office projects a foreign influence on American affairs, especially at a time when Catholics competed for social equality within the nation.\textsuperscript{255}

Irrespective of the Americans’ position, the Pope acted unilaterally and sent an apostolic legate to the United States in 1893 who had authority to ensure that the bishops persevered in the diligent administration of diocesan affairs.\textsuperscript{256} Throughout the nineteenth century, the Vatican was distressed by the lack of communication between the American episcopate and Rome. A Papal representative could rectify that problem and “reorder the American church” which was “filled with great defects.”\textsuperscript{257}

The Pope articulated an implacably European rancor that the United States was no different than any other nation-state. The American model, separation of Church and

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State, was not necessarily the most desirous and will not be universal in its application.\(^{258}\)

The American Catholic church’s status continued as that of a mission church subjected to the jurisdiction of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda. Voicing his concerns about the future course of America’s Catholics, the Pope issued a graciously worded encyclical to the American Catholic church.

Titled *Longinqua Oceani* (*Across A Wide Ocean*), it was issued on January 6, 1895 exclusively for the American Church. In his pastoral letter, the Pontiff wanted, from the American hierarchy, greater unanimity of opinion and action by them, an end to the discord and disagreements concerning parochial education, the establishment of Catholic University and a cessation to the friction over the direction of the North American College in Rome. Leo praised the Catholic Church in America particularly the “virtue, the ability and prudence of the bishops and clergy; but in no slight measure also, to the faith and generosity of the Catholics laity.”\(^{259}\) Because of this, the Church in America was in “good condition and enjoying a prosperous growth.”\(^{260}\)

However the Pope clearly, and without hesitation, decreed that the American Catholic Church adhere meticulously to the Vatican’s dictates and regard the papal legate as his voice in the nation. The Encyclical was a reminder to the protean American church that it did not enjoy a preferential status and that the Roman Catholic Church did not function within a democratic environment. The Holy Father’s words were more like those of a parent to his children: praiseworthy where necessary and yet disciplinarian in action.


\(^{260}\) Ibid., p. 323.
Europeans and the “Americanist Heresy”

The actions of the Vatican did not end the Americanism controversy and essentially contributed to its European episode. As Leo promised, Archbishop Francesco Satolli arrived in the United States as the nation’s first Apostolic Delegate and was politely but not enthusiastically received. The Archbishop, not trained as a diplomat, inserted himself into the controversy by praising German-American Catholics at a liturgical function in Pottsville, Pennsylvania. This was an incompatible position with the liberal element of the hierarchy who considered German-American Catholics as an impediment to Americanization.

Concurrently, Bishop Keane was removed from the rectorship of Catholic University in Washington by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda. In Rome, Leo requested and received the resignation of the outspoken and liberal Monsignor Denis O’Connell as rector of the North American College. As a prestigious seminary for the training of America’s future priests, the Vatican ensured that Americanism cannot infect the seminary’s curriculum. These events were evidence that the Vatican disapproved of the liberal and progressive wing of the American hierarchy. For America’s Catholics, these incidents served to emphasize that the intransigent authority of political and theological doctrine resides only in Rome.

There was a final chapter to the Americanism narrative. This installment straddled two continents. It was more about European issues than American and, like its New World counterpart, divided Catholics in Europe. It was a theological controversy waged

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in French, German and Italian periodicals among groups who had inadequate actual knowledge of the Church in the United States.

European liberals claimed that the progress of the Church in the United States was relative to particular doctrines which they named “Americanism.” To them, “Americanism” correlated with democracy, equality and individuality in the structure of the Church. This group yearned to impose these principles on European Catholics while supporting the church in the United States. However, their opponents castigated this anti-authoritarian attitude and condemned it as heretical.264

Fr. Hecker and the Americanists

The foundational point for this tempest was the translation into French of the biography of Father Isaac Hecker, the founder of the Paulist Fathers. Isaac Hecker (1819-1888) a Catholic priest, founded the Paulist Fathers in order to evangelize and convert America to a Catholic nation. Hecker’s spirituality centered on cultivating the Holy Spirit within the soul and being mystically connected with the dynamics of the Spirit at every moment. He believed that the Catholic faith and American culture were not in opposition but could reconcile. He declared that “the Church is not the enemy but the guardian of liberty.”265

In America, the narrative was part of a biographical series in the journal Catholic World which aroused interest but no significant excitement.266 Hecker, a convert to

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266 Conservative Bishop McQuaid of Rochester and the spiritual non-conformist Fr. Hecker were long time acquaintances. McQuaid criticized Hecker for his missiological theories yet praised him for his zeal and loyalty to the Church. See Robert McNamara “Bernard J. McQuaid’s Sermon on Theological
Catholicism, felt destined by God to bring about a conversion in the American people. He maintained a narrow view on the theology of Protestantism and believed that only the Catholic Church afforded men the opportunity of being Christian without violating the laws of reason. Hecker did not consider personal liberty to be at odds with the authority of the Church but that the authority of the Church must be subservient to the Holy Spirit. His opponents criticized this as containing more Protestantism rather than Roman Catholicism.

Hecker considered Catholicism as the only true viable religion in America because “no place where Protestantism prevailed among a people as their religion has it given birth to a republic.” For him Catholicism, by its nature and supernatural strengths, sustained republican virtues. In the United States, Catholics were acknowledged to be sincere in their beliefs, loyal to the authority of the Church and generous supporters of the republic. “Catholicity in religion,” Hecker avowed, “sanctions republicanism in politics and republicanism in politics favors Catholicity in religion.” His theological and philosophical renderings were subject to interpretation, and misinterpretation, constituting orthodoxy or heresy depending upon the reader’s perspective. Only when European Old World Catholics applied Hecker’s ideology to their interpretive framework did the concept of a “heresy” garner attention.

Europe’s introduction to the Americanist idea came from the French translation of

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269 Ibid., p. 16.
Fr. Hecker’s biography by Abbé Felix Klein, a well known Biblical scholar. Klein was supported in France by a faction that promoted the collaboration of Catholics with the French Republic and this influence was apparent in the translation. In Klein’s rendition of the biography, he branded Hecker as the priest of the future and a genius of the new age.

Hecker was portrayed as that of spiritual colossus on par with St. Augustine and destined for canonization as a saint. He was viewed as a universal mystic who manifested a “direct approach of the soul to God in order to make the union more complete.” For Klein and other French progressives, Hecker was the ideal hard working American priest who can overcome Protestantism and skepticism.

The beliefs and works of Fr. Hecker were further buttressed by subsequent articles in the Catholic press. For “Americanists” on both sides of the Atlantic, Hecker’s words encouraged stronger involvement of the laity in the Church and civil affairs as co-operators with and consultants to their bishops. This position stressed that priests should participate in the social and political arenas as “priests of the people.” It suggested a Church that was modern and responsive; one that contained individuality and freedom. Hecker’s thoughts paralleled the cultural inclinations of America at that time which appealed to many Old and New World Catholics.

**Political and Ecclesial Americanism**

Adding to the confusion in Europe Msgr. O’Connell, after his dismissal as rector of the North American College, established an international group dedicated to

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modernizing the Catholic Church. They utilized the popularity of Fr. Hecker’s biography as a model for the Church’s reconciliation with reform and democracy. Members comprised the clergy and laity from Belgium, Italy, Germany and France with Abbé Klein, the French translator of Hecker’s biography, as a peripheral participant.\footnote{Margaret Mary Reher, “Leo XIII and Americanism, \textit{Theological Studies}, Vol. 34, No. 4, Dec. 1973, p. 683.}

Speaking at the International Congress at Fribourg, Switzerland, O’Connell presented his paper on \textit{A New Idea in the Life of Father Hecker}.\footnote{Gerald Fogerty, \textit{The Vatican and the Americanist Crisis: Denis J. O’Connell, American Agent in Rome, 1885-1903}. (Roma: Universitá Gregoriana Editrice, 1974), p. 257.} For the Monsignor, there were two types of “Americanism”: political and ecclesiastical. He described “political Americanism” as the Catholic response to religious liberty and the separation of Church and State. The Monsignor argued that the American paradigm was easily facilitated since it assured freedom for the church and individual independence.\footnote{Hennesey, \textit{American Catholics}, p. 201-202. The Congress was a primarily a meeting of scientists and intellectuals to discuss a range of contemporary topics.}

O’Connell considered that this strategy offered unique opportunities for Catholic evangelization on both sides of the Atlantic.

“Ecclesiastic Americanism,” for O’Connell, endorsed spiritual Catholic doctrine and authority.\footnote{William Barry, “ ‘Americanism’ True and False,” \textit{The North American Review}, Vol. 169, No. 512, July 1899, p. 44-45.} O’Connell maintained that Hecker appraised the separation of Church and State as beneficial to Catholics in America. Americanism was not, according to O’Connell, in conflict with Catholic faith and morals; it was not a variant form of heresy, liberalism or separatism. This “concept” was nothing more than loyal devotion by Catholics in America to the “principles on which their government was founded, and their conscientious conviction that these principles afford Catholics favorable

opportunities for promoting the glory of God, the growth of the Church and the salvation of souls in America.” The Monsignor’s words disconcertingly echoed a notion of American exceptionalism advanced since the founding of the nation.

European conservatives proclaimed the lexis of Klein and O’Connell as invective and heretical. The Pope was still suspicious of the anti-clerical tendencies in France that lingered from the Third Republic which coveted a separation of Church and State like that in the United States. The attacks primarily happened in France where the protracted battles and campaigns were waged from the pulpit and in the press.

The March 1898 edition of *Catholic World* published Bishop Keane’s article with the intention to rationalize the Americanism controversy and ameliorate this international affair. It only served to stoke the fires of this conflict. Writing from Europe, the purpose of Keane’s evincive exposé, *America As Seen From Abroad*, was to demonstrate that an orthodox Catholic can simultaneously be an Americanist. European Catholics were unable to appreciate the American separation of Church and State and therefore misunderstood America’s special relationship with the nation’s Catholics. Keane asserted that the Old World believed that America was dominated by a spirit “hopelessly Voltairean, infidel and anti-Christian.”

During this turmoil European conservatives continued to fear that Americanism

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280 French Bishop Charles Turinaz of Nancy denounced Hecker as more Protestant than Catholic. In Paris, Abbé Charles Maignen and Fathers Coubé and Gaudeua began a war against Americanism when they declare, from the pulpit, that it is one of the “evils of the time.” Maignen effectively discredits Hecker and those he calls the “Ireland party” who seek to liberalize American Catholics, referring to Archbishop Ireland’s liberal bloc. See Moynihan, *The Life of Archbishop Ireland*, p. 109 and Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present*, p. 315.
could destroy their ecclesiastical structures but world events conspired to threaten European political strength. In the Spring of 1898, the Spanish-American War erupted and placed an Old World Catholic nation at odds with a New World nation that was both Protestant and pluralistic. American liberal clergy such as Archbishop Ireland and Msgr. O’Connell judged this event as an opportunity for persuasion. The United States, as an emerging international power, had the capacity to alter the world politically. Effectually, this was an expedient occasion for the Vatican to modernize the Church in Europe.\textsuperscript{282}

\textit{Testem Benevolentiae: the Final Word}

Rome, however, was inclined to maintain control over the American Church not promote modernization. To end this trans-Atlantic syncretism, Leo established a commission to examine the controversy and then with the proclamation of a pastoral letter, irrevocably ended the conflict between liberals and conservatives.\textsuperscript{283} Several weeks before its publication a minor Vatican official and editor of the prominent conservative Catholic publication \textit{Civilità Cattolica}, Fr. Salvatore Brandi, advised American conservative Archbishop Corrigan that the encyclical against Americanism was ready to be issued.

Originally intended as a private letter only for Cardinal Gibbons, its contents were made public which temporarily “discouraged” the relationship between the Archbishop and the Holy See.\textsuperscript{284} On January 22, 1899, \textit{Testem Benevolentiae (As Evidence of Our Goodwill)} was proclaimed. It became Leo’s peculiar manner of expressing the fears of

\textsuperscript{284} Curran, \textit{Michael Augustine Corrigan}, p. 494-495 and Ellis, \textit{The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons}, Vol. II,
European and American conservatives. The Pope’s intention was to “reveal specific peculiarities of the Faith,” which were originally propagated in the translation of Fr. Hecker’s biography and “to extirpate them completely.”

In the Encyclical, Leo declared that the Church, while She “has the capacity to admit modifications according to the diversity of time and place” [will not adapt] “somewhat to our advanced civilization and relaxing her ancient rigor, show some indulgence to modern popular theories and methods.” The Pope stressed that these new beliefs were considered, by some, as a method to bring over those who dissent from Catholic doctrine.

However, Leo emphasized that the Church will not make “some concessions to new opinions” as She can follow only the “rule of life which is bestowed by the Divine.” The Pontiff refuted those who alleged that the presence of the Holy Spirit rendered external authority superfluous as “we know by experience that the impulses and prompting of the Holy Ghost for the most part are not discerned without the help….without the preparation of an external guidance.” This section was Leo’s direct response to the works of Fr. Hecker.

But the central point of the document was the Americanism problem. The Pontiff did not accuse any prelate of heresy and was exceptional in his continual praise of the American Church. Leo, however, resolutely advised that he did not approve “those views which in their collective sense were called by some ‘Americanism.’” The Pope

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287 Ibid., p. 441-442.
288 Ibid., p. 446.
289 Ibid., p. 452.
explained that the title Americanism did not necessarily signify the United States as it was merely the vernacular that “designated your political conditions and laws and customs.”

Leo did reiterate, as stated previously in *Longinqua Oceani*, that the American Catholic church was “Roman” not American in its foundation. The Pope warned that thinking otherwise was dangerous as “it raises suspicion that there are some among you who conceive of and desire a church in America different from that which is in the rest of the world.”

The Encyclical was more than just a warning to American Catholics about doctrinal differences. It was the implicit repudiation of the American liberals’ desire to implement American values of democracy, freedom, individuality and exceptionalism into the canon of the Church. The encyclical produced uncertainty within the American Catholic Church. Leo’s earlier paean attitude toward them, in other pastoral letters, suggested an acknowledgment not an acceptance of American style democracy within the American Church. But *Testem* revealed that American Catholics misunderstood their role within the universal church. Ultimately, this became the Vatican’s sumptuary manner for control of American Catholics.

*A “Phantom Heresy”*

*Testem Benevolentiae*, according to historian Philip Gleason, ends the period of controversy but it does not settle the question of Americanism. The ambiguity of Americanism had been condemned but it was not the assumed doctrine of the Americanists. The condemned principles were derived mainly from the fulminations

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290 Ibid., p. 452.
291 Ibid., p. 452.
of the conservatives, on both sides of the Atlantic, who asserted that they were exposing the errors of the Americanists. Yet these denounced Americanists maintained that they never did adhere to those principles. Consequently, they did not feel that they were required to counter the accusations against them.293

Americanism, in virulent forms, still persisted after the publication of the Encyclical. The theologically conservative journal Civiltà Cattolica stated

“Americanism was a purely American invention which was to rejuvenate the Church and in particular, the ‘new crusade’ against the uncompromising position of the Catholics of the old creed.” The periodical alleged that it damaged the American Church and threatened Catholicism everywhere.294 Father Péchenard, rector of the Catholic University of Paris, wrote in the journal North American Review soon after the publication of the Encyclical, how at the end of this sacrilege “the French clergy uttered a cry of relief and of joy.” He opined that contradictory views, the result of a “liberty to think and write as one pleases,” were a disruption to the Church. He further testified that the clergy and laity “welcomed with transports of joy the papal decision which had just dispelled all uncertainties and pointed out to each one the traditional path. It was marvelous how speedily calm was restored and silence ensued.”295

The consequences of the crisis invited a disquiet reflection. The Americanism, that the Pope abhors, actually developed in France. It was based on a European interpretation of American ideas further advanced by the clergy there.296 No disciplinary

\[\text{\scriptsize 292 Curran, Michael Augustine Corrigan, p. 498-499.}
\[\text{\scriptsize 293 Gleason, The Conservative Reformers, p. 38-40.}
\[\text{\scriptsize 296 George La Piana, & John W. Swomley, Catholic Power Versus American Freedom. (Amherst:}
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actions were imposed by the Vatican. Yet the Pope, a friend to the American Church, rebuked the actions of the American hierarchy who only longed for collegiality. The American Church, specifically the magisterium, re-orient its position to be more Roman and Vatican centered. This only reinforced Protestant trepidations of a foreign power that operated within the country.

In the United States, there were divergent analyses of the Encyclical. Most American Catholics were unaware of the document at all. However, German-American Catholics considered Testem as a vindication of their conservative and ideological position against Americanization. American bishops expressed incredulity at the Pontiff’s captious view of American democracy for the Church. The American hierarchy would struggle to accurately interpret the Pope’s meaning as to this “phantom heresy.”

Cardinal Gibbons never allowed himself to be dissuaded from his fervent support of Americanism, that being democracy and equality in the American Church. He felt that any interpretations and distortions were fallacies by Europeans not Americans. They were an aberration of what he understood of his faith as an American Catholic. Throughout this controversy, the American Church cultivated friendly relations with non-Catholics, endeavored to attract converts and maintained cordial relations with the State. None of these actions were judged as heretical.

**Affect and Effect**

But there were internal and lasting effects. The controversy’s most acute impact was on the hierarchy who became solidly divided on social reform issues and the place of the Church in American society. Cardinals and bishops bitterly opposed each other on

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297Gleason, The Conservative Reformers, p. 78.
the Church’s relationship to Rome and its position in the nation.\textsuperscript{299} As a result, no unified ideology or strategy for the future developed within this confraternity of prelates. Conservatives like Corrigan and McQuaid remained suspicious of social reform. They insisted on a separate and unique Catholicism to maintain its distinct identity and values in a hostile, materialistic society. This unique Catholic identity, they believed, could only be promoted and protected in parish schools.\textsuperscript{300}

Conversely, the liberal bishops such as Gibbons and Ireland, were more progressive on social reform matters and embraced republican ideology. In the matter of education, they were willing to work within the parameters of a public school system that enabled all Americans to receive both a religious and secular education. Ireland particularly viewed this as a method to build bridges between Americans and Roman Catholics.\textsuperscript{301} To further assimilate Catholics into mainstream society, the liberal bloc promoted cooperation with the Federal government and encouraged collaboration with other denominations. They felt this could be achieved in an “Americanized” church without compromise to a Protestant/nativist agenda.

Yet both liberals and conservatives feared that immigrant and ethnic Catholics would succumb to urban Protestant denominations. The hierarchy, predominately Irish-American, desired to gather Catholics under the watchful eye of a clergy that personified the prelates’ ethnicity and their corresponding values. The foremost damage of the Americanism crisis, in the United States, was that it reinforced earlier divisions

\textsuperscript{298} Ellis, \textit{The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons}, Vol. II, p. 79.
\textsuperscript{300} Rochester’s Bishop McQuaid believed that Protestantism was in decline and detrimental to Catholics particularly in school as he stressed the “necessity of spiritual instruction in the education of the young to which the ‘godless’ schools pay no attention.” His reference is to the free public school system. ARD, Bishop McQuaid Papers: news articles binder.
\textsuperscript{301} Dolan, \textit{The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present}, p. 273. Must
over representation of ethnic groups in Church leadership and maintained autonomous
ethnic or “national” parishes. The precise concept of an American Catholic was still to
be realized.

The controversy was waged principally in the press and within the ecclesiastical
ranks while ordinary Catholics appeared more concerned about the politics of “Free
Silver” and the Populist movement. The American Catholic Church, still regarded by
Rome as a missionary church, did not enjoy parity with her sister congregants in Europe.
The Apostolic Delegate, the Pope’s official representative in the United States, was a
reminder of that condition and that power resided in a foreign land. The intention of
the Vatican’s message was that of an anamnesis to the American hierarchy on the status
of that inequality.

This was also a process for Leo to maneuver the universal Church between the
ancient Old World traditions and its opportunities for expansion in the New World.
As society increasingly engaged with the modern world, the Church would be pulled into
that condition willingly or not. The Pope attempted to decelerate that process at the
expense of an American style democracy.

The condemnation of Americanism shaped the American Church into a more

public schools taught religion courses albeit Protestantism in the Nineteenth Century.
in the Streets and in the Churches of the Urban United States, 1900–1930,” Journal of American Ethnic
303 Thomas McAvoy, “American Cultural Impacts on Catholicism,” from Elwyn A. Smith, The Religion of
Democrat & Chronicle and the Rochester Morning Herald published articles detailing the “Americanism”
affair between the United States and Rome. ARD, Bishop McQuaid Papers: news articles binder
304 The total population of Catholics in America is approximately ten million with a total number of
bishops at 144. See The Official Catholic Directory, 1906.
305 Mark A. Noll, The Old Religion in a New World. The History of North American Christianity. (Grand
conservative body that now overreacted to any semblance of Modernism. The primary casualty of the Americanism crisis was the integration of intellectualism into American Catholic thought. American Catholicism retreated from intellectual and theological vitality as cultivating the life of the mind was suspect. Effective enforcement of these dictates isolated the Catholic community from the contemporary world.

Future Popes, specifically Pius X, associate Americanism with Modernism. In his encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (1907), Pius X vilified Modernists who “with regard to morals, they adopt the principle of the Americanists.” The American liberal hierarchy and clergy previously denied such accusations in 1899. But the specter of a “phantom heresy” will linger and the American Church was still a suspect church.

The Catholic Church in the United States, at the end of the nineteenth century, was a very different organization then at the start. From the early days of the Republic, both clergy and laity were vigilant in their application of independence from direct Vatican control. This seemed only a natural evolution of being an American, that is, autonomous in thought and action as part of a national consciousness. American exceptionalism infiltrated all levels of society and culture and Roman Catholics were not immune from this impulse.

Catholicism was synonymous with an ethnic identity in the United States but the

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307 Hennesey, *American Catholics*, p. 217

pluralism and mobility of an expanding nation enabled immigrant Catholics to acculturate, even meld, into the political and social milieu. Organizationally, the magisterium continued with an episcopal centralization of power. But the Americanism crisis emasculated the clergy who exchanged American independency for dogma.

For the laity, the controversy had an contrary effect. The encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* and *Longinqua Oceani* encouraged and motivated the laity to active participation in social and labor reforms. Leo challenged the American church, especially its lay component, in that “Catholics ought not to be followers but leaders.”

The American Catholic laity, not the clergy, responded to this challenge and ultimately would not allow Rome to push the American Church backwards. As they evolved though participation in political, social and labor reforms, the laity demonstrated that their faith was compatible with the Constitution. This was the esoteric component of Americanism and an extension of exceptionalism. America’s lay Catholics acted like Americans; they proved their independence and leadership abilities religiously, politically and socially by self-integration into the American system. This was evident decades later with the formation of the labor schools. But the struggles for America’s Catholics were not over, they merely entered a new century.
Chapter 4

Between The Encyclicals:

Protestants, Progressives and the

Evolution of American Catholic Social Engagement

In the last part of the nineteenth and into the initial decades of the twentieth centuries, it became acceptable to champion for social and labor reforms as Catholics, Protestants and secular society increasingly campaigned to eradicate the social injustices of the nation’s industrial surge. Yet the historiography dealing with this era discounted the capability of America’s Catholics in these efforts. Some historians relegated Catholic programs as a replication of Protestant initiatives or as part of a greater parochial outreach.

Initially, America’s Catholics proceeded cautiously and gradually in the areas of social and labor reform. But as the number of American Catholics multiplied in the pre-war years so did their influence. The conclusion of the First World War became vital to the assimilation of Catholics in the nation and the formulation of a comprehensive Catholic plan to alleviate social ills. The hierarchy discerned that their position now was to assist in the restoration of American society. With a fresh sense of participation in the nation and the guidance of the Papal encyclicals, it was the laity that not only developed social reform programs but implemented them.

As the nineteenth century concluded, Catholics and Protestants competed to be the voice of the worker, the guardian of the marginalized and the defender of the

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“American way.” Both contended to be the spiritual and moral representative of the nation as each wanted social and labor reforms that accentuated their ideological and theological discrepancies. The Protestant Social Gospel movement sought its place with the worker and as a reformer of the transgressions from the Industrial Revolution. Juxtaposed to this divine Protestant crusade, Progressivism emerged to break the chains of intellectual and religious thought that seemed to bind Americans and inhibit any meaningful reform. Both movements originated from an urgent need to reassess and transform America’s political and economic institutions. Consequently, they resolutely intersected at various points.

Although the Catholic hierarchy during this time generally remained conservative, they too recognized that the hazardous working conditions along with the ensuing social and moral conditions, demanded an improvement in the standard of living through social legislation and the acceptance of organized labor unions. Some Catholic leaders considered government intervention in the economy as a cure for social problems. Yet a liberal leader such as Cardinal Gibbons struggled to explicitly comprehend the serious flaws in America’s social conditions.

Catholics, particularly the burgeoning lay middle class, began a shift toward a more progressive posture of social reform; a position that included the other social concerns of the day. In an era of reform movements a Catholic response, as an offset

to other religious and secular agendas, was inevitable. But the American Catholic magisterium, and some of the laity, were hesitant to engage in reform movements as they are likely to be associated with Protestantism.\textsuperscript{316}

With initiatives by Protestants and Progressives already in place, how could American Catholics formulate a policy to alleviate the contemporary labor and social ills? The dilemma then was how to develop a program of social engagement, and how soon could that occur, without disruption to the Church?

\textit{Social Gospel Movement}

In this analysis, the Social Gospel is likely more compatible to Catholics in the imminent formation of their own social reform programs and so further scrutiny is necessary. Similarly, the Progressive movement contains comparable elements. Both Movements rely on a moralistic and religious dimension to move forward. Yet, those components eventually are responsible for the termination of these crusades. The Social Gospel exposes conservative and liberal elements within Protestant America which, in time, fractures and defeats mainline denominations and diminish their endeavors at social reform.\textsuperscript{317}

Progressive era activists were awash with righteous indignation as the movement unintentionally assumed the character of an evangelical revival in matters of reform.\textsuperscript{318} Progressivism however, while it shared some of the Social Gospel’s fervor, was heavily dependent on humanitarianism and secular interests to arouse the American conscience.\textsuperscript{319}

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\item Arthur A. Ekirch, \textit{Progressivism In America. A Study of the Era from Theodore Roosevelt to Woodrow}
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Some historians argued that the Social Gospel Movement was theology in action. Others maintained that the Progressives were a post-religious phenomenon as the progressives tended to be the children of devout believers who abandon Christian orthodoxy. Jane Addams was an example of this conundrum explaining that the settlement house was not a continuation of religious piety but a revolt against Puritan ideas and dogma. However, as the nation’s interests fluctuated so did progressive causes.

The emergence of the Social Gospel movement did not necessarily constitute a bifurcation of social reform into Catholic and Protestant theologies. Yet, separate strategies did evolve. The Social Gospel movement became, in a sense, more than the introduction of Christian or rather Protestant principles into society. It was also the application of social principles to Christianity. American industrial society in the nineteenth century manifested a pluralistic urban culture that placed value on success not religion. Into this medley, the Social Gospel sought to make large scale changes in society as a link between personal holiness and social reform echoing the revival traditions in American religious history.

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The Movement's European Origins

The Protestant lineage of the Social Gospel movement was rooted in European theology and philosophy with liberal and conservative components. Modern German biblical scholarship instigated a re-evaluation of the Scriptures which directed many theologians to emphasize the here-and-now rather than the hereafter.\textsuperscript{324} In Great Britain during the mid-nineteenth century, Protestant clergy such as Frederick Maurice, Charles Kingsley and others called for a revitalized church. Their mission, popularly known as Christian Socialism, mandated concern for the poor and the working classes and efforts to ameliorate those conditions.\textsuperscript{325} Theirs was not a political philosophy but a theological idealism.

In the post Civil War era in America, similar developments proceeded from a tradition of transcendentalism and communitarian values. Laymen such as Henry George and Edward Bellamy, insisted on a religious component to cure social ills without the horror of revolution or the abandonment of capitalism.\textsuperscript{326} Protestant ministers Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch assumed religious leadership roles within the movement and emphasized the social aspects of the Gospel to the delight, or consternation, of Protestants on both sides of the Atlantic.\textsuperscript{327}

Walter Rauschenbusch’s Social Gospel as Christian Orthodoxy

The focus of the Social Gospel movement was on divine intervention in order to achieve social readjustment.\textsuperscript{328} “Enlightened conservatives” examined the “newness” of

\textsuperscript{324} Dorsett, \textit{Billy Sunday and the Redemption of Urban America}, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{325} Ekirch, \textit{Progressivism In America}, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{328} The historiography varies as to the dateline of this movement. Some historians place the start in the
science and industry in the late 1800’s. They acknowledged that the content of their Christianity was more important than the sentimental piety of the Gilded Age. Four “evils” influenced the formation of doctrines for the movement: crime, political corruption, urbanization and labor-capital conflicts. Social Gospel adherents believed in an optimistic, if not naïve manner, that application of the Gospel to this havoc resulted in reform, reconstruction and a return to Christian values.

The Movement was controlled by the clergy but reliant on the laity. Washington Gladden, the Protestant preacher and social reformer who advocated for the worker, was labeled as the “father of the social gospel.” He condensed the essence of this Movement, expressing it in a Christian faith that was not bound up in dogma or ritual but situated in the simple injunction to “love thy neighbor as thyself.” Gladden’s desire was for Christian unity that can be achieved through the Social Gospel movement but it was a Protestant unity he sought not a comprehensive ecumenicalism.

The Social Gospel movement also attempted to reinforce American values at the dawn of a new century. The Movement’s theologians aspired to shape a particular

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concept of the Kingdom of God on earth.\textsuperscript{335} Those principles were an obvious connection to progressive thought and nationalism which supported social obligation and America’s sense of mission.\textsuperscript{336} The premier theologian of the Social Gospel group was historian Walter Rauschenbusch. He considered how the evangelical traditions of American Protestantism created the twin beliefs of liberty and democratic equality in the United States. For Rauschenbusch, history was the method for Christian ministers to reinterpret the timeless truths of the Bible. Studying the Bible and history enabled men and women to become advocates for the Kingdom of God. In this manner, churches used their moral authority to affect a revolutionary change in society.\textsuperscript{337}

Rauschenbusch succinctly stated that the Social Gospel was Christian orthodoxy. The church then, vis-à-vis the Social Gospel, was the common factor in salvation which brought social forces to bear on the evils of society.\textsuperscript{338} Yet Rauschenbusch recognized that part of the tragic consequence of American capitalism was that the system represented a distortion of the divine-human relationship. Wealth became a technique for the rich to isolate themselves from the sufferings of the poor.\textsuperscript{339}

But many in the United States regarded democracy and individual liberty, part of the American system, as Protestant American traits only. It was inconceivable to Rauschenbusch that the dogma of the Gospel could be preached in the advanced industrial society of the United States by Catholic bishops subservient to Rome. He felt

\textsuperscript{339} Christopher H. Evans, “‘What Would Walter Want?’ Walter Rauschenbusch and the Future of Religious Progressivism.” Unpublished paper, Arizona State University, Center for the Study of Religion
that remediation of social concerns cannot be adequately attended to by non-Protestants. Rauschenbusch characterized Catholicism as profoundly anti-democratic and as a major cause for the difficulties that many nations encountered in maintaining free institutions. Writing in *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, he affirmed that “even today, when the current of democracy is flowing powerfully through the modern world, the Roman Church has a persistent affinity for the monarchical principle and an instinctive distrust for democracy.”

**Theology of a Christian Economic Order**

In 1907, Rauschenbusch presented five fundamentals requirements for a Christian economic order: social justice, collective property rights, industrial democracy, approximate equality and cooperation. He favored labor in its struggles with industrial capitalists and believed that political democracy without industrial democracy was “form without substance.” The following year the General Conference of the Methodist Federation for Social Service issued their report titled *The Church and Social Problems*. It cited the good work of the industrialists but addressed the negative conditions of the worker and urged labor and capital to find “industrial peace and human brotherhood.”

The theology of the Social Gospel presupposed a kind of monolithic culture. Its indirect audience seemed to be simply an America which was Protestant and middle

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343 Gornell, *The Age of Social Responsibility*, p. 100. From this Conference, the Methodists published their “Social Creed of Methodism” which sought equal rights for workers, a safe environment, abolition of child labor, protections for women employees, reasonable work hours, a six day work week and a living wage. Apart from Rauschenbusch’s demand for collective property rights, the list of remedies to the labor problem was proclaimed more than fifteen years prior by Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. 
class. The Social Gospel endeavored to bring back the workers to the Protestant church. Yet as some Protestant churches abandoned urban areas Catholic parishes were established in ethnic working class neighborhoods. The objective of mainline Protestant denominations then, was to recoup the confidence of the working class that they exiled. The movement’s greatest strength, however, was spiritual rather than practical. It used theology as a lens to engage in political, economic and sociological analysis.

**Inconsistencies Within**

The Movement, however, was inconsistent at times. The mission of the Social Gospel initially promoted morals and ethics over economics. It regarded the conflict between labor and capital as the crux of this industrial clash. The Protestant Social Gospel constructed an aura that was socially liberal and politically active yet only proposed limited legislation to correct society’s evils. Some of the “social gospelers” were more proactive in their preaching to the middle class about social ills rather than acting to correct the circumstances. With the exception of the Episcopalians and Baptists, no other denominations established associations or made an official commitment to the cause of social Christianity.

The Social Gospel Movement became a composition of a predominantly white American Protestant middle-class group who, buffeted by economic and technological change, feared a decline in their social status. Essentially, it associated more with the middle class than with the working class. Protestant ministers failed to comprehend

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349 As early as 1887, a “Protestant activist” warned his colleagues that “the Protestant churches as a rule,
the social needs of the urban poor who lived in slums that were an extension of the Industrial Revolution. Whole congregations often moved their parish into better neighborhoods leaving the poor without religious care.\textsuperscript{350}

While some considered the Movement as the salvation of Christianity from secular futility, conservatives regarded it as a shift away from theological orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{351} The Social Gospel crusade did accomplish much and compelled people to aid their neighbors. It failed, however, in its campaign to be the leading voice of the worker and to convert the urban immigrant masses.\textsuperscript{352}

\textbf{Protestants, Catholics and Social Reform}

At the twilight of the nineteenth century and at the dawn of the twentieth, two parallel Christian movements emerged quite different in their political and practical implications. Their mutual focus was to end the exploitation of labor and correct the evils of urbanization and support the labor movement. The Protestant Social Gospel approach tended to be evangelical with a strong emotional appeal. Catholic social concerns stressed rights and justice based on the appeal of natural law.\textsuperscript{353} Does this imply that there was a religious competition for the soul of the American worker by Catholics and Protestants?

Rival faiths did not aggressively proselytize in the factories or mills of industrial America. There was no proof of any interaction or even awareness at the ministerial or ecclesiastical levels. No evidence existed of any collaborative efforts between Protestants

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\textsuperscript{351} Evans, \textit{Liberalism Without Illusions}, p. 56.
\end{flushright}
and Catholics on remedies to the social questions. Some Protestants such as Reverend Lyman Abbott, economist Carroll Wright and other Social Gospel advocates panegyrically welcomed the publication of *Rerum Novarum*. Yet this did not promote collaboration to alleviate social problems. Protestants tolerated religious diversity but not pluralism.

The real purpose of mainline Protestantism, particularly during the cultural changes concurrent with the Social Gospel Movement, was to maintain social order and stability which many believed that Jews and Catholics would destroy. Most Catholics in America continued to live in an antagonistic anti-Catholic nation. Therefore, ecumenical idealism was not viable despite the mutual recognition of the social evils brought about by industrial capitalists.

**Catholic Contradictions**

Catholicism, according to historian Ken Fones-Wolf, is unable to legitimize labor’s struggles or offer a meaningful program for social and political reform. Catholics are unable to maximize political clout and consequently, union leadership is dependent upon Protestant religious liberals of the Social Gospel for results. Fones-Wolf’s interpretation suggests that *Rerum Novarum* adds nothing particularly new or revolutionary to aid workers in their struggles. His perspective of *Rerum Novarum* is that it only “encourages a degree of pro labor social consciousness.”

Fones-Wolf contends that while the Catholic Church is better suited to reach an

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357 Fones-Wolf, *Trade Union Gospel*, p. 100
urban working class it is the Protestant denominations, and the Social Gospelers, that are likely to appeal to labor as their “clergymen spoke the language of unionism.”

Additionally, he portrays America’s Catholics as mimicking Protestant characteristics “suggesting that Catholic union leaders may have been attempting simply to Americanize their movement through an alliance with Social Gospel Christians.”

This insular analysis disregards how Catholics, after the publication of *Rerum Novarum*, become a viable partner with labor through the acceptance of unions such as the Knights of Labor. American Protestants, with their strong pedigree of individualism and exceptionalism, discern that it is natural to oppose unionization rather than support it.

The Social Gospel, according to Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, struggles to lend authoritative religious support to the cause of organized labor even though labor unions help to establish a measure of justice for the common worker.

The histories of individual Catholic dioceses illustrates that American Catholics are building parishes in urban working class neighborhoods not abandoning them. The narrative of American history equates organized labor and social reform more with the Catholic Church not inevitably so with the Social Gospel Movement.

**The Threat of the Protestant “New Theology”**

America’s Protestants continued to wrestle with the tendencies of modern progressive thought and theology. Some Protestant lay and religious leaders

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358 Ibid., p. 42 and 98-114 and 196-197.
interchangeably used the terms “liberal” and “social gospel” while many others did not identify themselves with the movement stressing a traditional evangelical theology.\textsuperscript{361} The liberal clergy succeeded in restoring a degree of their prestige through immersion in progressive social Christianity.\textsuperscript{362} However, religious conservatives voiced doubts about the relevance of the Social Gospel principles.

Many of these conservative Protestants feel restricted and forced into accepting a position of either traditional Christian belief or a new program of social action.\textsuperscript{363} Conservative evangelicals, who often address matters of social concern, judged the Social Gospel as a threat. This “new” theology challenged the relevance of eternal salvation through Christ with an exaggerated prominence on social concerns as an alternative to the Gospel itself.\textsuperscript{364} What then was the mission of the Church: was it to feed the poor and become entangled in economic reform or, was it to convert sinners?\textsuperscript{365}

For many conservative Protestants, they reacted by rejecting anti-reformist measures as their interests centered on conforming to God’s will rather than discernment of individual purposes.\textsuperscript{366} These conservatives, who resided mainly in rural areas, rebuffed progressive concepts in matters of religion and culture by reaffirmation of orthodoxy or attacks on liberal modernism. This response was an obvious return to the fundamental precepts of the faith and a refutation of the Social Gospel.\textsuperscript{367}

\textsuperscript{365} Dorsett, \textit{Billy Sunday and the Redemption of Urban America}, p. 45.
For the conservatives, the Social Gospel suffered under the handicap of its alliance with liberal theology. Fundamentalists ascertained that the rise of modernism and “social Christianity” created errors. The First World War was a confirmation of their position that demonstrated the weakness and vanity of a progressive society. With the conclusion of the war, the uncompromising fundamentalists commandeered Protestant efforts at reform and effectively end the Social Gospel movement. The positive aspects of progressive thought in American Protestantism were obliterated from memory as social views reversed to an earlier time.

**The Progressive Movement**

Contemporaneously with the Social Gospel was the more secular style Progressive Movement. The evolution of the progressive era set in motion numerous forces for change in the social and economic fabric of the United States and like the Social Gospel; it also attained its apex with the First World War. The Progressives recognized the dichotomy of American industry and capitalism in relation to the worker and society. The gap between rich and poor widened as industrial output increased with no corresponding means to meet human needs or reform the accompanying manifest evils of corporate enterprise.

But most Progressives rejected the religious notion that the status of rich or poor was the natural result of a divine preordained process. This skewed dogma inhibited those who seek change and reform. Progressives were more aware of secular humanist values than conventional religious doctrines. They wanted to make humanitarianism the

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369 Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, p. 93.
replacement for Protestantism in America.\textsuperscript{373} Those who strove for social reconstruction consisted of social workers, educators, politicians, economists, academics and journalists who preached their own Gospel of Progressivism.\textsuperscript{374}

Liberal clergy traversed both movements and this duplicity provided a simulated religious sanction to the Progressives’ mission.\textsuperscript{375} Historian Richard Hofstadter comments that no other major movement in American history receives so much pastoral support. The Progressive Movement is able to acquire a full complement of chaplains.\textsuperscript{376}

The Progressive Era primarily centered on social legislation that served democratic purposes. Social security, unemployment insurance, safer working conditions, restrictions on child labor, legal protection for women employees and better wages and hours, in addition to improved housing, were the hallmarks of reform. Melvyn Dubofsky contends that the Progressive era reforms “include a little something for everyone” as there are stricter anti-trust laws, business regulations and social reforms.\textsuperscript{377} This became, for a short time, America’s secular religion of democracy and civic piety.\textsuperscript{378}

\textit{Movements of Paradox}

Yet both the Social Gospel and the Progressive movements were full of contradictions. The Social Gospel preached reform. But when coherent proposals for social change, especially for labor, were proposed a wide chasm emerged between the

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\textsuperscript{371} & Hofstadter, ed. \textit{The Progressive Movement}, p. 2. \\
\textsuperscript{372} & Caine, “The Origins of Progressivism,” p. 11. \\
\textsuperscript{373} & Hennesey, \textit{American Catholics}, p. 206. \\
\textsuperscript{374} & Winters, \textit{The Soul of the Wobblies}, p. 4. \\
\textsuperscript{375} & May, \textit{Protestant Churches and Industrial America}, p. 225. \\
\textsuperscript{376} & Hofstadter, \textit{The Age of Reform}, p. 152. \\
\textsuperscript{378} & Winters, \textit{The Soul of the Wobblies}, p. 69.
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middle class and labor. Ministers who professed a friendship for labor lacked a complete comprehension of the workers’ struggles. The Social Gospel was often unrealistic in its evaluation of the ills affecting society. At times, it functioned as a panacea for the guilt feelings of the middle class or facilitated the clergy to compete intellectually with political and scholarly elites.

The Progressives engaged in a mindset that right and wrong were the only important categories and advocated for the questioning of ideas and the examination of institutions. Yet, Progressives only supported their own value system. Those radicals and dissenters who did challenge any progressive ideas discovered instability and confusion.

As a middle class movement, Progressives who promoted worker reforms were shocked by the militancy of labor. Ultimately, many Progressives aligned themselves with property conscious conservatives. Progressivism thrived on humanists principles not religious orthodoxy. Many inserted moralism into the cause thereby subtly, and unknowingly, weaving religious principles into the fabric of a secular movement.

As the First World War preoccupied the nation, the Progressive era, to the disappointment of many reformers, terminated into a conservative impasse. Years later, many of the proposed reforms of the progressives resurfaced in some New Deal legislation. With the 1920’s, both movements vanished but the social and labor issues remained. Within this vacuum emerged a nascent American Catholic program for social

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381 Ekirch, *Progressivism In America*, p. 57.
385 Ekirch, *Progressivism In America*, p. 57.
and labor reconstruction.

**American Catholics in a New Century**

America’s Catholics, were surrounded by a whirlwind of episodes specifically anti-Catholic agitation, the Americanism controversy, the Pope’s encyclicals, the Progressives and the Social Gospel. This had the potential to be crippling for many and even form a type of “spiritual neurosis.” The American Catholic hierarchy, previously uplifted by *Rerum Novarum* only to be wounded years later by *Testem Benevolentiae*, were uncertain how to vigorously guide their flock into the twentieth century. As the ecclesiastical structure regrouped, a new source of influence was emerging within the American Catholic Church one that could form sound principles of social reconstruction: the laity.

During the forty year interval between the pontifical reigns of Leo XIII and Pius XI, the American Catholic Church sought a distinctive path to characterize its identity within the universal Church and the America of the early twentieth century. This became the era of the imperial episcopacy. It was the preface to brick-and-mortar Catholicism that traversed the ideas of the Progressive Era and the praxis of the Social Gospel Movement. These were also exigent and perilous times that encompassed both economic mania and decay, the escalation of political and ideological systems and world war.

A greater issue was how could the clergy and hierarchy establish the Church’s place within American society. If the Church was too aligned with workers or organized labor this might create anxiety within the established industrial capitalist order. If the Church affiliated itself with capital, the worker, that being the lay Catholic individual,  

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could abandon his church totally. The American ecclesiastics now searched for a
compromise position that recognized the complaints and concerns of Catholic workers
yet satisfied industrialist by leading the laity away from radicalism and socialism.  
Within the labor-capital affair was a bourgeoning lay Catholic middle class that found
itself spanning both factions of labor and management.

**Intellectual Impediments for America’s Lay Catholics**

As lay Catholics advanced in all areas of society so did their power and influence.
The hierarchy exhibited a form of collegiality with the laity through congresses and
conventions but it was an ersatz arrangement. Bishops discouraged the laity from wider
initiatives and prohibited their involvement in key areas of ecclesiastical responsibility.

The hierarchy also moved slowly and cautiously, not enthusiastically, in promotion of lay
initiatives for social and labor reforms.

The Catholic laity, by tradition and reputation, was perceived as an inferior
component to the Church. For centuries, the manifestation was of two classes: those
who operated the church, decided doctrine, administered the sacraments and preached:
the clergy. The other class, the lay members of the Church, did not attain that status and
therefore did not have significant duties or important ministerial responsibilities.

However, America’s lay Catholics evolved into a contradiction to that tradition and
worked to formulate a response to the clergy and to be a viable alternative to the Social
Gospel movement. This could only occur once American Catholics developed their own

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p. 83.
388 Ibid., p. 97.
acknowledges in its document on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, that the laity contribute equally “with regard
to the dignity and the activity which they share in the building up of the body of Christ.” There is to be a
collaboration of ministry among pastors and the “other faithful.” Austin Flannery, O.P. ed., *The Basic
social reform movement.

The American Church, in the initial years of the twentieth century, wished to move beyond the incidental consequences of *Testem Benevolentiae* through active cooperation within the universal Church. Catholic thought, in both America and Europe, was captured within a legalistic and jurisdictional concept of Church that maintained a defensive attitude toward the modern world. With a strengthening capitalist economy, the preferential option for liberal and conservative Catholics, was to maintain a feeble organized labor. Consequently, lay and clerical leaders in the United States offered praise for the doctrines of *Rerum Novarum* but were unable to fully appreciate the document’s content as a source for change. This happened because Catholics were devoid of the intellectual tools and methodology for implementing those concepts.

But the social and labor dilemma was not just an American phenomenon. Labor troubles and the corresponding social issues were a trans-Atlantic reality. On both sides of the Atlantic a professional class of Catholics matured aware of the urban industrial squalor and the struggles of labor. To some extent, most American Catholics were already integrated into the issues of social injustice and industrial problems based on an empirical encounter not an intellectual perspective.

Catholic lay men and women had a social vision where religious and social needs coincided. Their premise was that Catholics can assimilate into a larger humanitarian mainstream of trans-Atlantic society that will have a moral Catholic foundation in a

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predominantly Protestant world. Accordingly, the laity re-emerged to be an independent political, spiritual and social voice for the marginalized and the laborer. But due to the disorder from the Americanism crisis, the intellectual formation of American Catholicism was not located in the lay congregations of the parish but resided with the directors of the seminaries.

There was some movement towards a Progressive era style restructuring in politics, science and social reform but this represented the minority of American Catholic thought. Catholics were not prominent in Progressive reform movements and only a negligible number of clergymen contributed to social reform. Drastic action and thought were necessary to move American Catholics to address the specific issues of labor and society but these efforts were impeded as the Church in the United States still functioned as a subaltern to the Vatican.

**Ambivalence Towards the Worker**

With the words “itaque a iursdictione Congregationis de Propaganda Fide exemptas” in the Apostolic letter *Sapienti Consilio* (On the Roman Curia), the American Catholic Church reached sacerdotal maturity on June 29, 1908. Pius X decreed that Catholics in the United States were no longer “residents” of a mission territory. The change in jurisdictional status did not initiate any modifications or

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397 “Therefore exempt from the jurisdiction of the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith”
adjustments to the internal structure or operations of the American church.\textsuperscript{399} It was however, a tacit reward for ultimately adhering to the traditions of the universal Church. This improved position created a sense of permanency for an American Catholic hierarchy that became somewhat tentative and unobtrusive due to the repercussions of the Americanism controversy.

Most of America’s Catholic magisterium, in the initial years of the new century, tolerated the developments of worker movements and unions. They had to: this was the heritage tendered to them by \textit{Rerum Novarum}. American Catholics now constituted majorities in many locals and represented forty percent of the leadership in industrial unions.\textsuperscript{400} If the hierarchy withheld support for organized labor this ultimately could erode spiritual, cultural and economic ties to the laity.

Rapid industrial change, along with economic fluctuations and political deference to industrial capitalists, widened the gap between the workers and capitalists.\textsuperscript{401} Contingent on labor remaining religiously neutral and anti-socialist, the Catholic clergy then were ostensibly dispassionate toward their cause. Only when violence erupted or the specter of socialism loomed did the clergy voice concern for the working class.\textsuperscript{402}

In the pre-World War I years, the social concerns of the Catholic clergy initially focused not on the worker problem but on the establishment of social welfare agencies. The influx of immigrants required Church leaders to establish social service organizations and charitable institutions under Catholic auspices. This was due,
partially, to an improved socially conscious awareness among Catholic leaders who recognized that the overwhelming majority of immigrants were Catholics. More significantly, their efforts were meant to obstruct competition by Protestants and Progressives in their desire to create corresponding secular organizations to alleviate social ills.\textsuperscript{403}

\textit{American Catholics and Ethnic Social Programs}

During this time diverse American Catholic ethnic groups were also involved in social welfare programs. Extensive lay activity originated with German Americans in the \textit{Central Verein} in the 1850’s and later in the 1870’s with Irish Americans and their Irish National Benevolent Union. But the era of the “new immigration” increased the entrance of other nationalities and they pursued the natural instinct to organize social agencies and associations within their own ethnic groups. Their purpose was to educate and assimilate the “foreigners” into mainstream American culture.\textsuperscript{404}

Consequently from 1901 to 1919 middle class lay Catholics, of various ethnic origins, consolidated and formed the American Federation of Catholic Societies. Operating at a national level, the Federation’s goal was to build a Christian America on Catholic principles.\textsuperscript{405} Eventually, the Federation modified its social reform program to concentrate on the labor issue.\textsuperscript{406} The influx of Catholic immigrants that swelled the Church’s growth in the New World concluded with the war in Europe and further decreased by restrictive immigration legislation in the 1920’s. The era of the immigrant

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\textsuperscript{403} O’Brien, \textit{American Catholics and Social Reform}, p. 33-34.
\textsuperscript{405} Dolan, \textit{The American Catholic Experience}, p. 341.
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church ends.\textsuperscript{407} Now, with superior numbers, the laity emerged as the dominant structure within the American Catholic church.

\textit{Catholics as Equals}

The First World War and its aftermath, occupied a crucial role in the formation of the American Catholic church, for both the laity and the clergy. Many Catholics joined the armed forces and a majority supported the Allied powers.\textsuperscript{408} Catholics who fought in the war now believed that their contributions obligated the nation to recognize Catholics as equals and truly integrated Americans.\textsuperscript{409} This sense of entitlement mutated into a consciousness of empowerment for the Catholic laity as they represented the Church in public forums unprecedented for its time.\textsuperscript{410}

The Catholic laity, in the post-war years of the 1920’s, exhibited a self-confidence of what they could offer to the Church and society. The War helps mute the ethnic separatism of many immigrant Catholics and deepened their American Catholic patriotism. This, and the laity’s improving status as a middle class entity, encouraged many to be more militant and vocal.\textsuperscript{411}

To the clergy and hierarchy, the laity were a financial source for the increase in parish building construction. The growth of parishes, parochial schools and confraternities enabled the laity to be an influential voice in each diocese. However, they

\textsuperscript{407} Hennesey, \textit{American Catholics}, p. 220.
\textsuperscript{408} Ibid., p. 225. The exceptions to this are the Irish immigrants who despise the British and view a defeated England as an opportunity for an independent Ireland. German-Americans support the Central Powers exhibiting ethnic pride over religion but American hysteria against Germany eventually suppresses their nationalism.
\textsuperscript{410} Hennesey, \textit{American Catholics}, p. 228. An prominent example where American Catholics openly profess their faith is at the Eucharistic Congress held at Soldier Field in Chicago in 1926.
did not necessarily speak with a commanding tone in Church affairs. The laity were more firmly entrenched in the civic and political arena. America’s Catholics viewed the 1920’s as their opportunity to define Catholic culture. This reached its zenith with the nomination of Catholic Al Smith for President in 1928.

As Catholic socio-economic ascendancy intensified many believe that they were now fully Americanized in a pluralistic society and wanted to be acknowledged. The hierarchy recognized that the laity were an integral part of mainstream American culture and were a potential force that could shape the Church’s future. The laity’s mission, categorized as “religio-civic action” by Catholic theologian John Courtney Murray, is to the temporal order and society.

These accomplishments enhanced the role of the Catholic laity moving them onto parity with the clergy. The laity were no longer amateurs but activists who took their rightful place with ecclesial representatives in social justice and labor reform matters. But the American hierarchy were not prepared to function in a collaborative partnership with the laity in the administration of the Church.

**The Hierarchy Solidifies Their Power**

A significant development was how the magisterium, equally ardent for complete assimilation, proceeded to develop policies and programs to efface the lingering resentments from the decades old Americanism controversy. The prelates and clergy, anxious to demonstrate American Catholic patriotism, inosculated themselves to President Wilson in his campaign to “make the world safe for democracy.”

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the hierarchy formed the National Catholic War Council (NCWC) in 1917 to coordinated Catholic efforts in support of the war and the military through sponsorship of Liberty Bond rallies and numerous relief efforts. The NCWC was organized by the clergy and bishops to operate as a national and united group of the hierarchy to promote Catholic causes. It was the first united organization of the American hierarchy.

The bishops, in order to expedite their own works through the NCWC, expropriated the efforts of the Catholic lay group the Knights of Columbus. In addition to their other spiritual and temporal works of mercy, the Knights were a Federally approved service agency for Catholic soldiers. The Knights performed the bulk of the work yet encountered resistance by the prelates because the Knights, as a lay association, were suitably organized and well funded. This lay group initiated service and relief work not the clergy. However, after the influential intervention of Cardinal Gibbons, the Knights of Columbus “voluntarily” accepted a subservient role. This maneuver by the magisterium, maintained clerical efforts to solidify power and authority over the laity.

Viewing the post-war years as an era for social and labor justice and as an opportunity to transform society, the bishops reconstituted the War Council into the National Catholic Welfare Conference. Pope Benedict XV encouraged this

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416 Carey, Catholics in America, p. 75.
418 Chester Gillis, Roman Catholicism in America, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 69. Officially, the Knights of Columbus “collaborated independently” with the National Catholic War Conference at this time and were lauded for their efforts by the prelates. See Maurice Francis Egan and John Kennedy, The Knights of Columbus in Peace and War, (New Haven: The Knights of Columbus, 1920), p. 222-232.
419 The NCWC’s purpose is to serve as a clearinghouse and disseminate information about the official
organization to be a permanent adjunct of the national episcopate that could apply
Christian principles to the issues of labor and education. This was also an opportunity for
the American bishops to maintain their position of singular authority over local Church
affairs. The prelates established five departments (Laws and Legislation, Education,
Social Action, Lay Organizations and Publicity, Press and Literature) to implement their
policies. The Social Action Department retained strategic power as it was responsible for
the education of all Catholics and non-Catholics in the Church’s teachings on social
justice matters.\footnote{O’Brien, American Catholics and Social Reform, p. 40 and Perko, Catholic & American. A Popular History, p. 228.}

Not all of the hierarchy supported this organization. Boston’s Cardinal William
O’Connell regarded the organization as a continuation of the Americanism controversy
that Rome condemned. Other bishops refused to sustain it financially or considered it as a
provocation to their authority. The effectiveness of the NCWC’s programs were solely
dependent upon the unity of the bishops and without ecclesiastical support, any crusade
for social and labor justice was not feasible.\footnote{Joseph Mc Shane, “Sufficiently Radical”: Catholicism, Progressivism and the Bishops’ Program of 1919, (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1986), p. 182.}

However, the majority discovered that the Conference’s headquarters were
located in Washington which offered them an unprecedented degree of exposure. This
enabled the Catholic magisterium to speak as a national body and to be heard in the civic
debate by both the public and the politicians.\footnote{Gillis, Roman Catholicism in America, p. 70-71. When the Pope Benedict died in 1922 the NCWC was temporarily suspended. Cleveland’s new Bishop, Joseph Schrembs, travelled to Rome and successfully lobbied for its reinstatement.} The bishops were now resolute to fully
utilize this new arrangement and participate in the new post-war sensation of American
achievement on the world stage.\textsuperscript{423}

\textit{The Bishops’ Program of Social Reconstruction}

The hierarchy’s defining moment at this time was the institutional commitment to social action outlined in their 1919 pastoral letter titled the “Bishops’ Program of Social Reconstruction.” For most Americans, the social and economic problems of the post war years accompanied the country’s development as an urban industrialized nation. American laborers were under duress and the middle-class was apprehensive of both corporate power and organized labor.\textsuperscript{424}

The Catholic prelates formulated a comprehensive plan to scrutinize these social concerns following the War. Consequently, to accentuate a unified Catholic presence, the bishops devised a strategy for an America that was transformed through a program of social reconstruction. This, they believed, would contribute to the economic stability of the nation. The Catholic bishops, not reactionary in nature, wanted to confine their model of change to a capitalist system that contained a few reasonable reforms to be achieved in a short period with ultimate fundamental reforms set for distant completion date.\textsuperscript{425}

Their plan was not particularly novel in 1919. Moreover, the hierarchy aroused the sentiment of Progressive Era Americans who felt that institutions and programs required change.\textsuperscript{426} The prelates reviewed similar concepts from the British Labor Party, British Quaker employers, the American Federation of Labor and executives from the

\textsuperscript{423} Mc Shane, “Sufficiently Radical,” p. 89.
\textsuperscript{424} Ekirch, Progressivism In America, p. 9.
United States Chamber of Commerce. But it was the idealistic writings of Father John Ryan that became the basis of this innovative American Catholic document. This ecclesiastical proposal was not official doctrine of the magisterium. Its purpose was to be a non-binding educational directive. The bishops wanted an enculturation of Christian social ethical principles in an American setting. The 1919 Program of Social Reconstruction became then a Catholic counterpart to the demands put forward in the Progressive Era by the Social Gospel Movement. This was an unintended American Catholic response to the Progressives, the Social Gospel and the Protestants. It was also an implicit rejoinder to the Russian Revolution and the troublesome labor conditions in the United States.

**Father John Ryan and a Living Wage**

The architect of the Bishops’ Program, Father John A. Ryan, inherited his father’s distaste for monopolies and the economic policies of capitalists and corporations. As a seminary student in the late 1890’s, Ryan encountered Rerum Novarum which validated his own views on the regulation of industry by the state. Fr. Ryan’s avocation became the adaptation of Rerum’s principles to the American economic environment. His 1906 dissertation, *A Living Wage, It’s Ethical and Economic Aspects*, was the foundation for his additional work in 1918 on social reconstruction.

Ryan, a professor of moral theology at Catholic University in 1919, was petitioned by Father John O’Grady, a secretary on the Reconstruction Committee of the

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NCWC, to refine and finish his monograph on social reconstruction. Ryan devoted his academic life as an advocate for a living wage. Melding the doctrines of *Rerum Novarum* with the American ideas of democracy and republicanism, Ryan developed not only his own personal social philosophy but advanced it as a major factor to shape American Catholic social identity. The genius of Ryan’s work was his ability to merge Catholic social thought with American reform programs.

Written by Ryan and issued in February 1919, the American bishops proposed “a practical and moderate program” of those “reforms that are to be desirable and also obtainable within a reasonable time and to a few general principles which should be a guide to more distant developments.” The magisterium considered this an “imperative call to action … for translating our faith into works.” There were several immediate noteworthy goals to be implemented: continuation of the National War Labor Board to mediate labor disputes; public housing for the urban poor; a national employment service; progressive taxation; regulation of monopolies and government control of utilities. The document unintentionally advanced a transition in social thought toward the future legislation of the New Deal.

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431 Ibid., p. 52.
436 A crucial part of the New Deal legislation was the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) of 1933. Sections of the law mirrored the Bishops’ 1919 program for social reconstruction in many areas. Under section 7(a), employees had the right to organize and to collective bargaining without employer interference. Three years later Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act with three broad objectives: the establishment of a minimum wage; regulate the number of hours worked per individual per week and the elimination of child labor.
American Catholic Social Reform and the 1919 Program

The key agenda of the Bishop’s Program focused on the worker. Like Rerum, the American bishops insisted on “the establishment of wage rates that will be at least sufficient for the decent maintenance of a family.” The creation of a minimum wage was for male workers and “adequate to the decent individual support of female workers.” Wages were to be “high enough” for the possibility to generate savings “to protect the worker and his family against sickness, accidents, invalidity and old age.”

The prelates stipulated that a living wage should prevail with no reduction. A living wage represented “only a minimum of justice” according to the document. The true effect of a living wage was a “guarantee of a continuous and general operation of industrial establishments” and an “instrument of prosperity for labor and capital alike.”

The American Catholic Church viewed this as a policy of justice and “sound economics” applicable to all workers regardless of gender.

The American hierarchy directed that the State should “make comprehensive provision for insurance against illness, invalidity, unemployment and old age.” Funding for this social insurance of workers’ compensation and unemployment benefits, “should be raised by a levy on industry.” While this social insurance was to be administered by the State, it was not to interfere with the “individual freedom of the worker and his family.”

The bishops were walking a new path of social reform that supported men, women and children in the work place. The Church succinctly defended the worker through the “recognition of the right of labor to organize and to deal with employers

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437 Ibid., p. 22-23.
438 Ibid., p. 20
through its chosen representatives.” The bishops also advocated for women in the work
place stipulating that “those women who are engaged at the same tasks as men should
receive equal pay for equal amounts and qualities of work.” The prelates were in
agreement with “public opinion in the majority of the States… against the continuous
employment of children.” The hierarchy reaffirmed that legislation to abolish child
labor must not become stagnant and to extend laws that strengthened and enforce “safety
and sanitation in work places.”

The long term objectives continued the activist nature of the pastoral letter. The
bishops suggested the formation of workers’ cooperatives and industrial realignment into
“co-partnerships.” This allowed “workers to own and manage the industries themselves
and… exercise a reasonable share in the management.” These collaborative
partnerships of labor and management authorized workers to have an equal voice in the
setting of wages, working conditions and industrial management.

But the “instruments of production will still be owned by individuals not by the
State.” The Church acknowledged that the “employer has a right to get a reasonable
living out of his business.” The prelates extolled the virtues of Rerum Novarum and
insisted that “the laborer is a human being not merely an instrument of production and
that the laborer’s right to a decent livelihood is the first moral charge upon industry.”

Ryan and the hierarchy did not propose the elimination of capitalism in exchange

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439 Ibid., p. 23.
440 Ibid., p. 18.
442 Ibid., p. 25.
443 Ibid., p. 28.
444 Mich, Catholic Social Teaching and Movements, p. 55-56; and Ryan, Social Reconstruction
   p. 217-238.
445 Mooney, Bishops’ Program, p. 28.
446 Ibid., p. 30.
for socialism. Ryan in fact condemned socialism as a social and economic movement that was hostile to religion, individual rights and human welfare.\footnote{John Ryan, D.D., \textit{The Church and Socialism and Other Essays}. (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1919), p. 14.} As an economic technique he argued that it was infused with limitations.\footnote{Michael Novak, \textit{The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism}, (New York: Touchstone, 1982), p. 252-253.} Ryan emphasized that the “rights of property are not unlimited, there is nothing in Catholic doctrine to support any such theory. The right of property is the right to use, not the right of ownership.”\footnote{Ryan, \textit{Social Reconstruction}, p. 208.} Yet Ryan stressed individual rights even as he criticized individualism. This apparent paradox echoed the merging of Catholic and American traditions in his thought, that is, his belief that Catholic teaching brings American ideals of freedom and equality into full realization.\footnote{Murphy, “An ‘Indestructible Right’,” p. 71.}

The Bishops’ Program, and Father Ryan, preached that industrial reform was a necessary factor in the alleviation of poverty and pauperism for the American worker.\footnote{Aaron I. Abell, “Monsignor John A. Ryan: An Historical Appreciation.” \textit{The Review of Politics}, Vol. 8, No. 1, January 1946, p. 131.} The document demanded not only “universal living wages” but necessitated industry “directly or indirectly to a more just distribution of wealth in the interest of the laborer.”\footnote{Mooney, \textit{Bishops’ Program}, p. 28.} The actuality for Ryan was that the number of bishops who backed his living wage agenda for social reform could be counted on one finger.\footnote{Ward, “The Church in America”, in \textit{The American Apostolate}, p. 19-20.  This is an issue he often}

The American Catholic Church, at the end of the war, sought a middle ground as an alternative to the social injustices of capitalism and the secularism of socialism. The proposals in the Bishops’ Program were intended to be that answer. Reaction to the document polarized both Catholics and non-Catholics. Historian Jay Dolan states that
the public’s response is “very favorable” with many in amazement at how the Catholic hierarchy is socially progressive. Protestants and labor leaders reacted positively to the plan. Radical elements in the labor movement praised the pastoral letter particularly the justification of the “worker in controlling the industrial process and distribution of the product.”

The document’s critics, such as the National Association of Manufacturers, attacked it as “partisan, pro-labor union, socialist propaganda under the official insignia of the Roman Catholic Church.” Corporations regarded it as a plot by the Catholic Church to introduce extremism and socialism into the nation. Anti-Catholic nativists revived fears, even among Catholics, of a “Bolshevik menace and Red Scare” at home due to the revolutionary concepts of the prelates.

**Father Peter Dietz and Labor Education**

During the initial two decades of the twentieth century, American Catholics were searching for the best method to implement *Rerum Novarum*. Father Ryan, and the Bishops’ Program for Social Reconstruction, focused on the intellectual foundations of the encyclical as transferable to the economic system and resultant labor problems. Concurrently, Father Peter Dietz, born in New York and ministering in Cleveland and other parts of Ohio, functioned from a position of collaboration with organized labor to resolve the workers’ problem.

He firmly believed, more so than other priests of his era, that strong unions bring

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456 Mc Shane, “*Sufficiently Radical*, p. 209.
social justice and prevent the development of socialism.\textsuperscript{458} Social and labor progress for him, was realized not just through prayer but through active participation and education of the worker and laity. Dietz attempted to establish a Catholic social movement that embraced the laity and proposed education to train workers and correct social injustice.

His most momentous accomplishment, for transforming \textit{Rerum Novarum} into daily action, came through the formation of the Militia of Christ. He regarded it as a “Catholic auxiliary” to the trade union movement and the nucleus for Catholic trade union thought.\textsuperscript{459} Dietz realized that half the membership, and the majority of the leadership, of the American Federation of Labor was Catholic. His mission was to incorporate Catholic principles and doctrine into the labor movement.\textsuperscript{460} The priest’s fundamental goal was to build social education and social action groups of lay Catholics and unionized Catholic workers through “labor schools and colleges.”\textsuperscript{461} However, his future plans failed to materialize due to a lack of funds and a lack of interest by Catholic clergy.\textsuperscript{462}

The American Catholic Church demonstrated how it was shaping its American identity. The works of Irish American Fr. Ryan centered on the laboring classes not a specific immigrant culture. This was equally true of Fr. Dietz who was not absorbed in the preservation of the cultural identity of German American Catholics or their national

\textsuperscript{462} David Saposs and Aaron Abell viewed the Militia of Christ and Fr. Dietz as bulwarks in the establishment of Catholics in the labor movement. Henry Browne disputes this assertion and considered the Militia and Dietz as nothing more than a “one man paper show.” Refer to Marc Karson, “Catholic Anti-Socialism”, p. 164-180 and Henry Browne, “Comment”, p.186 in Laslett and Lipsett, eds. \textit{Failure of a Dream}. Also, David J. Saposs, “The Catholic Church and the Labor Movement,” \textit{The Modern Monthly},
benevolent association known as the Central Verein. Both priests toiled to facilitate a social liberalism within the American Catholic church but they were a minority.

The actuality of American Catholicism, between the two great social encyclicals, was a church vested in the cope of paternalism and elitism. The clergy seldom recognized or protested against social and labor injustices. When they did so, it was only to pacify parishioners and alleviate parochial discontent or to protect workers from themselves. Priests such as Ryan and Dietz were alienated in their efforts to affect social change that must filter down into the labor movement. They believed that the Church was obligated to be entwined in the labor movement. For their struggles they were perceived as “semi-socialists.”

The achievement of these two priest was that they definitively melded religion, that being Catholicism, to the labor movement. Ryan insisted that the social question was in great part a religious question. The hierarchy, unable to ignore the words and works of these priests, responded with their own agenda. Yet these clerics, more so than the hierarchy, found ways to implement the doctrines of Rerum and apply them directly to the labor and social struggles of American society. Effectually, their actions not only predicted the future course of American Catholic social engagement but became reality in the following years.

May-June 1933, Vol. 7.
465 O’Brien, George G. Higgins and the Quest for Worker Justice, p. 49. Dietz was forced to leave his ministry in Cincinnati due to pressure by business interests on Archbishop Moeller who requested he leave the diocese.
467 O’Brien, George G. Higgins and the Quest for Worker Justice, p. 49. Dietz’s labor schools anticipated the labor colleges by twenty years and the ACTU’s objectives were similar to those of the Militia of Christ.
With the commencement of the 1930’s, tinged by European political events and the dominant American economic engine, Catholics prepared to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. Another compelling social encyclical, that advocated for worker’s rights, was proclaimed. *Quadragesimo Anno* became a clarion call to enact Leo’s prescriptions for social and economic justice through greater action by the laity. The document stipulated not only justice but a reconstruction of the social order.\(^{468}\) This encyclical was as radical as any politically charged treatise in the intervening hundred years. It was Pius XI’s social and labor encyclical that irrevocably catapulted American Catholicism to a position long championed by the laity.

Chapter 5

*Quadragesimo Anno*

The Laity Empowered, The Church Militant

Like *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Pius XI and his monumental encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno* originated from the circumstances of European Catholicism with implications that responded to the ideological and economic diversity of that time. It revealed the social and political turmoil of that era and the Vatican’s reply to those conditions. In the four decades since Leo’s apostolic letter, the world witnessed a global war, the rise of American imperialism, industrial capitalism and the development of extremist forms of political systems namely Communism and Fascism.

The religious and secular conditions of the world created many challenges for Pius XI. This particular papal document mirrored those circumstances. The Encyclical’s subtext was consistent with New World and Old World valuations of the Catholic tradition. But an examination of the man and his times provides an unambiguous comprehension of Pius’ pontificate and an appreciation of his encyclicals.

Europe, prior to the First World War, experienced prosperity and economic growth. Industrial capitalists and workers in Germany, France and Italy benefited from the successes of the industrial age. Accordingly, European laborers intensified their demands for better conditions and wages. As they increasingly acquired the right to vote, workers predominately favored Marxist or other socialist brand candidates that echoed their sentiments. This influence of modern thought in politics and social issues was
countered by the Church’s support of anti-socialist Catholic candidates.469

The European pattern of interacting with the laboring class differed greatly from the American approach. Most of the Old World clergy were from the middle class and had minimal contact with the emerging industrial urban centers or even with the working classes. The Church made minimal effort to build new churches in these areas or even attempted to understand the problems of the proletariat. Consequently, religious influence on European workers was absent and socialism moved in to fill the void.470

With the conclusion of the “war to end all wars,” a surfeit of anxiety placed the Old World into a miasma of despair. The psychological trauma of twenty million Europeans killed on native soil resulted in post-war social unrest, economic disorganization, hatred between the classes and political instability.471 The threats of communism and socialism, as viable functioning political institutions as witnessed in Russia, was authentic. Juxtaposed to this, was the menace of ultra-conservative fascism further fracturing the European body politic. Within this backdrop of the post-war era, the election of a new pontiff signaled the hope for a restoration of society and social reform. If change was to come should it be social or spiritual and in what format? Who ultimately would lead any reconstruction of the social order? The clergy or the laity?

A Pope for the Twentieth Century

On May 31, 1857, in the diminutive industrial village of Desio ten miles from Milan, the future Pope Pius XI, Ambrose Damien Achilles Ratti, was born. The fourth of five children, he entered the minor seminary at the age of ten, matriculated to the major seminary in Milan and eventually to the Gregorian in Rome where he was ordained a priest on December 20, 1879. From his childhood through passage into adulthood, Ratti experienced the consequences of the Prussian wars and the turbulence of the unification of the Italian peninsula. Italy was finally united and the Roman Question, that is the vexing status of the Vatican, was born from these complexities. The course of Ratti’s future papacy was ultimately shaped by these geo-political events.

Noted for his scholarly endeavors, Ratti was appointed to the Ambrosian Library in Milan and remained there for thirty years. The future pope also ministered to the people of Milan as chaplain to the German colony in the city, taught catechism to poor children and worked with the laity in organized charitable associations. His pastoral work and contacts with the worker and the poor resonated throughout his encyclicals in his mission to remake Christianity in the twentieth century.

Prior to the outbreak of the First World War, Ratti now a monsignor, was promoted to Papal Librarian of the Vatican. Due to his knowledge of history and European nations, Pope Benedict XV often sought the Monsignor’s advice on international policy. During these discussions, Benedict was subtly training Ratti in the

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473 Philip Hughes, *Pope Pius the Eleventh*, (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1937), p. 47. The Prussians fought two noteworthy wars: Austro-Prussian (1866) and Franco-Prussian (1870); both impacted the secular and religious culture of Europe for successive generations.
methods and strategies of international papal diplomacy.\textsuperscript{476} From these meetings and to the consternation of many, the Pope felt confident to utilize Ratti’s skills and appointed him to the reconstituted nation-state of Poland in 1918 as an “Apostolic Visitor” and then later as Papal Nuncio.

In Poland he was embroiled in political and religious conflicts between the Poles and Germans.\textsuperscript{477} As Nuncio, Ratti gained a reputation for courage and stubbornness. Like his predecessor, Archbishop Pecci (Leo XIII) and the Belgium affair, prominent clerics petitioned Rome for his removal from this post. In 1921, Ratti was promoted to Cardinal of Milan.\textsuperscript{478}

Five months after his installation, a Conclave convened to find a successor to Benedict XV. This papal election continued the Vatican tradition of intrigue and strategy as two groups emerged to campaign for their candidate. These parties manifested the contemporary ideology of society and religion to determine the future course of the Catholic Church. Having experienced the horrors of war and the speculation of uncertain political ideologies, should the Church move into the modern world with all its complexities or retreat to the stability and potency of its tradition?

On the fourth day of voting, February 6, 1922, Cardinal Ratti, the bespectacled librarian turned diplomat, emerged as the compromise successor.\textsuperscript{479} But his selection was not essentially a conciliation to liberal or conservative factions. Pope Pius XI

\textsuperscript{479} He set a modern course for his Pontificate and diverged from tradition by delivering the initial Papal blessing from the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica. This simple innocuous act, demonstrated Pius’ determination to have the Church act not just locally but to be a protagonist throughout the world. Sugrue,
proved his capability in making difficult uncompromising decisions as a Nuncio. His expertise proved invaluable for the universal Church in the 1920’s and 1930’s in any attempts to open bridges between the religious and secular worlds as the Church needed to maneuver among the “isms”: modernism, socialism and communism.\footnote{Popes in the Modern World, p. 176.}

\textit{Mussolini, Fascists and the Vatican}

The post-war world of the 1920’s was a dichotomy of experiences. The psychosis and general restlessness generated by the distress of the Great War was offset by economic expansion. Political uncertainty transformed into deviant political power. Pius disdained the deception of partisan politics and the mistrust brought about by jingoism and its hatred. On a mission to establish peace and mitigate the potential for war, the Pope ventured to open diplomatic relations with many nations and accommodations with others.\footnote{Coppa, Politics and the Papacy in the Modern World, p. 105.}

These efforts initiated talks between Mussolini’s Fascist government and the Vatican in 1923 over the political status of Vatican City. Mussolini wanted better relations with the Holy See to gain Church support for his programs.\footnote{Denis Mack Smith, Italy, A Modern History, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959), p. 440 and Riccards, Vicars of Christ, p. 108-111.} After some contentious negotiations, the Lateran Treaty was finalized in February 1929 establishing the Vatican City State. Pius asserted that the Church could reconcile itself with any just system of government but warned that popular democratic governments were most in danger of being overthrown.\footnote{Coppa, p. 105.} Some interpreted this as tacit support for Mussolini while...
factions within the Vatican and the Fascist Italian government were equally opposed to
the treaty.  

The Lateran Treaty settled the Roman Question with the establishment of the
Vatican City state and continued the papal heritage of the pontiff as both a spiritual and
temporal leader. Il Duce kept the Communists out of Italy as his oratory electrified the
masses. However, soon after the treaty was finalized, the Fascist government began
attacking the Italian lay group Catholic Action considering them as a political operative
of the Vatican.

**Pius’s Social Strategy for the Laity**

If a central theme predominated his pontificate it was the reconciliation and
restoration of institutions sacrosanct to Catholicism. Pius’s tripartite didactic on
education, the family and socio-economic matters became the nucleus of a modern
Catholic social agenda. It was his vision of how the laity could interact with the Church
in various apostolates. The Pope issued two noteworthy yet forgotten encyclicals prior
to *Quadragesimo* that demonstrated his zeal to re-establish Christianity and re-affirm the
laity in the modern world. These papal documents were also diaphanous criticisms of
fascist Italy’s moral decay.

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484 In the United States, the Lateran Concordat is debated among Catholics and non-Catholics. Father
James Gillis editor of *Catholic World*, defends the Vatican and insists that the Church did not reconcile
itself to Fascism. The defensive posture by American clerics appears ineffectual to many American
Catholics who, in the late 1920’s and early 1930’s, prefer Mussolini’s authoritarian methods over the
liberalism of the late 19th Century. John P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism. The View From America*,

485 This movement evolved in the late 19th Century as a Catholic cultural and political entity to aid the
Vatican in its struggle with the Italian state and unification. *Catholic Action* was to be strictly religious but
in the initial decades of the 20th Century, it became affiliated with the Christian Democratic Party and was
part political group and part religious association. For further treatment see: D.J. Geaney, “Catholic
2003), p. 275-278 and Bruce Duncan, *The Church’s Social Teaching: From Rerum Novarum to 1931*,

486 The term apostolate refers to various types of ministries or religious acts.
Reppresentanti in terra (On the Christian Education of Youth, 1929) addressed the education standards of youth and upheld the patriarchal model of family. Pius declared that the Church, not the State, was the dominant influence on education. A year later, his encyclical Casti connubial (Christian Marriage), was a dogmatic reaffirmation of the sacrament of marriage and the value of the laity in perpetuating the sacredness of this union. Pius described this not as a private matter but an act that permeates the wider society.\footnote{Joe Holland, Modern Catholic Social Teaching. The Popes Confront the Industrial Age 1740-1958, (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), p. 251-253.} Pius felt that the role of the laity can be enhanced in the reconstruction or re-Christianization of society. This included the political and economic sectors of public culture.\footnote{Paul Misner, “Catholic Labor and Catholic Action: The Italian Context of Quadragesimo Anno,” Catholic Historical Review, Vol. 90, No. 4, October 2004, p. 657} He judged the best method to accomplish this was through the Catholic Action organization. The laity were to be an extension of the priest; it was the “participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy.”\footnote{Anderson, Between Two Wars. The Story of Pius XI, p. 75. Some historian speculate that Mussolini attacked the group because of their special relationship to Pius.} Pius was aware that society and culture appeared to be in a state of cynicism and malaise about the future. The Pope was cognizant of the massive numbers of unemployed and their plight. He knew that if the laity continued under the stress of attacks upon the family, marriage, education and labor this could create havoc and even class warfare.\footnote{Sugrue, Popes in the Modern World, p. 187-189.} Pius decided that in this milieu only the Church can properly resolve society’s ills. Pius contemplated an action plan for social reconstruction. His agenda could reverse this despair and establish a unity of purpose. His plan was to move the Church from a defensive posture to a militant reformist one.\footnote{In both France and Germany Catholic thought shifts from a transformation of existing values to that of a reformist nature. O’Brien, American Catholics and Social Reform, p. 16.} Within this design, Pius intended
to build a system that required the laity to be proactive in the composition of organized labor with the cooperation of the State.

**Pius’ Intentions**

Amid the throes of a worldwide economic depression and the spread of totalitarian regimes, the fortieth anniversary of Leo XIII’s revolutionary apostolic letter, *Rerum Novarum*, loomed. In those forty years between the social encyclicals, the Catholic Church encountered profound changes in its expression of social principles and even in the composition of the social question. To commemorate this event, and to present his program for social reconstruction, Pius XI issued a most activist encyclical: *Quadragesimo Anno*.

The genesis of the document originated from two conditions in Europe, particularly in Italy, that affected the Pontiff: labor and the laity. In the intricacies of a fascist and materialist society, this encyclical was his answer to the labor turmoil infected by the worldwide Depression and a call to empower the laity. Like *Rerum*, *Quadragesimo Anno*’s intended audience was the Old World. However Americans considered it from a different posture.

European labor unions were more of a social and political organization unlike those in the United States. From the end of the First World War to the onset of the Depression, laborers and their unions in Europe endured mercurial episodes of wage fluctuations and control. prohibition of unions was not uncommon and when this occurred the consequences reverberated across a continent.492

Fascist governments in Italy and Germany replaced unions with state controlled

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“corporations.”

Strikes and lockouts were banned. Throughout the continent, workers’ wages declined and they lost their ability to bargain for improved conditions and wages as the labor movement assumed a defensive posture. By 1931, democracy and trade unions were crushed by the Italian fascist state.

**The Encyclical’s European Economic Origins**

The seeds for the encyclical were planted by the Study Circle of Königswinter-on-the-Rhine who met in the 1920’s to discuss the Church’s role in the area of social reform. The study group, also known as the Königswinter Institute for Society and Economy, accommodated noteworthy German Catholic economists and sociologists such as Fr. Oswald von Nell-Breuning, S.J., Fr. Gustav Gundlach, S.J., Dr. Franz Mueller and others. They gathered to discuss comprehensive social reform, proposed legislative agendas on social policies and called for a fundamental reorganization of the social economy corresponding to corporatism.

Christian corporatism was a model of society that restructured the economy emphasizing vocational or occupational groups of trades and employers. In the 1920’s and 1930’s, the corporatist system was dominated by the Fascists who bound labor unions to the State and therefore created a laboring class subservient to bureaucrats. Pius XI was considered a conservative corporatist but he rejected the extremism of the

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495 Corrin, *Catholic Intellectuals*, p. 221.
497 Ibid., p. 117.
Fascists in their application of corporatism.  

The Königswinter Group was also influenced by the works of Fr. Heinrich Pesch, S.J. This German Jesuit economist (1854-1926) developed an economic system based on the principle of solidarity. This solidarist system was a vertically integrated economy that opposed individualistic capitalism and collective socialism. It as to be a “third way” as many theologians hoped this could be a middle ground between economic systems.

Pesch’s concept of the principle was the coexistence of human beings as persons. It was a reorganization of the development of human social life. Pesch’s principle interest was to relate economic activity to human interests. He contended that marriage, the family, private property and the state, as guardian of the legal order, constituted the “pillars of economic society.” The economic society involved reciprocal mutual cooperation at all levels from families to businesses to government which led to national unity. This concept of the economic society, that is, cooperation among all sections, was eventually weaved into the fabric of Pius’s encyclical.

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505 In this organic view of society and the market, harmonious cooperation and the interdependence of all segments of the people and the economy was required. Individual and group activity was to be subordinate to the common good of social prosperity and cooperation was considered a duty. Consequently, the individual and social nature of humans are safeguarded. See Charles E. Curran. American Catholic Social Ethics: Twentieth Century Approaches, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), p. 99.
Quadragesimo Anno: a Program for Social Reconstruction

Challenged more by the Socialist threat than was Leo, Pius pursued a middle position between Capitalism and Socialism. He viewed both as ineffectual in correcting the social and economic troubles of the early twentieth century. 506 The intention of the encyclical was to be that alternative to those economic systems that segregated the world into rich and poor and vitiated the role of the worker. This became a personal reply to the political ideologies of Socialism and Fascism, and to the prolix of their respective leaders, who denigrated the cultural values of marriage, family and education.

The Pontiff exercised his ecclesial authority as he walked a moral tightrope to uphold the Church’s distinct mission to support the worker in the modern world. The Pope detailed this mission for restoring the social order through a triad of principles: the principle of subsidiarity, the principle of occupational groups and the companion virtues of social justice and social charity. 507 These were the fundamental components to implement a reconstruction of the world inclusive of the laity, the clergy and the state. Pius’s encyclical was to reinvigorate Rerum Novarum and also offered an alternative to the political and economic systems of that time.

This Encyclical, like all papal pronouncements, was officially by that pope and Pius was no exception. Deciding to commemorate Rerum in 1930, Pius circumvented Vatican officials and contacted the Jesuit Superior General Fr. Vladimir Ledochowski, S.J. to appoint an expert in social and economic matters to draft the new document. The Pope was aware of European “study groups” and particularly the Study Circle of

and Mich, Catholic Social Teaching and Movements, p. 77.
Königswinter, with Fr. Nell-Breuning, S.J. as a prominent member. The clandestine assignment to commence drafting the encyclical was given to Nell-Breuning who was not permitted to discuss his work although it mirrors the thoughts of the Königswinter group.\textsuperscript{508}

Meeting the Pontiff only once, all summaries were handled through Fr. Ledochowski who returned the material to Nell-Breuning with the Pope’s corrections and annotations. The document was authored in secret to maintain its confidentiality. As the Pontiff was critical of Italian fascism competing with Catholicism for the hearts and minds of the people, he did not want Mussolini’s regime undermining Church authority.\textsuperscript{509}

After several months of editing, \textit{Quadragesimo Anno} was proclaimed on May 15, 1931. This Encyclical will address social reconstruction at a time when state dominance and the free movement of economic individualism were impediments to the social development. This lengthy and multifaceted document was constructed in five parts: introduction, benefits derived from \textit{Rerum Novarum}, the development of the Church’s social teaching, an analysis of the social problem and its remedy through Christian moral reform and the conclusion.

In the introduction, Pius offers a recapitulation of Leo’s social encyclical.\textsuperscript{510} He describes the context and scope of \textit{Rerum} and that by the end of the nineteenth century new economic and industrial developments divide the laboring class into two distinct groups: “One class, very small in number, was enjoying almost all the advantages which


\textsuperscript{509} Craig R. Prentiss \textit{Debating God’s Economy. Social Justice in America on the Eve of Vatican II}
modern inventions so abundantly provided; the other, embracing the huge multitude of working people, oppressed by wretched poverty, was vainly seeking escape from the straits wherein it stood.”

Pius views this economic disparity as “unjust” and that “men were without question sincerely seeking an immediate remedy.”

Pius, in the following sections, articulates the benefits of Leo’s Encyclical. His assessment is that three areas are supported by *Rerum*: the Church, the State and Employers and Workers. *Rerum*’s global inducement is to increase both ecclesial and legislative efforts to support the worker. The bishops and clergy devote themselves to the improvement of the workers’ soul and “helped to make them conscious of their true dignity.”

Civil authorities also embrace the teachings of the encyclical as “Catholic principles on the social question have, as a result, passed…into the legislative halls and also the courts of justice.” Additionally, Pius recognizes *Rerum* as a force majeure for workers to establish unions and associations, under the counsel of the Church, where “new and continuously expanding organizations in which workers’, craftsmen, farmers and employees… receive mutual help and support.”

Pius reaffirms Leo’s stance that the State must care for and protect its citizens:

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510 I consider the encyclical to be a “living document” and examine it in the present tense.
512 *QA*, 5-6, p. 220.
514 *QA*, 21, p. 225.
515 *QA*, 24, p. 226.
“The function of the rulers of the State, moreover, is to watch over the community and its parts but in protecting private individuals in their rights, chief consideration ought to be given to the weak and poor.”\textsuperscript{516} The Pope welcomes the “new branch of law” and requisite legislation that protects “life, health, family, homes, workshops, wages and labor hazards, everything which pertains to the condition of wage workers, with special concern for women and children.”\textsuperscript{517} Pius desires laws that more exemplify Catholic values but appreciates the new social legislation nonetheless.

The final section of \textit{Rerum} addresses the relationship of employers and workers. Leo’s encyclical is written to counter liberalism’s tendency to focus only on the individual. \textit{Rerum’s} mission is to champion workers’ rights to form associations. Ideally, these unions should be Catholic and organized according to their occupations but society’s concerns necessitate the formation of secular unions. This is permissible provided “these unions profess justice and equality and allow Catholic members full freedom to care for their own conscience and obey the laws of the Church.”\textsuperscript{518} Pius expresses regret that similar associations of “employers and managers of industry” do not fully materialize, as suggested by Leo, to better the workers’ conditions.\textsuperscript{519}

Pius proclaims \textit{Rerum} to be “the Magna Carta upon which all Christian activity in the social field ought to be based.” However in the course of the past forty years he acknowledges that \textit{Rerum} is now subject to various interpretations. The result is conflict among Catholics as some implement the social teachings while others discard them.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{516} QA, 25, p. 227.
\item \textsuperscript{517} QA, 28, p. 227.
\item \textsuperscript{518} QA, 35, p. 230.
\item \textsuperscript{519} QA, 38, p. 231.
\end{itemize}
Pius defines the context of *Quadragesimo Anno*; it is an amplification of Catholic social doctrine in a world where “new needs and changed conditions of our age have made necessary a more precise application of Leo’s teaching or even additions to it.”

**Church Authority on Social Matters: Property and Wealth**

Pius decrees that the Church has the authority to teach and speak about socio-economic matters because pontifical jurisdiction concerns itself “not only on the social order but economic activities themselves.” Economics and morality, for the Pope, are distinct but inextricably attached. This is all part of the moral law.

The Church intervenes not on technical matters but when temporal concerns obstruct moral or dogmatic issues. The Church has the right and duty to propose remedies to correct not just theological errors but moral wrongs. This transpires through the teaching authority of the Pope who utilizes the encyclical as a vehicle to announce this teaching to both Catholics and non-Catholics. Often however, the message contradicts the current convention.

The body of *Quadragesimo* is a contemporary interpretation and defense of Church social teaching based on *Rerum*. The first area is Ownership of the Right of Property. Pius admits that some Catholics “are at variance with one another concerning the true and exact mind of Leo” on this issue. The right to property comes from the Creator and it is both individual and social in nature. Pius assert that “denying the social and public aspect of ownership (the person) threatens to succumb to individualism.”

Additionally, by “rejecting or minimizing the private and individual character of

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this same right, one inevitably runs into collectivism.” To chose either, according to the Pope, one is “swept upon the shoals of moral, juridical and social modernism.” The right to property must be distinguished from its use and Pius endorses Leo’s application of commutative justice but warns that those who “restrict ownership” in fact “destroy it and are mistaken and in error.” This is construed as Pius’ subtle caution to the Fascists, and critics of the Lateran Treaty, to respect the rights of the Church in Italy.

The Pope culminates this section with an explicit direction to those with a “superfluous income.” The possessor of such wealth is obligated by the Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church to practice “almmsgiving, beneficence and munificence.” Pius, mindful of the Depression and lack of employment opportunities, obligates those entrepreneurs with investment income to create “gainful work” opportunities by “producing really useful goods.”

**Redistribution of Wealth as Social Justice**

The next area the encyclical attends to is Labor and Capital. Pius teaches that social harmony prevails when labor recognized capital’s right to a just profit and capital realizes labor’s right to a just wage. It is in this section that Pius declares that a redistribution of wealth is required to attain the common good of all and he introduces the term social justice: “To each, must be given his own share of goods and the distribution of created goods…between the few exceedingly rich and the unnumbered property-less and brought into conformity with the norms of the common good, that is,
social justice.”

Supporting the Workers

In the next segment, the “Uplifting of the Proletariat,” Pius reiterates Leo’s dictum that support of the worker is the paramount goal of social rehabilitation. Nell-Breuning, the encyclical’s “composer,” explains that the use of “proletarian” is not to convey the idea of a specific class but is a linguistic device. In later English translations the word is changed to “wage earner.” Its use is to imply that Socialists regarded workers as “property-less.” Pius wants to diminish the property-less status of workers through the just wage principle.

The Pope expresses satisfaction that the worst “pauperism” of the last century is alleviated as the “condition of the workers has been improved and made more equitable especially in the more civilized and wealthy countries.” However, the Pope expresses dismay at how global industrial capitalism, especially in Asia, has “enormously” increased the number of property-less poor workers whose “groans cry to God from the earth.” Pius maintains that the remedy to this situation is the “equitable distribution of the fruits of production among the workers.”

The Pope candidly offers a business solution to a moral crisis; if a worker is able to own property the worker can bear: “the burdens of family life, and the insecurities and uncertainties of earthly existence.” Pius, in persuasive fashion, proclaims that a content worker is a productive and secure person who will ensure the tranquility of

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529 QA, 58, p. 240.
530 Nell-Breuning, Reorganization of Social Economy, p. 150.
531 Ederer, Economics as if God Matters, p. 45.
532 QA, 59, p. 240.
534 QA, 61, p. 241.
society and “defend against agitators of revolution.”\textsuperscript{535}

\textit{A Just and Living Wage}

The Encyclical proceeds next to the portion on Just Wages and Salaries. Pius affirms Catholic teaching which does not reject wage contracts but compensation must be just and fair. The Pope’s intention is for a mutual relationship between labor and capital. He advises that wage contracts should be modified into a partnership contract so that “workers and other employees thus become sharers in ownership or management or participate in some fashion in the profits received.”\textsuperscript{536} Labor, like property ownership, contains both an individual and social aspect. Labor is only productive when there is a just collaboration between workers and management within society.\textsuperscript{537} This is an example of the potent influence of Pesch and the Königswinter Group on the composition of the document.

Pius reiterates Leo’s demand for a just and living wage: “the worker must be paid a wage sufficient to support him and his family.” If current economic conditions are devoid of a family wage then “social justice demands that changes be introduced as soon as possible.” Additionally, the Pope persists in his mission of support for the family through condemnation of child labor and asserts that mothers “should work primarily in the home or in its immediate vicinity.”\textsuperscript{538}

The Pontiff subliminally acknowledges the economic conditions and business realities of 1931. He accepts that in establishing a wage “the condition of the business must be taken into account” and that it is “unjust to demand excessive wages which a

\textsuperscript{535} QA, 62, p. 242. 
\textsuperscript{536} QA, 65, p. 242. 
\textsuperscript{537} QA, 69, p. 243. 
\textsuperscript{538} QA, 71, p. 243-244.
business cannot stand without its ruin” or create misfortune for the workers. But the Pope exhorts businesses to be technically progressive and economically efficient because it is offensive for a company to reduce wages due to a “lack of initiative or indifference.” The onus is on the business to sell its product at a just price and therefore able to pay its workers. Otherwise, corporations are “guilty of a grave wrong, for they deprive the workers of their just wage and force them to accept a wage less than fair.”539 The Pope urges both labor and capital to unite, and cooperate with civil authorities, to “overcome the difficulties and obstacles” they must confront.540

The Encyclical teaches that wages should be regulated and maintained “within proper limits” to accommodate the economic welfare of society. Pius considers excessively high salaries as a potential obstacle to full employment and extremely low wages as a cause of unemployment and poverty. Pius succinctly judges wage variations, and unemployment, as a contemporary evil: “injuring so many during the years of our Pontificate; [it] has plunged workers into misery and temptations, ruined the prosperity of nations and put in jeopardy the public order, peace and tranquility of the whole world.”541

The Pope offers a proposal and solution: that a balance should exist between “wages and salaries… by various occupations.”542 Namely, the correct salary for that occupation will result in stable prices and reduce unemployment and economic anxiety. The Pope feels that when these factors converge, the economic social order is firmly established.

539 QA, 72, p. 244.
540 QA, 73, p. 244.
541 QA, 74, p. 245.
542 QA, 75, p. 245.
The Principle of Subsidiarity

Pius now moves onto the main theme of his magnum opus. The Pope concentrates on reconstruction of the social order and indicates that if the initiatives of Rerum, and his particular recommendations are to be implemented, then “two things were especially necessary: reform of institutions and correction of morals.” The Pope emphasizes that the State, to its detriment, is overwhelmed by tasks and duties once performed by small associations of various kinds. The Pope concedes that in a modern society what was formerly accomplished by smaller associations or groups such as guilds is now done by larger associations or even the State.

Continuing the Thomistic tradition of Leo on the nature of the State, Pius now introduces the principle of subsidiarity. The principle is uncomplicated: people completed their tasks in a more competent fashion when they plan and control the assignment. In relation to civil and social life, subsidiarity means that the central organizations of the state should not interfere, unnecessarily, at the local level. The Encyclical requires that assistance be provided for individuals but it should come from intermediate or “lesser organizations.”

Duties of the State

The principle of subsidiarity maintains that the State relegate itself to a higher level of administration and management. Consequently, proper decisions occur at the proper level. The Pope urges the State to “let subordinate groups handle matters and concerns of lesser importance which would otherwise dissipate its efforts greatly.”

543 QA, 77, p. 246.
544 From the Latin subsidium for help or assistance.
Accordingly, the State is then free to utilize its resources on more critical matters.\footnote{QA, 79, p. 247.} Specifically, subsidiarity requires that exclusively hierarchical or excessively bureaucratic forms of organization, for economic success and for human development, are to be avoided.\footnote{QA, 80, p. 247.}

The principle of subsidiarity, which is historically significant in this context, restricts the State from interference at the lower levels of the community or with the individual. But, these smaller communities and individuals are to receive assistance from the State when they are unable to support themselves. Accordingly, the State cannot and should not usurp their prerogative.\footnote{Helen J. Alford, OP and Michael J. Naughton, Managing as if Faith Mattered. Christian Social Principles in the Modern Organization, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), p. 77-78.} Here in this segment of the encyclical, Pesch’s contribution is clearly evident.\footnote{Fred Crosson, “Catholic Social Teaching and American Society,” in David A. Boileau, ed., Principles of Catholic Social Teaching, (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1998), p. 170.} This philosophy surrounds the context of the encyclical and implies not just an economic application but a social one.

Pius’s concern is that the Italian fascist state is extremely involved in the daily activities of the individual especially in areas that are the moral responsibility of the Church. The Pope reiterates the role of the Church in matters of the family and education of youth from his earlier encyclicals. Pius asserts that the Church is the competent party to handle matters of faith and morals. The state should not meddle in these affairs. However, the “social policy of the State,” that being social legislation, should be to abolish conflict between the classes and promote cooperation among industries and

\footnote{Pesch’s doctrine conceives of government intervention in the economy as one that “stimulates, assists, coordinates and regulates self-responsible private activity” but substantial decisions are made by producers and consumers in their “capacity as members of the social community.” Pesch considers a viable economy as one with limited state involvement yet dependent on participation by individuals “guided by high moral considerations.” See Jacques Yanni, SJ. “Pesch’s Goal of the Economy,” Social Order, April 1951, Vol. 1, No. 4, p. 174-175.}
professions.  

**Labor, Unions and Worker Education**

An analysis of paragraphs 83-87 provides an understanding that is the core of the social reconstruction message pertaining to labor and the impetus for the future development of Catholic labor colleges. Pius upholds Leo’s declaration that “labor is not a mere commodity” and that the “worker’s human dignity must be recognized.” The Pope’s trepidation is over the class divisions between capital and labor fabricating a “battlefield where, face to face, the opposing lines struggle bitterly.”

His solution to this conflict is through the formation of owner-worker councils who practice the same profession or trade combined into corporate groups. These associations exercise the principle of subsidiarity and accordingly sustain a dynamic society:

“A complete cure will not come until members of the Industries and Professions are constituted not according to the position each has in the labor market but according to the respective social functions which each performs.”

To enable the effective operation of this system, Pius specifies three crucial areas. First, the “Industries and Professions” must unite in “some strong bond” of the employers and employees in the production of “goods or the rendering of services.” This amicable cooperation is also for the common good as “this unity will be the stronger and more effective” as the groups unite.

Second, these associations are “to promote the cooperation in the highest degree

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552 QA, 83, p. 248.
553 QA, 83, p. 248.
555 QA, 83, p. 248.
of each Industry and Profession for the sake of the common good of the country.”

Third, participation in these groups must be free and exercise “Christian social teaching” for the good of society:

“People are quite free not only to found such associations, which are a matter of private order and private right, but also in respect to them ‘freely to adopt the organization and the rules which they judge most appropriate to achieve their purpose.’”

The implications of this particular paragraph are momentous. It becomes the stimulus and framework for the Catholic labor colleges in the United States that organize several years after the publication of the Encyclical.

**Criticism of Economic Systems**

The Pope contrasts his concept of a corporatist society to the “poisoned spring” of the “errors of individualistic economic teaching.” He is critical of a laissez-faire capitalistic economic system that “while justified and certainly useful provided it is kept within certain limits, clearly cannot direct economic life.” The Pontiff’s critical assessment of capitalism is its inequality with regard to workers. Pius is equally vigorous in his condemnation of other economic systems and labels them as an “economic dictatorship which has recently displaced free competition” that needs to be “strongly curbed and wisely ruled.”

The Pontiff ardently declares that social justice and social charity must be the soul of any economic system, only then will “it be truly effective.” Echoing Leo in *Rerum,* Pius maintains that it was the obligation of the State to protect and defend “this juridical

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556 QA, 84, p. 248.
557 QA, 85, p. 249.
558 QA, 87, p. 249.
559 QA, 88, p. 250.
Historically, the Pontiff considers a time when a semblance to this type of society existed. For him, the medieval guild system as “indeed not perfect, nevertheless met in a certain measure the requirements of right reason considering the conditions and needs of the time.” The Pope contends that to bring about a new social order there needs to be a new state of mind.

Pius appreciates that both the global economic system and socialism have changed since Leo’s time. Quadragesimo restates Leo’s contention that “this economic system,” (capitalism), was not to be “condemned in itself.” However, when the dignity of the worker is violated then the “social character of economic activity and social justice itself” is ridiculed. Pius concedes that the world’s major economic system is capitalism but in the intervening years since Rerum, it is morphing into a “despotic economic dictatorship” where wealth and power are “consolidated in the hands of a few.” This plutocracy produces three types of conflicts:

“The struggle for economic supremacy; the bitter fight to gain supremacy over the State in order to use, in economic struggles, its resources and finally there is conflict between States… because they seek to decide political controversies through the use of their economic supremacy and strength.”

\[560\] QA, 88, p. 250.
\[561\] QA, 97, p. 253.
\[562\] For the Pope, the guild system eventually fails because it is “deceived by allurements of a false freedom… and sought to reject every form of control.” This might be construed that Pius was anti-modern or anti-democratic in thought. However, Nell-Breuning clarifies this: the intent was to demonstrate that the social and economic order was destroyed by rejecting authority. Nell-Breuning, Reorganization of Social Economy, p. 260.
\[564\] QA, 101, p. 254.
\[565\] QA, 104-105, p. 255.
\[566\] QA, 108, p. 255.
Commutative Justice as a Solution

The Pope offers a remedy to these “grave evils.” The social and individual character of capital and labor must maintain and “conform to the laws of strictest justice-commutative justice.” When society acts together for the common good “that is to the norm of social justice,” and the “economic dictatorship” is effectively brought under public authority, then economic relationships are restored to a proper order.\textsuperscript{567}

The principle of commutative justice emerges whenever there is a matter of equal exchange between two persons or parties. It consists of “rendering everyman the exact measure of his dues without regard to his personal worth or merits.”\textsuperscript{568} The basis of commutative justice then is equality of exchange. This principle is essential in an organized economic society.

The Benedictine educator and theologian, Virgil Michel, states that a violation of commutative justice occurs when an employer extracts a maximum amount of work from a laborer for a minimum wage when in fact, the labor is worth more.\textsuperscript{569} Application of commutative justice implies that honesty is operational in the marketplace but dishonest acts create social injustice.\textsuperscript{570}

Criticism of Socialism

Socialism like capitalism, according to Pius, has also changed since the time of Leo’s encyclical. The Pope feels that socialism has two forms “one section of socialism has undergone almost the same change that the capitalistic economic system has
undergone.” It is degenerating into violent communism which is openly hostile to the Catholic Church. The goals of communism, according to Pius, are straightforward: unrelenting class warfare and absolute extermination of private ownership.\textsuperscript{571}

The other more moderate type retains the name “socialism” which is less radical and less violent. In fact, it “approaches the truths which Christian tradition has always held sacred” as it recedes from class warfare and the abolition of private property.\textsuperscript{572} This may allow for the possibility of a middle position or even the acceptance of this variety of socialism.

However, Pius proclaims uncompromisingly that socialism: “as a doctrine, or as an historical fact, or a movement cannot be reconciled with the teachings of the Catholic Church because its concept of society itself is utterly foreign to Christian truth.”\textsuperscript{573} To further clarify the Encyclical’s teaching, the Pope condemns socialism as a “human association instituted for the sake of material advantage alone.” He reasons that socialism is incompatible with Christianity: “Religious socialism and Christian socialism are contradictory terms; no one can be at the same time a good Catholic and a true Socialist.”\textsuperscript{574}

The Pope laments that some Catholics have abandoned the Church to embrace socialism. Pius states that those who left claim that the Church favors the rich and neglects the worker.\textsuperscript{575} Additionally, there are employers who pervert religion and utilize it for their own sake. This presents the false appearance of the Church that favors the wealthy. Pius, chastises those who deceive the “disowned children” and invites them

\textsuperscript{571} \textit{QA}, 112, p. 257.
\textsuperscript{572} \textit{QA}, 113, p. 258.
\textsuperscript{573} \textit{QA}, 117, p. 260.
back to the “bosom of the Church.”

_How to Reconstruct the Social Order_

Pius contemplates the disorder of society and insists that greed and lust for material goods are the “root and font of this defection in economic and social life from the Christian law” which is also the “apostasy of great numbers of workers from the Catholic faith.” With obdurate precision, Pius identifies the “easy gains” of an unrestricted market and corporate businesses’ quest for profits as perpetuating the “worst of injustices and frauds.” The Pope abhors how management “treat their workers like mere tools with no concern at all for their souls… while men there are corrupted and degraded.” This abandonment of religion creates egregious conditions for women and children to the detriment of family life.

The remedy for this situation, to reconstruct and regenerate society, is simple: an open and sincere return to the teaching of the Gospel. That entails returning to the “right order” and the proper “use of wealth… within the bounds of equity and just distribution.” Pius observes that charity and justice can “remove the causes of social conflict but never bring about union of minds and hearts.” He stresses that the Christian struggle to renovate the social order is arduous but a restoration of Gospel teachings is the only method for social and economic reconstruction.

To achieve these goals, the Pope implores God’s blessings “that all men of good

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574 QA, 118-120, p. 260.
575 QA, 124, p. 262.
576 QA, 126, p. 263.
577 QA, 132, p. 265.
578 QA, 132, p. 265.
579 QA, 135, p. 267.
580 QA, 136, p. 268.
581 QA, 137, p. 269.
will work with united effort toward that end.” Pius consistently proclaims his support for the laity during his reign and now seeks their participation in an apostolate “convinced that as a necessary consequence, that this end will be attained the more certainly the larger the number of those ready to contribute toward it their technical, occupational and social knowledge and experience” under the leadership and guidance of the Catholic Church. Ultimately, it is the Catholic lay person who will bring about social reconstruction. Pius reminds the world that reconstruction of the social order can only come with a reconstruction of the moral order.

Pius concludes his Encyclical with a crusade for the Catholic Church to be militant in returning “whole classes of men” to Christ in a world that is returning “to paganism.” The Pope’s priority, in this reconstruction of the moral and social order, is on the working class. He favors “apostles” of the workingmen who must be workers and “apostles to those who follow industry and trade ought to be from among them.” The commission for the laity to act within organized labor and industry comes from this pronouncement.

Pius regards the current economic and moral circumstances as an attack on the Church of Christ. The Church is “built upon unshakeable rock” but requires “valiant soldiers of Christ” who will “stand united to fight this good and peaceful battle of Christ.” His strategy is to fight socialism and bring about social reconstruction through education. The Pope, acknowledging the Church’s ancient tradition as a teacher, now directs the Catholic faithful to be apostolic instructors. The Pope utilizes military style

582 QA, 96, p. 252. 
583 QA, 96, p. 252. 
584 QA, 141, p. 271. 
585 QA, 144-147, p. 272-273.
language as he believes this struggle to be a spiritual conflict and to demonstrate that the Church is willing to engage in this battle.

Pius asserts that it is the duty and responsibility of Catholics to change the status quo of social injustice which can be accomplished by properly training Catholics in all fields and endeavors. This papal summons stipulates that by the “proper use of resources of Christian education by teaching youth, forming Christian organizations and founding study groups guided by principles in harmony with the Faith” can social reconstruction occur. The Catholic faithful eventually respond to this mission. Within a few years after the proclamation of Quadragesimo Anno, the laity in the United States employ the resources of Christian education and form study groups and associations to implement Catholic social principles for workers and unions.

**European Reaction to the Encyclical**

Global reception and interpretation of the Encyclical varied. Pius’ ulterior motive was to maintain the Church’s authority to speak and teach on social and economic problems and to assert that authority as a precondition for utilizing Catholic ideology. Equally important, the Pope instructed the State as to its duties and responsibilities. Pius, like Leo before him, accentuated the universal nature of social reform, the dignity of the individual and remediation of labor issues. These were long term goals that signal radical yet gradual change not rapid extremism.

*Quadragesimo* then became the vehicle for Pius to commence an ideological counterattack on the economic conditions of that day. The challenge was application of

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586 Michel, *Christian Social Reconstruction*, p. 120.
587 QA, 143, p. 272.
the Encyclical’s doctrine in a modern global pluralistic community. Scholars in France, Germany and Italy debated the content and connotation of the Encyclical. It was a Catholic restoration grounded in a romanticized notion of corporatism that appealed mainly to central European Catholics. 590

For these scholars Thomistic legal justice was social justice. 591 However, Americans equated Pius’ social justice discourse with Fr. John Ryan’s view of equal distribution of wealth. Neither party was precisely correct in their assessment of the document. 592 Consequently, two divergent perspectives of social reconstruction developed: one espoused by the Old World and another for America.

In Europe, society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was defined by profound philosophical divisions. This evolved into a culture that gathered Europeans into united but relatively isolated factions. 593 The goals of these groups were to meet the needs of the believers within these distinct societies. The socialists and communists were the most obvious model. However, the Catholic Church also was organized to provide a dogmatic belief for its adherents and impart a solution to the needs of humanity. 594

Pius’ social reconstruction, while intended to be universal, had the manifestation of a program directed primarily to such European factions. European heritage was rooted in the guild system of the Middle Ages and Quadragesimo Anno referred to that arrangement as the paradigm for social reform. Pius felt that an activated laity was the principal agency for advancing social reconstruction to the workers. Lay groups such as

592 Ibid., p. 378-380.
593 Camp, The Papal Ideology of Social Reform, p. 163.
the Belgian and French Young Christian Workers movement as well as Catholic Action, which extend to all social classes, were appropriate for this mission.  

But the Encyclical’s prototype of a corporatist reconstruction of the social order was construed, by some critics, as linkage of Catholic social doctrine with authoritarian or Fascist corporatism. Vocational associations were similarly perceived as a means to neutralize labor unions through attachment to employer groups. Consequently, because the Church feared communism more than fascism, the vocational associations were, in effect, sacrificed as restraints and protections against totalitarianism.

Fascist leaders such as Salazar in Portugal and Franco in Spain implemented a hermeneutical treatment of *Quadragesimo Anno* as a technique for government control of labor unions. Workers and management were grouped together not in accordance with the Encyclical but to the detriment of society and industry. Trade unions in addition to co-operative unions, Catholic or neutral, were likely to become political instruments that encountered mistrust and opposition.

France, still contending with anti-clerical sentiment, together with Belgium and Holland, struggled over the best methods to fulfill the Encyclical’s directives. Austria’s Catholics welcomed the document because it provided an opportunity to protest the policies of the government. Catholics could now demand the abolition of a neutral and

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594 Ibid.
un-Christian republic and replace it with one inspired by papal teachings.600

The Encyclical’s impact in Germany was negligible. The State instituted a regulated “Labor Front;” strikes and lockouts were prohibited and wages were stagnant.601 Economically, workers were employed but organized labor and the Catholic Church were increasingly incompatible with the pending plans of Nazi Germany.602 Opportunities for social reconstruction and labor justice evaporated as the Center Party (Catholic) was persecuted while the Social Democrats (Socialist) were unable to survive the imminent Nazi assault.603

Hitler and his National Socialists gauged the Catholic Church to be a great but obsolete institution. They believed that the Church will disappear once young people were subjected to and guided by the doctrines of National Socialism.604 This conviction negated the progress made by German Catholics, particularly in the 1920’s, when Father Heinrich Brauns was Minister of Labor from 1920-1928. Under his direction, Germany was a global leader in policies to protect the worker such as social insurance, factory regulation, work councils and protection against arbitrary dismissal.605

The Encyclical’s most pronounced consequences were in Italy. Relations between the State and the Vatican, since the signing of the Lateran Treaty (and until the end of the Second World War), were occasionally accommodating and at other times

601 Camp, The Papal Ideology of Social Reform, p. 94.
confrontational.\textsuperscript{606} \textit{Quadragesimo}'s message placed the Church and the Italian fascist nation at odds. Fascists, in general, regarded Pius and the document as a criticism of their ideology. Anti-clerical Fascists interpreted the Encyclical as an alternative to the Fascist corporatist state while some Fascists perceived the document as a condemnation of their agenda.\textsuperscript{607} The Italian fascist paper \textit{Il Lavoro Fascista}, claimed that the ideals and objectives of both \textit{Rerum Novarum} and \textit{Quadragesimo Anno} had been realized by Fascism and questioned the authority of the Pope to speak on economic and social matters.\textsuperscript{608}

At the time the Encyclical was issued, Catholic youth groups, prominently including the \textit{Young Christian Workers} from Belgium and France, were in Rome for the celebrations of \textit{Quadragesimo Anno}'s proclamation. Mysteriously, anti-fascist flyers appeared throughout central Rome during this event. They denounced the Fascist regime as illegitimate and explained the absence of organized Italian Catholic workers from the Roman observances due to government repression.\textsuperscript{609} The antagonistic fires were further stoked when, just weeks after the announcement of \textit{Quadragesimo Anno}, Pius issued another encyclical \textit{Non Abbiamo Bisogno} (We Have No Need) which denounced authoritarian rule and the premise that no Catholic can be a fascist.\textsuperscript{610}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[609] Misner, “Catholic Labor and Catholic Action,” p. 662. National Catholic groups, particularly \textit{Azione Cattolica Italiana} (Catholic Action), were suppressed by the State for two weeks after the promulgation of the Encyclical. This was fascist Italy’s approach to control the Church’s influence on education and labor. See Wilfrid Parsons, “The Church in Contemporary Italy,” in Peter Guilday, ed., \textit{The Catholic Church in Contemporary Europe, 1919-1931}, (New York: P.J. Kennedy & Sons, 1932), p. 187-189.
\item[610] Aradi, \textit{Pius XI. The Pope and the Man}, p. 188 and Smith, \textit{Italy, A Modern History}, p. 443. By orders of the Pope, the document was smuggled out of Italy by then Msgr. (later Cardinal of New York) Spellmen where it was published in America. See “Archbishop Smuggled Encyclical Out of Italy,” \textit{Catholic
The American Interpretation

In the United States, initial reception of the Encyclical was met with skepticism and indifference. For a nation savaged by the Depression, Quadragesimo Anno was judged as a Papal assessment of historical and cultural conditions peculiar to certain nations in Europe. Concepts such as industry councils, a living wage and economic order were regarded as beyond the competence of the average prelate or priest.  

American Catholics, during this era, were not inclined to delve into a critical study of the encyclical or any papal documents.

Those who did examine Quadragesimo discovered ambiguous statements on Christian labor associations and their connection to industry and management. Socially minded Americans were pragmatic and selective of the document’s content pertinent to their needs especially those that support labor. Most American Catholics simply regarded the document as permission for and validation of what American Catholic workers have instinctively permitted for themselves: the affiliation with non-religious (but not anti-religious) or neutral labor unions.

Many American Catholics in the 1930’s mechanically accepted the Church’s teachings without any considered reflection. However, after Quadragesimo Anno was published in the New York Times awareness of the document increased. As a result, the American Catholic Church was required to act.

The Social Action Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference

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produced pamphlets as study guides and groups formed to analyze and discuss the components of the papal text. But extensive and bitter disagreements among clergy and laity arose over the definition and treatment of Pius’ application of social justice and reconstruction of the Christian social order. The role of government intervention in the economy and the establishment of vocational and industry associations became flashpoints in any discussion on social doctrine.

Many Catholic businessmen were infuriated at being denounced as exploiters and unfaithful to the teachings of the Church. At the parish level, pastors were likely to be economic conservatives in support of industry and unaware of the social teachings of the magisterium. At a time when organized labor endured the “lean years” and was branded as communist or anti-religious, *Quadragesimo Anno*, for Catholic progressives, established a pro-labor attitude in the Church. Gradually, the Encyclical embraced a wider assemblage of American Catholics, and Americans on the whole, who are captivated by the Encyclical’s substance.

*Protestants and the Encyclical*

As Americans analyzed the document, in the shadow of the Depression, an American adaptation was forming. The national anti-Catholic environment was gradually eroding. In an increasing pluralistic society, acceptance of Catholics (and others) started to permeate American culture. Catholics were now progressively

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614 Cronin, “Forty Years Later,” p. 311.
615 The National Catholic Welfare Conference was the national organization of American bishops.
recognized, by many, as a major force in society.\textsuperscript{619}

Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr sees value in the Catholic Church’s support for the working class and its institutional charities which rest upon religious solidarity and mutual responsibility.\textsuperscript{620} In the journal The Christian Century, Protestants write that the Encyclical is a “notable landmark in social history.” The author affirms that the Pope, like “anyone who has a right to teach in the field of religion has a right to teach in the field of social and economic questions in so far as they refer to moral issues.” However, he questions the Pontiff’s sole authority to do so and terms it “annoying.” Yet this Protestant writer welcomes the Pope as a “brother” since religion, that being Protestants and Catholics, functions to better the social and economic life of the worker.\textsuperscript{621}

Protestants were also preoccupied with reformulating their theology in the 1920’s and 1930’s due to the divisions created by fundamentalists.\textsuperscript{622} This encouraged Protestant theorists to regard unions as a vehicle to bring about the moral regeneration of society. They speculated how labor organizations should protect workers’ economic interests, seek social justice, promote peace and harmony, and strengthen family life. This was but a step to promote an eventual partnership between labor and management. Class harmony rather than class struggle was the eventual goal of this school of thought.\textsuperscript{623}

\textsuperscript{619} O’Brien, American Catholics and Social Reform, p. 51.
\textsuperscript{622} Hutchinson, Religious Pluralism in America, p. 148-150
Ultimately for Americans, Catholics and non-Catholics in the 1930’s, *Quadragesimo* was the impetus for further advancement of social justice issues and the recognition of organized labor’s position in the work place. It became a Catholic social awakening. The document emboldened some of the clergy and inspired members of the laity to be proactive in support of the worker and to seek solutions for resolving the economic crisis. Analysis of the historical record illustrated how the Encyclical was used in four areas to advance Christian social reconstruction in the United States: the unconventional reaction of the prelates; social legislation; the Catholic Worker movement and ultimately the Catholic labor schools.

The hierarchy during this decade, retreated from a non-confrontational position to one that was more vocal and exuded leadership in socio-economic areas. As economic conditions worsened, prelates such as Archbishop Edward Hanna of San Francisco, Cardinal Patrick Hayes of New York, Cardinal George Mundelin of Chicago and Boston’s Cardinal William O’Connell lashed out at how capitalism was rooted in greed that created such lamentable economic conditions. They now echoed the principles of *Quadragesimo Anno*. Hayes, in particular, clamored for a new order based on cooperation and a just distribution of wealth. Cleveland’s Bishop Joseph Schrembs declared his support for unions and suggested that employee and management groups form to settle labor disputes and ensure worker justice.

The timing of the Encyclical’s announcement materialized just prior to

Roosevelt’s New Deal programs. With the document as a gauge, Catholics were in a better position to examine and comment on recovery and reform measures. Catholic intellectuals contemplated the dangers of the capitalist system as well as centralizing power in the national government. The Encyclical offered an alternative.  

Portions of *Quadragesimo*, and Fr. Ryan’s works particularly the United States Bishops’ document of 1919, read as a draft for New Deal legislation. Suggestions for a minimum wage, child labor laws, the right to organize, unemployment and health insurance offered a moral perspective on the economy and advocated the dignity of the person. When the Encyclical was published, Ryan’s prestige as a pro-labor theorist escalated. He, and his followers, believed this to be a vindication and affirmation of the labor priest’s philosophy and teachings.  

It was unlikely that Roosevelt or anyone in his administration read any of the papal social encyclicals. Critics noticed minimal Catholic influence and alleged that New Deal programs developed from a variety of sources such as the Social Gospel and the Progressive movements. Yet, in his 1932 campaign, Roosevelt called *Quadragesimo Anno* “one of the greatest documents of modern times.”

The Catholic clergy responded to this newfound inclusiveness. Cardinal Mundelein lauded Roosevelt as “more friendly and sympathetic to the Church and its institutions than any occupant in the White House in half a century.”

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627 Schmesing, *Within the Market Strife*, p. 84.
leaders welcomed the legislation, even those fearful of government intervention. Because it was pro-labor and, with a national work force that was overwhelmingly Catholic, FDR’s administration received the support of the majority of Catholic laity and clergy.634

With Quadragesimo Anno as its plinth, momentum in the Catholic social movement accelerated.635 American Catholic social thought was maturing and advanced beyond rhetoric and piety. This was achieved because the economic vicissitudes of the 1930’s demanded action. Father John Ryan believed that Catholics should be an equal partner in the recovery and reform measures of the New Deal.636 Accordingly, Catholic priests such as Fathers John Ryan and Francis Haas served on several prominent NRA advisory boards.637 Buffalo’s labor priest, Father John Boland, was appointed chairman of the New York State Labor Relations Board.638 Catholics were no longer an addendum to American society but a strategic partner.

European Catholic social thought developed in accordance with Thomistic thought. With Rerum Novarum, Leo intertwined faith and dogma with social concerns and affiliation with the worker. This arrangement pushed European social thought into the industrialized modern world. European Catholic social concerns were also besieged by the “isms” of Marxism, Communism, Socialism, Fascism and even Capitalism. Quadragesimo Anno became the Pope’s alternative proposal for social reorganization to

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635 Browne, “Catholicism in America,” p. 105.  
636 O’Brien, Catholicism in America, p. 105.  
637 Hennesey, American Catholics, p. 259-260.
counter Mussolini, Marx and Lenin.

European Catholics sought strength in political parties which bolstered their intellectual stance but suffocate social reforms. Pius’s encyclical was his effort to restart the process of social awareness and elevate the status of the worker which commenced with Leo. But Europeans preferred to debate the merits of social reconstruction and Catholic social thought rather than attempt to implement the Encyclical’s program.

In the United States, the evolution of Catholicism and Catholic intellectualism advanced in its own unique American way. The Church did not enjoy the comfort of state sponsorship and was demeaned as a foreign element that resided in a unreceptive environment for decades. Catholics were an immigrant minority required to substantiate their worth as citizens while they constituted the majority of organized labor. This arrangement significantly affected Catholic social thought.

With the arrival of Pius’ encyclical on social reconstruction American Catholics now designed their own course. The significance of America’s rendering and realization of Quadragesimo differed from European Catholics in two parts. First, Americans viewed the document as advocating industrial democracy. Associations of labor and management were equals in the progression of industrial relations and the Catholic Church was resolute to be militant in this cause. The second, and most important aspect, was the concept of a Catholic labor school. These labor schools personified the social encyclicals that advanced beyond a parochial expression.

638 Betten, Catholic Activism, p. 85.
639 Piehl, Breaking Bread, p. 50-52.
640 Diamant, Austrian Catholics and the First Republic, p. 182-188.
641 Betten, Catholic Activism, 24-25, and Piehl, Breaking Bread, p. 52-54.
This Catholic lay initiative was the distinctively American response to the Americanist crisis of decades earlier. This prior “contest” with the Vatican only solidified the perception that America’s Catholics were different and would follow their own plan of action. *Quadragesimo Anno*, for American Catholics, centered on the laity because the document was a radical invitation to speak and behave in a manner that emphasized their position. The labor schools then became that vehicle to propel America’s Catholic laity onto the public square. The implications of this were profound and enduring.
Chapter 6

America’s Lay Catholics Respond:
The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists
And Catholic Labor Education

As the Industrial Revolution advanced, *Rerum Novarum* initially failed to affect the judgment and conduct of most legislators, corporate leaders and many Catholic priests, in the United States and did not convince them to immediately pursue social and labor remediation. However, while World War I impeded the momentum of Leo XIII’s call for a new social order in most of a devastated Europe, in the United States the war acted as a catalyst for labor reform. Catholic support for social reconstruction during the post-World War I period was spearheaded by clergy such as Cardinal James Gibbons, Archbishop John Ireland and Monsignor John A. Ryan.

The nation’s Catholics supported the war and its relief efforts. Now America’s bishops, desirous of being more proactive in the formation of reform initiatives, proposed their own plan for social reform in 1919. But even after Pius’s reaffirmation of Leo XIII’s mandate in favor of workers’ rights, the call for renewed social action among many of the Catholic clergy did not generate overwhelming enthusiasm. Some clergy viewed certain unions with contempt as Communist tools and collective bargaining as an

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unacceptable solution to labor problems in the pre-New Deal era.

Clergy and the Social Action Department

According to labor priest George Higgins, the model of the Catholic Church still reflected a hierarchical and paternalistic attitude: the clergy were the professionals and the laity were amateurs. The National Catholic Welfare Conference promoted the hierarchy as the qualified organization to speak for the American Church. Within this operation, the bishops also launched the Social Action Department (SAD) which functioned in many ways as a clearinghouse for Catholic social thought. Over the years prominent nationally recognized labor priests such as Msgr. John Ryan and later Fr. Raymond McGowan, Msgr. George Higgins and Fr. John Cronin became directors of SAD. But SAD was clergy oriented and never intended for the laity.

SAD published a series of pamphlets, as part of its work, which represented “an effort to present to the general public, and especially to Catholics, a discussion of current economic facts, institutions and proposals in the United States in their relation to Catholic social teaching” based primarily on Quadragesimo Anno. However SAD’s emphasis was to promote social reform education for the clergy only. In November 1936 at a general meeting of the American hierarchy, the National Catholic Welfare Conference and SAD arranged for four “summer schools of social action study for the clergy” in

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647 Hennesey, American Catholics, p. 287.
648 John A. Ryan, The Constitution and Catholic Industrial Teaching, (New York: Paulist Press, for the Social Action Department, N.C.W.C., 1937). This declaration is located on the inside cover of each pamphlet. Other titles included: Francis Haas, The American Labor Movement (1937); The Wages and Hours of American Labor (1937); Rev. John F. Cronin, Rugged Individualism (1937). SAD publishes over
Milwaukee (July 5-30, 1937); Toledo (July 6-30, 1937); San Francisco (June 7-July 1, 1937) and Los Angeles (August 2-28, 1937).649

These summer programs were under the sponsorship of the local bishop and organized by a committee of priests. Clergy from the local and surrounding areas attended the summer schools. The sessions consisted of “study clubs” and discussion groups that examined topics such as economics, economic morality, Communism and social legislation. The curriculum later included study of the social encyclicals with a purpose to teach them “in relation to history and to present day facts and movements.”650 These schools for the clergy expanded their locations in the late 1930’s and early 1940’s with sessions in Buffalo, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Baltimore, New York and other dioceses throughout the nation.651

Yet as the concepts of Quadragesimo Anno were openly discussed in the middle of the Great Depression, there was an escalating agreement within the Catholic clergy that the papal message could best be advanced through social action and education among the workers themselves.652 This signified tacit acceptance that the lay Catholic vocation was gradually being recognized as an equal, or nearly so, to that of the clergy.653 This Catholic action, that being the program of lay involvement, was vital in the training

twenty titles in the series.
650 Raymond McGowan, “Social Action Schools for the Clergy,” Catholic Action, Vol. 21, September 1939, p. 21. These programs were infrequently referred to as the “Catholic Chautauqua” in reference to the summer programs at the mainly Protestant flavored Chautauqua Institute on Lake Chautauqua, New York.
651 The Labor Leader: June 23, 1938, p. 4; August 1, 1938, p. 3; October 17, 1938, p. 3; April 30, 1946, p. 3.
653 Labor priests such as Fr. Cronin consider the evolution of American lay leadership as a missionary work of the Church shared by the laity. See John Cronin, S.S., Catholic Social Action, (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1948), p. 37.
of lay leadership. This adjustment of clerical attitudes subtly empowered the laity to be legitimate pastoral agents in society and the workplace, particularly in matters of education and the training of workers. The realization of this came in the late 1930’s through the Catholic Worker Movement from which eventually arose the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists.

Initiatives for Educating the Worker

Education of the working class was the central concept of laity’s predominant role in the Catholic Worker Movement. It was the considered belief among the poor and the working class that education enabled the less privileged to attain a better lifestyle and some manner of equality with the affluent. Historically, universal public education became a prominent cause of the unions and their affiliated political parties so attempts to establish labor schools were not unusual in America.

Both Catholics and Protestants considered labor education as foundational for maintenance of the moral order and as a transition to other types of social reform. Only through learning could individual union members comprehend the principles of a free labor movement and contribute to organized labor. Unfortunately, long term religious efforts to train laborers about their rights and duties were unsuccessful. These programs

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654 Cronin, Catholic Social Action, p. 42-43. See also Quadragesimo Anno, paragraph 141.
659 Richard J. Ward, “The Role of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists in the Labor Movement,”
originated from well intentioned clergy who ultimately could not sustain the venture. Two examples substantiate this.

Presbyterian minister Charles Stelzle realized that an estrangement between religion and labor hampered both. To remedy this in 1910, he instituted the Labor Temple in New York as a forum for religious, political and social discussion. The Temple expanded its agenda to include institutional, community and adult education programs for the worker with an emphasis on their spiritual welfare. The hallmark of the Labor Temple was its lecture series. Eventually, this developed into the Labor Temple School with a program of study that included history, anthropology, biology, economics and subjects to educate “the workers for the additional responsibilities that will face them as a better social order comes.”

Factional disputes, philosophical differences and attacks by conservatives eventually closed the Labor Temple and its school in the 1930’s.

Catholics formulated their own projects to educate the laborer. An early Catholic attempt at worker education was in the early 1920’s. Fr. Peter Dietz, a labor activist priest, organized a Catholic labor school in Cincinnati for the laity. His plan was to educate the laity to be professionals in the political and economic systems of the country and equip them with Catholic social teachings to understand the spiritual implications of

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663 Chaffee, The Protestant Churches and the Industrial Crisis, p. 194-195.
664 Robert Moats Miller, American Protestantism and Social Issues, 1919-1939, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977), p. 234. However in 1945, Protestant clergy from the Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations, a reconstituted form of the Labor Temple to train Christian leaders for the “particular needs of urban and industrial communities,” attend some sessions of the New York ACTU to observe the Catholic program. The Presbyterian Labor Temple group continues to attend ACTU sessions and joint meetings are conducted to discuss the role of Christianity in labor-management disputes and to collaborate on
social service. The curriculum listed course work in religion and Catholic theology as well as parliamentary law, public speaking and the history, policies and methods of the American labor movement. Considered by some as a socialist agenda, the school never opened and the priest was “requested” by Archbishop Henry Moeller to leave his archdiocese of Cincinnati.

Other clerics, primarily the Jesuits, aspired to commence labor educational programs. In 1934, the Jesuits established the St. Joseph Labor School in Philadelphia housed at St. Joseph’s Preparatory, and two others in New York: Xavier Labor School and the Crown Heights Catholic Labor School operated by Father William Smith, S.J. The Jesuits also attempted to organize labor schools wherever a Jesuit college or high school existed. But this experiment did not achieve the desired results of the schools becoming permanent institutions.

There were some possible reasons for this. Father Philip Dobson, SJ, director of the Xavier school was described as “very young and inexperienced and seemingly has poor advisors.” He and Fr. Smith created labor turmoil in late 1939 by attacking the CIO and the New York city transport workers local describing them as the “breeding nest

O’Brien, George G. Higgins and the Quest for Worker Justice, p. 49.
Mary Harrita Fox, Peter E. Dietz, Labor Priest, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1953), p. 181 and 192-193. Reviewing the literature, there has been no significant nor comprehensive published material on Fr. Dietz since Fox’s book.
William J. Smith, SJ., “The Catholic Labor School,” Catholic Mind, July 1949, Vol. 47, p. 394 and Archives, St. Joseph’s College, Folder- Fr. Dennis Comey, SJ. The Jesuits established their version of labor schools: Xavier Labor School, Manhattan; Crown Heights, Brooklyn; St. Peter’s, Jersey City; St. Joseph’s, Philadelphia and elsewhere. However, John Cort, co-founder of the ACTU, contends that the Jesuits started their schools after the ACTU began theirs.
of American Communism.” The rank and file of the transport workers union were angered at the priests over the “distortion.” These tactics eventually hindered the influence of the Jesuit labor schools. The schools remained open for several years but most closed during the Second World War as many potential students were serving in the military during the war.

**The Laity and Labor Education**

Only when the American Catholic laity advanced the cause of and were active participants in labor education did any similar programs succeed. Their success was marked by their longevity and adaptability to changing conditions in labor and management. These institutions were more than a continuation of the Catholic tradition of education as now applied to labor. There were profound implications as it was the laity that ultimately shaped these reform programs.

My contention is that the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, and the diocesan labor colleges, constitutes a response by the American Catholic laity to foreign and domestic conditions. It is a “bottom up” rather than a “top down” lay program.

The laity’s establishment of labor schools became the rebuttal to the “phantom heresy” of Americanism and reflected the American Catholic interpretation of the social encyclicals. It was an obvious affirmation of American Catholic exceptionalism and demonstrated the resolve of a social activist laity to complete what the clergy were hesitant to realize: the implementation of the social encyclicals, and worker reform, through labor education in spite of possible reaction from Rome.

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The Catholic labor schools were furthermore a singular American Catholic answer to the Social Gospel movement. As the Social Gospel Movement entangled itself with the rise of fundamentalism and the internal challenges propagated within Protestant theology, it disintegrated in the 1920’s due to this intensifying conservative ideology. Many Protestants desired a return to a Church that was grounded more on theology rather than on matters of social reform. Consequently, most of the Social Gospel Movement’s agenda of social reform ceased. Within the ensuing void many of the American Catholic laity moved forward to advance their own programs of social reconstruction and particularly worker justice through the labor schools.

*America’s Lay Catholics Advance*

The composition of the American church, in the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries, was that of an immigrant faithful corpus with lay involvement contained more to the parish level. The modification of some “old world” Catholic practices by the laity, such as special feasts to patron saints or the Blessed Mother, were more of an attempt to concentrate on the essential Catholic doctrines and practices in new situations. The bishops and clergy carefully discouraged the laity from wider initiatives and prohibited their involvement in key areas of ecclesiastical responsibility.

672 The trustee problem in the American Catholic Church, that being the laity controlling the administration of the parish, created tensions and challenges among Catholic ethnic groups, clergy, hierarchy and even some state governments. The result is that the diocese and clergy own and operate the parish with the “assistance” of the laity. A complete historical account can be located in these sources and others: Sr. Felicity O’Driscoll, *Political Nativism in Buffalo: 1830-1860*; Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Experience. An Interpretation of The History of American Catholicism*; Jay Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience and James Hennesey, American Catholics. A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States*. The contemporary concept of a parish council and lay parish administrators is more the result of Vatican II and the declining numbers of clergy to operate the parish. See David J. O’Brien, *The Renewal of American Catholicism* (1972) and *Public Catholicism* (1988).
consistent Catholic clerical leadership concerning social reform was often weak and
marked by internal discord. However, a transposition of power and influence
gradually occurred in the United States after the First World War and over the ensuing
decades. It shifted from the clergy to the laity.

Catholicism in American was associated with an ethnic immigrant identity as
parishes were often viewed as pivotal to the life of the immigrant community. But the
pluralism and mobility of an expanding nation enabled many, if not the majority of
immigrant Catholics to acculturate and even meld into the political and social milieu.
According to historian Deirdre Moloney, as the immigrant church grows into an
assimilated American church there is a corresponding and developing middle class. The
laity can no longer be ignored and are recognized as a source of influence in the
economic, political and social arenas. The advancement of lay Catholics in all sectors
of secular society amplifies their power and influence; a position they are not likely to
surrender.

As a conciliation to the laity, the hierarchy exhibited a type of collegiality and
cooperation with the laity through congresses and conventions. A Catholic lay convention
coincided with the 1893 world’s fair in Chicago. The purpose of this gathering was to
explicate how Catholicism was compatible with American institutions in open
discussions managed by the laity. While clergy were in attendance it was an event noted

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2003), p. 131-132 and Robert D. Cross, The Emergence of Liberal Catholicism in America, (Cambridge:

675 O’Brien, The Renewal of American Catholicism, p. 94.

676 Moloney, American Catholic Lay Groups, p. 4.
The agenda at this lay convention included discussions on cooperation with Protestants in “general philanthropic and reform movements.” According to the official record of the event, the lay congress debated the social content of *Rerum Novarum* and voted to integrate the principles of the document into daily affairs. The vote was more of an acknowledgment of the laity’s spiritual union with the Pope rather than a democratic pronouncement. The Chicago congress set a precedent for American Catholic lay activism. The issues that were discussed: assimilation, women’s rights and the relationship of the laity to the church and clergy, will define the parameters of lay activity on social reform into the next century. But any mutuality between laity and clergy was symbolic at best. Many of the clergy often disregarded reforms proposed by the laity.

Monsignor John Ryan, the author of the Bishop’s Program for Social Reconstruction, lamented that the clergy and hierarchy ignore the problems of social reform: “The great majority of our clergy in the United States have not yet began to study or take more than superficial interest in the important social problems of the age and country.” However, the majority of the social minded lay Catholic community resolved to take up the cause of reform and not acquiesce to Rome, the hierarchy or extremists. The laity acted unilaterally to discuss issues pertinent to them. This became more of a militant cause for America’s lay Catholics, integrating into mainstream

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society, who were urged to “think Catholic thoughts to every problem.”

The social encyclicals became Vatican mandates for the laity to vociferously engage in the works of the Church. They were to participate fully as collaborators in the apostolate of social reform. The clergy could provide spiritual direction but it was the laity that will complete the task of social reconstruction. Pius XI’s intent, with Quadragesimo Anno then, was to illuminate the role of the laity in the work of the Church and society as certain aspects and disciplines were exclusive works to the laity. Specifically, the transformation of the worker and working class.

**It Begins with Dorothy Day**

The most compelling individual leadership effort to uplift the worker originated with an American Catholic lay woman: Dorothy Day. A convert to Catholicism, she was both a spiritual and social activist who was influenced by the philosophical musings of fellow writer and friend Peter Maurin. European Catholic social thinkers, particularly Leon Harmel a prominent lay voice during Leo XIII’s reign, shaped Maurin’s beliefs. Maurin’s deliberations shifted Day’s focus from management of social problems to directly tending to the needs of people. The emphasis was solely on the dignity of the individual and the common good which must include the worker.

Day experienced a profound spiritual awakening due in part to her personal mishaps and exposure to life in New York’s underside. But her Catholic faith was not

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that of the conservative clergy or hierarchy. She committed herself to a life of simplicity in faithfulness to basic Christianity. She applied those precepts to social problem which were profoundly formed by the social justice directives of Leo XIII and Pius XI. Her basic philosophy and lived theology was fundamentally concern for the individual and a reconstruction of the social order. She was not content to simply talk or read about social reform but worked as an activist for change.

Day was attracted to the Church as it represented the poor, the immigrant and the working class. Unfortunately, she was scandalized by the leadership which failed to live out its own teachings. In spite of its failures, the Catholic Church for her was a consecrated community which she loved and sought its return to a radical vocation. Day wanted Catholics, not communists or capitalists, to lead and support the worker. She hoped for a radical revolutionary movement that was not atheistic but one that was inspired by the teachings of the Church. This philosophy empowered her and Peter Maurin to form the Catholic Worker Movement.

**The Catholic Worker Movement**

The Catholic Worker Movement became that exceptional lay Catholic response to the conditions of that time based on the social encyclicals. This produced the formation of the House of Hospitality in 1935 whose purpose was to shelter, feed and clothe the

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690 Stanley Vishnewski, *Wings of Dawn*, (New York: The Catholic Worker, 1980), p. 37. Vishnewski’s momentous memoir details his encounter with Day and enlisting in the Catholic Worker movement at the age of 18 when he dedicated his entire life to the cause. He was an active witness and participant to the early years of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists.

unemployed and the working poor. Initially in lower Manhattan, other houses opened in Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Chicago and various cities. Catholic Worker farm communities were later started in rural Pennsylvania and New York.  

It was Day’s talents as a journalist and writer, in partnership with Peter Maruin, that permitted them to establish the newspaper The Catholic Worker in 1933. They aspired to implement a radical renewal of Catholicism and the social order in the midst of the Great Depression and the written word was the vehicle to enact this social reconstruction. Day insisted on the title because of her concern for the worker and to sway Catholic thought. Their newspaper was to be an alternative to the Communist Daily Worker which promoted violent class struggle. The non-violent Catholic Worker Movement was not specifically the newspaper but a way of life and philosophy. At the Catholic Worker houses, not only were the marginalized cared for but discussion, debate and activism were initiated. Peter Maurin asserted that:

“The aim of the Catholic Worker is to create order out of chaos…to help the unemployed to employ themselves…to create a new society within the shell of the old; a philosophy so old that it looks new.”

The Movement and Organized Labor

Unlike most clergy, Day’s support for organized labor was often proactive and confrontational. She visited the sit-down strikers in 1937 at the General Motors plant in

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692 Rosalie Riegle Troester, Voices from the Catholic Worker, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), p. 4. Dorothy Day’s pacifist position to W.W. II coupled with staffing and personnel issues devastated the Movement however it survives to this day.

693 The paper contends that it was the only nationally circulated Catholic labor newspaper (in the 1930’s).

694 It sold then, and still does, for a penny a copy, The Catholic Worker, June-July, 1933, p. 4 & 5.

Flint, Michigan to encourage them. At strikes, Day’s picket signs often quoted papal encyclicals. Her efforts to create better working conditions, unfortunately, were often misunderstood or misinterpreted especially at a time when labor’s right to organize increased fears of communism or engendered anti-union sentiment.

Day, and the Movement, reiterated that it was a natural right and duty for workers’ to organize. She summarized the Catholic Worker movement as a means to “reach the workers, bring to them a philosophy of labor, speak to them of Christian solidarity and point out the need of a long range program.” She further expounded that the objectives of the Catholic Worker were to bring the social teachings of the Gospel and the Church to the worker through the paper and pamphlets and to organize study groups “for the clarification of thought.”

Day and Maurin, according to historian David J. O’Brien, were part of a new group of radicals searching for an American Catholic solution to daily problems and to build a “truly Catholic culture, win converts and lead to personalist social action which would revolutionize American society.” The Catholic Worker Movement strove to be that particular organization. This Movement’s indirect stimulus on organized labor was that it awakened lay Catholics to social awareness and a call to change as promulgated in the social encyclicals. Its direct impact was that it birthed the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists which, I contend, ultimately was the American laity’s response to the Americanism controversy.

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696 Troester, Voices from the Catholic Worker, p. 12.
697 Zwick, The Catholic Worker Movement, p. 152.
698 O’Brien, Public Catholicism, p. 182.
700 The Catholic Worker, January 1939, p. 4 and The Catholic Worker, February 1939, p. 7.
Formation of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists

The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU) began without fanfare but with much passion. In 1936 Martin Wersing, president of the Utility Workers’ Union of New York City, inadvertently read a discarded copy of the Catholic Worker on the subway. An article on the Christian labor program, authored by John Cort, prompted Wersing to attend informal study sessions on the social encyclicals at the Catholic Worker House on Mott Street.702

Wersing and his friend Ed Squitieri, who were instrumental in the formation of the ACTU, were also acquaintances of a laborer who was fired for union activity and could not find another job. This man “finally went mad from despair and hung himself in the bathroom of a five room tenement flat, leaving a sickly wife and five small children.”703 Upset by this incident, Wersing ruminated on how best to implement Christian principles on the labor front where Catholics can insert justice and human rights into organized labor and industry.

Part of the agenda of the Catholic Worker was the Catholic Worker’s School. This was not a formal educational program but a study group with various lectures.704 Here Wersing met Catholic labor reformers John Cort, Edward Scully and George Donahue. They considered the Catholic Worker Movement as quixotic and not resilient in combating Communism.705 According to Cort, the Catholic Worker Movement was commendable but not embraced by every adherent. “Many of us who became interested

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705 Betten, Catholic Activism, p. 124.
didn’t buy the whole thing,” according to Cort. He continued that “a lot of people were like that…but nevertheless got involved in various aspects of social justice and social action.”

**John Cort Institutes the ACTU**

John Cort, like Dorothy Day, was a convert to Catholicism whose life centered on the causes of labor, civil rights and Christian socialism. Cort, a 1935 Harvard graduate, worked as a reporter for what he called a “small town newspaper,” the Brookline Citizen. One Sunday after Mass, someone handed him a copy of the Catholic Worker paper. Intrigued, he attended a lecture by Day and was transformed. Cort joined the Catholic Worker Movement in 1936 and resided at St. Joseph House until he separated from the Movement in November 1938.

His affiliation with the Movement came at time when they assisted the local CIO in their battle to form a new maritime union affiliate. Cort continued his journalism career and on an assignment for the Catholic Worker paper was to report on a meeting between the CIO local and the New York state AFL labor council. Cort observed that the AFL and the ship-owners exercised an incestuous relationship. Violence erupted as the AFL members rouged up the CIO followers. Later, Cort was advised that part of the problem was apathy by Catholic union members. After this episode, he experienced an

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707 Letter of John Cort to Fr. Charles Rice, May 26, 1941. AUP, Box 2, FF 6. Cort was an associate editor of the *Labor Leader*, associate editor and contributor to the *Commonweal* and “took part in more than 20 strikes and organizing campaigns, speaking, picketing, writing leaflets, distributing literature, getting pushed around…”
epiphany and resolved to start an organization that will teach Catholic workers about their rights and obligations as union men.\footnote{Voices from the Catholic Worker, p. 73.}

Day and the Catholic Worker Movement initially pledged their support to him and his cause. Cort, along with Wersing and Donahue, decided to send out a notice to union men to meet and discuss the formation of a Christian labor program. Those who replied to the flier were representatives of the Utility Workers’ Union, International Seamans’ Union, Newspaper Guild, Carpenters’ Union, International Ladies Garment Workers’ Union, Milk Drivers’ Union and the Brush Makers’ Union.\footnote{Vishnewski, Wings of Dawn, p. 157.} On Saturday afternoon February 27, 1937, a group of twelve Catholic union laymen gathered around a smoke filled kitchen table at St. Joseph’s House and talked about creating a new labor group based on Christian principles.

Cort presided at the meeting as the union men expressed the need for an organization to teach Catholic workers their union rights. Those gathered also conveyed their concerns about the ever growing influence of the Communists in the unions and sought a solution to combat that pressure. The result was the formation of the Catholic Association of Trade Unionists (CATU). The purpose of the organization was not to be a “union within a union” but to “educate, stimulate and coordinate on a Christian basis the action of the Catholic workingmen and women in the American labor movement.”\footnote{“New Association For Catholics in Labor Movement,” The Catholic Worker, March 1937, p. 1 and Vishnewski, Wings of Dawn, p. 158.} Membership in the CATU, according to the group’s tentative pact, was open to “all bona fide trade unions… whether A.F. of L., C.I.O. or otherwise.”

Non-union members
were eligible provided that they could obtain a union card.\textsuperscript{714} At the next, and subsequent gatherings, attendees were urged to bring a union friend with them.

At the April meeting a provisional constitution was outlined. The purpose of the CATU was defined as bringing Catholic working men and women a knowledge of the social encyclicals. This was to be accomplished by: “A) Enrollment in this Association of all Catholic trade unionists; B) Promoting unionization among unorganized Catholic workers and \hspace{1em} C) Applying Catholic doctrines to the problems of the trade union movement.”\textsuperscript{715} Officers were elected at this time: Martin Wersing as President; John Cort as Secretary; Lawrence Delaney as Treasurer and Robert Smith as Educational Director. Plans for expansion were also discussed.

It was reiterated that the CATU was not establishing dual unions or “Catholic unions to compete with unions.” The intention was that the local chapters will make Catholics “conscious of the universal, all embracing nature of their religion and impressing them with the necessity of co-operation with non-Catholics in all legitimate action.”\textsuperscript{716} The CATU will support Catholic union workers in their spiritual and practical experiences at the work place.

\textit{The Catholic Worker and CATU Divide}

Minor tensions between the CATU and the Catholic Worker Movement began to percolate within a few weeks. The response to the Association was so overwhelming that the shared office and classroom space on Mott Street was insufficient. The Catholic Worker Movement, from the outset, supplied funds and resources to the CATU. But

\textsuperscript{714} \textit{The Catholic Worker}, March 1937, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{715} \textit{The Catholic Worker}, April 1937, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{716} \textit{The Catholic Worker}, April 1937, p. 6. Discussions on combating socialism, fascism and communism at the workplace occur later.
many in both organizations felt that the CATU was likely to absorb and usurp the Catholic Worker Movement. Various members of the Catholic Worker, such as Stanley Vishnewski, a resident participant of the Movement and also a charter member of the CATU, recognized that the Association was an essential mission to the worker and the Church. Yet many viewed it as another plank in the Catholic Worker Movement which also included Houses of Hospitality, the newspaper, works of charity and the farm communes.\footnote{Vishnewski, \textit{Wings of Dawn}, p. 161.}

Moreover, the CATU disagreed with the strategy of the Catholic Worker which offered no specific program for work within the unions or solutions to social and industrial problems. The Catholic Worker Movement favored a communal and more agrarian lifestyle which the CATU opposed citing the social encyclicals’ defense of private property.\footnote{Douglas P. Seaton, \textit{Catholics and Radicals}, (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1981), p. 55.} The Catholic Worker Movement considered its vocation as care for the victims of industrial urbanization and that harmony was found in an agrarian system. The CATU diverged further from the Movement by its attempts to Christianize the social order through an industrial apostolate. Specifically, the CATU wanted to concentrate its efforts on correcting the injustices of the industrial system from within the labor movement.\footnote{Richard Ward, \textit{The Role of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists in the American Labor Movement}, (Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1958), p. 55.} Expansion for the CATU required its own separate space. Within less than a year, the organization rented a loft on Canal Street, just around the corner from St. Joseph House.\footnote{Richard Ward, \textit{The Role of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists in the American Labor Movement}, (Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1958), p. 55.}

\textit{The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists}

The CATU, after only a couple of months, was “encouraged” to change its name
from the CATU to the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU). This was to avoid confusion that the “Church is directly connected with and supporting the Association” as a canonical organization. Some Catholic “officials” objected to the original title as it implied that the CATU was an authorized part of the Catholic Church.

The intent, subtle or not, was that the laity, untrained in theological matters, cannot speak directly for the Church. Therefore, as a Catholic lay group a “spiritual director” was required. Fr. John P. Monaghan, a labor activist and friend of Day who was already a familiar speaker at the Catholic Worker house, was approached by the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU) to be the organization’s chaplain and to act as a consultant in spiritual matters. Accordingly, this action was formally approved by New York’s Cardinal Patrick Hayes.

The inclusion of a chaplain did not compromise the ACTU as a lay organization. In fact, the appointment of a chaplain authenticated its Catholic spiritual character. The ACTU was a Catholic organization and was subject to the Catholic Church. The ACTU’s primary function was spiritual but also educational. According to the ACTU’s Articles of Confederation which cited Quadragesimo Anno, associations should “engage in imbuing and forming their members in the teaching of religion and morality so that

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721 The Catholic Worker, May 1937, p. 7.
722 John Cort interview (AUND) and Vishnewski, Wings of Dawn, p. 159. It is thought that New York’s Monsignor James McIntyre, later Cardinal of Los Angeles, had reservations concerning the title. See Ward, The Role of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, p. 58.
723 John Cort interview (AUND).
725 The role of a chaplain is to provide “services to institutions.” See Gerald O’Collins, SJ and Edward Farrugia, SJ. A Concise Dictionary of Theology, (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), p. 39.
726 Oberle, The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, p. 28.
they in turn may be able to permeate the unions.” The teaching portion was conducted by the laity as the ACTU was a “movement by and for the Catholic laity.”

Members of the Association often referred to themselves now as “Actists.”

Discussion centered on the publication of an newspaper and establishing chapters in Chicago, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and St. Louis. During its embryonic years, the ACTU occasionally sent members to assist with the creation of new chapters. It also assisted workers in their efforts to organize unions. But more often, ACTU chapters were established from labor strife.

**The New Deal and the ACTU**

The legislation of the New Deal era replaced labor alienation with institutional legitimacy. The National Labor Relations Act of 1935, popularly known as the Wagner Act, became labor’s “magna carta.” Labor’s right to organize without penalty was the long sought victory of the workers. Most of the New Deal’s programs received support from both Day’s Catholic Worker Movement and the ACTU. The ACTU endorsed the majority of Roosevelt’s “imperfect” programs but still believed that implementing the concepts of *Quadragesimo Anno* was the better way to bring about economic recovery. But understanding the new government regulations regarding labor and industry at this time proved to be somewhat crude and confusing for the rank and file. Additionally,

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729 “Catholic Workers Here It Is the ACTU,” AUP, Box 2, FF 4 and Oberle, *The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists*, p. 3
730 *The Catholic Worker*, June 1937, p. 6 lists the contacts and addresses for the Chicago, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and St. Louis chapters.
733 Betten, *Catholic Activism and the Industrial Worker*, p. 70.
734 Thorn, *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement*, p. 269.
friction developed between the AFL’s grudging acceptance of government involvement in the collective bargaining process and the CIO’s congenial acceptance to government’s regulatory role in labor-management negotiations.\textsuperscript{736}

These circumstances seemed ideally suited for the nascent ACTU. As the New Deal’s programs appear, to many Americans, to be innovative and experimental so were many of the principles and practices of the ACTU and its parent the Catholic Worker Movement. The appearance of the Catholic Worker Movement, and then the ACTU, ironically emerged at the time of the New Deal agenda even though Catholics were ambivalent about the New Deal. While many supported FDR’s programs and appreciated his “quoting of the encyclicals in support of New Deal programs” others claimed that New Deal proposals were “inconsistent.” They were “superficial” and emotional rather than effective in correct economic injustice.\textsuperscript{737} Yet there was no historical evidence, directly or indirectly, that the Catholic Worker Movement and ACTU were created as a particular Catholic response to FDR and the New Deal labor legislation.\textsuperscript{738}

However, the labor schools will become the ideal method for educating workers, Catholics and non-Catholics, about the Wagner Act and their rights as laborers and union members. At the opening of the labor school in Buffalo, New York, Bishop John Duffy urged all laborers to “learn the underlying principles and the Christian teaching relative to

\textsuperscript{737} O’Brien, \textit{George G. Higgins and the Quest for Worker Justice}, p. 21.

A precise reading of Dorothy Day’s works clearly illustrate that her intentions to assist the worker are based on her spirituality and her individual implementation of the social encyclicals. For further treatment see the \textit{Catholic Worker} paper and Mark and Louise Zwick, \textit{The Catholic Worker Movement. Intellectual and Spiritual Origins} (2005). The ACTU, is birthed from the Catholic Worker Movement to be more militant in its support of the worker. Complete history of the ACTU is contained within this chapter.
labor and industry.” Because the “most pressing social need in America is a well informed workingman.” As the New Deal agenda was further realized, the ACTU would become an vocal supporter vigorously backing its legislation and criticizing its detractors.

**Pittsburgh’s Catholic Labor Organization**

In Pittsburgh, Fathers Charles Rice and Carl Hensler founded the Catholic Radical Alliance in 1937 as a “group of priests and lay people who have got together to do something about the present social and economic mess.” The “mess” was the Heinz strike of April 1937 and the right to organize. Lay and clergy members of the Alliance marched with the strikers to remind laborers, and Catholics, that the Church supported unions. Their charter emphatically stated that the Alliance was based upon the social encyclicals of Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI and “the direct inspiration that set us in motion is the Catholic Worker group directed by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin in New York.”

Additionally, they defended the CIO and the Wagner Act against false assumptions by the clergy, particularly Fr. Charles Coughlin. Coughlin, a populist preacher, viewed the world as religiously right or wrong however, his radio sermons become exclusively political. Initially, he was a supporter of Roosevelt, the New Deal and labor reforms. Coughlin assessed his inexplicable personal theories on economics

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741 Fr. Rice’s notations in Convention Notes from Cleveland, August 31, 1940. AUP, Box 1, FF, 43 and William Bolts, “Pittsburgh’s Labor Priests in the 1930’s,” p. 20-23. AUP, Box 2, FF 32.
743 Catholic Radical Alliance charter. AUP, Box 1, FF 42.
744 *The Catholic Worker*, August 1937, p. 3.
were proper and Christian. But, by 1936 he turned against FDR believing that the President never intended to enact the reforms proposed by Coughlin. The priest was eventually discredited for his inflammatory anti-Semitic remarks and tacit support of fascism as a means to fight communism.\textsuperscript{746}

Fathers Rice and Hensler, in concert with Catholic laymen and women and with the approval of the local ordinary Bishop Hugh Boyle, established the Pittsburgh chapter of the ACTU.\textsuperscript{747} Instituted on August 30, 1938, the membership roster spanned workers in both the AFL and the CIO inclusive of brewery workers, canning and pickle laborers, retail clerks and others.\textsuperscript{748} By converting the Alliance to an ACTU chapter, Fr. Rice hoped to obtain the recognition and support of a national Catholic labor organization.\textsuperscript{749}

\textit{Detroit’s ACTU}

A “small group of zealous laymen” interested in the problems of the workingman form the Detroit chapter of the ACTU in the summer of 1938. It was a logical site since large scale industries employed an overwhelming number of unionized Catholics.\textsuperscript{750} In the Fall of 1939 the UAW Dodge 3 local struck and this mobilized the Detroit ACTU chapter. The press, and “radio priest Father Charles Coughlin, support the company.

The ACTU through the newspapers, particularly their own The Wage Earner, and radio rebuttals explained the position of the strikers and the injustices of the company.

This type of intervention by the Detroit ACTU brought it prestige and an increased


\textsuperscript{747} Fathers Rice and Hensler attended a New York ACTU meeting in August 1937 where they were encouraged to found a chapter in Pittsburgh, \textit{The Catholic Worker}, September 1937, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{748} Letter of Marie Connolly, secretary Pittsburgh ACTU chapter to Edward Squiteri, national president of the ACTU, August 3, 1939, AUP, Box 2, FF 1.

\textsuperscript{749} Bolts, “Pittsburgh’s Labor Priests in the 1930’s,” p. 26-28, AUP, Box 2, FF 32.

\textsuperscript{750} Oberle, \textit{The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists}, p. 4.
membership of Catholic auto workers “who had been unaware of the extent and meaning of Catholic social teaching.”

This chapter, after New York, was the most significant through its work with organized labor. The Detroit ACTU promptly instituted several labor schools and published the *ACTU Catechism* which was both an organizational aid and a response to critics of the Association.

Detroit’s Archbishop Mooney was known as an advocate for the worker, organized labor and openly supported the ACTU. In his January 17, 1939 address before the regional meeting of the Catholic Conference on Industrial Problems, the Archbishop stated:

> “Those who are familiar with the fundamentals of the Catholic labor movement will recognize that I am pleading for a lively interest on the part of priests and Catholic workers in favor of a Christian and American program like the program of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists.”

The importance of the Archbishop’s speech was that he identified the ACTU as an American paradigm to implement the social encyclicals. It was also an alternative to Fr. Coughlin’s provocative actions against organized labor. At an ACTU rally in Detroit, Mooney further described the ACTU as “Catholic action in the social field” and defined it as “a constructive program, it is a democratic program, it is a Christian program.”

Upon my review of the archival material, the ACTU was a program that in fact reflected America’s lay Catholics implementation of the social encyclicals.

**The ACTU as a National Organization**

The ACTU’s national growth continued in 1938 and 1939 when chapters open in

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752 McKenna, “The Story of the ACTU,” p. 454.

753 “Catholic Workers Here It Is the ACTU,” AUP, Box 2, FF 4, p. 16.
San Francisco and Chicago. The San Francisco chapter started as a result of the retail department store strike in the Fall of 1938. Unionized Catholic lay leadership discovered that Catholic employees and employers were not cognizant of the social encyclicals or Catholic doctrine pertaining to labor organizations. In February 1939, Catholic union leaders assembled to form the San Francisco chapter. At the initial meeting officers were elected and established a labor school to educate workers. Classes commenced immediately.\textsuperscript{755}

Chicago’s ACTU chapter, like others, evolved from labor turmoil. The city’s newspaper strike in the Spring of 1939 was the catalyst for the establishment of a chapter. Additionally, The Chicago ACTU backed strikers and assisted in organizing several industries. Some noteworthy examples were the Campbell Soup Company represented by the CIO’s United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers. Others were organized by the United Retail and Wholesale Employees union at the John Hagh Company while workers at the Chicago Molded Products Company were now represented by the Die Casting Workers local.\textsuperscript{756}

However in Chicago, the ACTU morphed into the Catholic Labor Alliance (CLA). It differed from the ACTU in that it accepted not only Catholics but Protestants or Jews who supported the “common democratic objective of building a social order founded on the principles of the labor encyclicals.”\textsuperscript{757} Although the group was still primarily Catholic, the Alliance’s objective was to ensure that secular unions were not divided along religious lines over religious issues. This was to “promote justice in

\begin{footnotes}
\item[754] The Labor Leader, May 13, 1940, p. 3
\item[755] Report of the San Francisco Chapter #6, ACTU. AUP, Box 2, FF 5. See pg. 251 for list of courses.
\end{footnotes}
economic life” for all workers.\textsuperscript{758}

The CLA’s mission was to accentuate a Catholic revival of the social order by the laity. Citing Popes Pius XI and Pius XII, the CLA considered that apostles to the workers must be workers as the “laity are in the front lines of the Church.” The CLA promoted its tenets through the operation of labor schools in the Chicago area.\textsuperscript{759} At these schools lay teachers conducted courses in labor, labor-management relations and vocational training.\textsuperscript{760}

**National Administration of the ACTU**

In the initial months, and even the first couple of years, the ACTU was preoccupied by internal strife over the formation of an agenda and the establishment of the Association as a national body. Co-founder John Cort, reminiscing about the early years of the ACTU’s national program, expressed his anxiety over this struggle:

“The first few months of the ACTU saw a series of meetings that to some were pointless sessions of hair-splitting, but to most of us meant the essential job of hammering out a definite program based on the wisdom and experience of the Church. We conceived our primary objectives as identical with social justice viewed from a worker’s angle.”\textsuperscript{761}

From these discussions the principles and constitution of the ACTU, predicated on the social encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI, was formatted. Cort perceived the ACTU’s charter as an extension of the passage from *Quadragesimo Anno* that promoted worker groups:

\textsuperscript{758} Bob Senser, “Catholic Labor Alliance,” p. 2. Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, (AKC) Cornell University, AUF Pamphlet Collection, Folder 6046.

\textsuperscript{759} Senser, “Catholic Labor Alliance,” p. 2, (AKC) Cornell University, AUF Pamphlet Collection, Folder 6046.

\textsuperscript{760} Bruce Rattenbury, “A New Beginning: It’s Catholic Council on Working Life.” AKC- Cornell University, AUF Pamphlet Collection, Folder 687163.
“Side by side with these trade unions there must always be associations which aim at giving their members a thorough religious and moral training, that these in turn may impart to the labor unions to which they belong the upright spirit which should direct their entire conduct.”

The organization’s initial purpose was to “steer a straight course between reactionary, corrupt forces in labor and the rising tide of united front revolutionaries.” The group intended to be a “militant effective opposition to Communists and anti-Christian domination of American unions by being a positive force for social reconstruction.” The supposition was that the ACTU will battle Communist infiltration and corrupt union officials within organized labor creating a constructive environment that promoted industrial democracy. By that, reconstruction of the social order was achieved.

The ACTU considered itself to be primarily a “religious movement.” The spiritual tenet of the Actists was to be “ambassadors for Christ on the waterfront, in the union halls and the picket lines and in the court room.” Cort and the other founders of the Association, inspired by the encyclicals and the work of Dorothy Day, claimed that “it is important that ACTU members remember that it is their ambition to save souls ... of the labor movement... of our industrial society ... of the individuals who make up that movement and that society. We are not a political movement but an educational and, above all, a religious movement.”

The goal was to be true “apostles” as the encyclicals advised, by introducing spiritual power, social justice, Christian principles, fraternity and

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761 Cort, "Catholics in Trade Unions,” p. 34.
763 *The Catholic Worker*, March 1937, p. 1. The ACTU considered racketeers, corrupt union officials and those who espoused anti-democratic beliefs as “anti-Christian.”
ideally, the Mystical Body of Christ to the working man. Employing these actions, the lay Catholic social apostolate endeavored to reform the social and economic orders through education.\textsuperscript{766}

The ACTU envisioned itself not as a union but as an “Association of Catholics who are members of ‘neutral trade unions’ in which the members may be Jews, Gentiles, Democrats or Communists, as long as there is a neutral ground respecting the religious principles of the membership.”\textsuperscript{767} The Actists used the term “neutral trade unions” as a reference to “bona fide” unions in general.\textsuperscript{768} The ACTU’s membership was divided among the AFL, the CIO, the Railroad Brotherhoods and other unions consequently the Actists remained neutral so not to be “biased in favor of one group and opposed to the other.”\textsuperscript{769}

Moreover, the ACTU did not officially or even unofficially, favor any particular union nor side with any specific organization. The ACTU was often criticized for allegedly supporting the AFL or being influenced by the CIO. The ACTU clarified its position through its newspaper the \textit{Labor Leader}:

“The AFL is a good organization within limits. The CIO is also good within limits. Both have fruits in common and each has its own special brands of faults. Catholics working in favor of Catholic social teaching have almost universally refused to take sides. Rather, they are in favor of both sides-within limits.”\textsuperscript{770}

The article highlighted the fact that from the earliest days of organized labor, that being the Knights of Labor, “the American labor movement has never had a better friend in the

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\textsuperscript{766} \textit{ACTU Catechism}, AUP Box 2, FF 9, p. 3-4.
\textsuperscript{767} \textit{The Catholic Worker}, July 1937, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{768} \textit{The Labor Leader}, August 12, 1940, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{769} Oberle, \textit{The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists}, p. 23.
\end{flushright}
United States than the Catholic Church.”\textsuperscript{771} The ACTU hoped and desired that unity between the AFL and CIO will come quickly as membership in the ACTU was “half AFL and half CIO.”\textsuperscript{772}

The ACTU, at first considered expanding its base from just Catholics to be more inclusive. However, this did not occur. The Association’s focus clearly was on Catholic workers in order to “organize and educate Catholic members of labor unions so that their union activities may be imbued with a Christian spirit and direction which will eventually bring a sound reform of the economic and social system.”\textsuperscript{773}

The Actists were equally adamant that the ACTU was not a separate labor union of only Catholics. The group declared that it was not a trade union and did not seek to usurp the “duties and prerogatives of the unions.” Instead, the ACTU’s mission was to “promote and foster trade unionism in America” as a necessary step in “building the new social order as called for in the Encyclicals.”\textsuperscript{774} The Actists intention was to work with organized labor and provide it with a moral code. This became a charism, that being a special spiritual function, of the laity and the vocation of lay Catholic union members.

\textit{Rights and Duties of the Membership}

Cort, and the leadership of the ACTU, formulated a code of principles that articulated a creed of rights and duties for the Actists. This policy derived from the social encyclicals. It was an invitation for cooperation among all parties with a long range view toward a just and moral economic order. Membership in the ACTU required an

\textsuperscript{770} The Labor Leader, September 5, 1938, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{771} The Labor Leader, January 3, 1938, p. 3 and September 5, 1938, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{772} At the ACTU conventions in Cleveland (1940) and Pittsburgh (1941), resolutions were passed demanding unity between the AFL and the CIO. AUP, Box 2, FF 4.
\textsuperscript{773} ACTU Catechism, AUP Box 2, FF 9, p.3.
\textsuperscript{774} ACTU Cleveland Convention Program Book, 1941, p. 3, AUP, Box 1, Folder 43.
unreserved adherence to implement these principles. The platform of the ACTU provided for eight rights and eight duties for the laborer:

*The Worker Has A Right to-

Job Security;
An income sufficient to support himself and his family in reasonable comfort;
Collective bargaining through union representatives freely chosen;
A share in the profits after just wages and return to capital have been paid;
Strike and picket peacefully for a just cause;
A just price for the goods he buys;
Decent working hours;
Decent working conditions.

*The Worker Has A Duty to-

Perform an honest day’s work for an honest day’s pay;
Join a bona fide union;
Strike only for just cause and after all other legitimate means have been exhausted;
Refrain from violence;
Respect property rights;
Abide by just agreements freely made;
Enforce strict honesty and democracy within his union;
Cooperate with honest employers who respect rights to bring about a peaceful solution of industrial war by setting up guilds for the self-regulation of industry and producer co-operatives, in which the worker shares as a partner in the ownership, management and profits of the business in which he works.

The national leadership considered optimum strategies to implement this platform. As the ACTU was a Catholic and religious group the spiritual formation of the worker was emphasized. Monthly communion breakfasts, attended by union membership, became an effective and somewhat informal affair to advocate for worker rights and

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776 ACTU Catechism. AUP Box 2, FF 9, p. 7. This creed is also located in Oberle, *The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists* and the ACTU convention programs. *The Labor Leader*, with the January 24, 1938 issue, commenced its “weekly series of articles explaining the different points in the stand of the ACTU as contained in the eight rights and eight duties of the worker.”
promote the activities of the ACTU. The Actists also organized days of recollection and spiritual retreats for workers and sponsored many of the various dioceses’ Labor Day Mass. The Labor Leader printed the Worker’s Prayer and articles about worker saints. But the group developed three specific set components as a system to bring the mission of the Actists into the American labor movement. The Association specified that its work was educational, organizational and legal.

The Catholic Labor Defense League

The Association recognized that labor justice required legal aid for the worker to utilize the law in the enforcement of contractual rights and to defend himself. It established the Catholic Labor Defense League to handle any legal matters that a laborer’s union could not or would not handle. This group of lay lawyers offered free legal services to any worker, regardless of religious affiliation, creed or race, related to any just labor grievance. Additionally, this service advised on “fair contracts, and help union individuals or union groups on interpretation of clauses of union contracts, union constitutions and by-laws.” The Defense League accepted cases from any and all workers even if they were not members of the ACTU. Usually these legal matters consisted of cases that a union would not consider because it was a minor case of no consequence or there were “political” issues that could impact future contract negotiations between the union and employer.

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778 The Labor Leader, September 12, 1941, p. 2 and September 30, 1941, p. 3.
780 ACTU Cleveland Convention Program Book, 1941, p. 3. AUP, Box 1, Folder 43.
782 “What Does ACTU Stand For?” AUP, Box 2, FF 4.
Assisting the Worker

The ACTU was not an alternative union and, except for the Communist Party or the Socialist Party or fascists, had “no political axe to grind.” The Association’s raison d’être was to build an organization of Catholic unionists who were already members of established unions. They offered a practical methodology to assist workers to organize, improve their employment conditions and according to Cort, “manning the barricades wherever labor fought a just fight.” The ACTU’s position was that Catholics needed to work from the inside not the outside of an established union to not only protect their interests but to “raise the level of that union’s policy closer to a Christian plane.” With ACTU members within organized labor, a Catholic labor perspective was available to debate the issues, review legislative proposals and consider the viability of political and union officials.

When strikes were called, the ACTU investigated both sides and if the workers demands were found to be justified, the Actists picketed, agitated and negotiated for a settlement. One such incident occurred early in the life of the ACTU. Actists, after investigating workers’ claims, met with both labor and management at the Aerovox Company in Brooklyn to mediate a resolution to the strike over a wage cut. The ACTU attempted to arbitrate but the company refused and soon closed and moved the shop out of New York to avoid the union. Throughout the life of the ACTU, Actists consistently supported workers’ causes and marched with picketers in New York, Pittsburgh, Detroit

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783 “Catholic Workers Here It Is the ACTU,” AUP, Box 2, FF 4, p. 2.
784 John Cort interview (AUND).
785 The Catholic Worker, July 1937, p. 4.
786 John Cort interview (AUND) and Cort. “Catholics in Trade Unions,” p. 36.
787 The Labor Leader, October 17, 1938, p. 3 and The Labor Leader, October 31, 1938, p. 1.
and other venues.\textsuperscript{788}

An equally important organizational effort was how the ACTU ventured to bridge the gap between labor and the Catholic clergy. During a labor dispute, John Cort secretary of the ACTU, was directly engaged in a strike at the Atlantic Mills factory in Stottville, New York with the Textile Workers Organizing Committee. He quickly acted when the local Catholic priest sermonized that strikes and unions were a detriment to the country and that the CIO was infiltrated by Communists.

Cort conveyed, to the picketers and Catholics, how the Church was in support of unions and the right to organize and strike. He also reaffirmed that the history of American Catholicism validated that the Church both defended labor and upheld national unions.\textsuperscript{789} The ACTU’s avocation was not only to educate the Catholic worker about Catholic social doctrine but to tutor the clergy as well.

\textit{The Labor Leader}

The most important activity of the ACTU, by their own admission, was education.\textsuperscript{790} Instruction and training allowed the Actists’ to communicate their platform, and the doctrines of the social encyclicals, to many American Catholics and most American workers who were uninformed. This program was divided into two parts. The first constituted pamphlets and newspapers. Due to costs, the ACTU did not publish many pamphlets but issued some important booklets. The first was in March 1939 with “Catholic Workers Here It Is! The ACTU, Principles and Methods of the Association of

\textsuperscript{788} \textit{The Labor Leader}, January 19, 1943; February 29, 1948, p. 2; April 12, 1948, p. 3; December 15, 1951, p. 2. The Executive Secretary of the ACTU, John McNiff, testified at a Senate hearing on racketeering and unions. See \textit{The Labor Leader}, Summer 1957, p. 2-4.

\textsuperscript{789} \textit{The Labor Leader}, May 25, 1938, p. 3. There is no evidence that any members of the Catholic clergy responded in support of Cort’s efforts.

\textsuperscript{790} ACTU National Council Meeting, Director’s Report May 1941, p. 12. AUP, Box 2, FF 5 and John Cort interview (AUND).
Catholic Trade Unionists.” Additional titles followed such as “The ACTU- A Catholic Apostolate For Labor” and the Detroit chapter’s “The Actists’ Catechism.”

Yet it was the ACTU’s official newspaper that distributed the Actists’ opinions and educated many Catholic workers about social and labor reforms. The Labor Leader envisioned itself as a forum “whose only criterion is truth and justice in light of Catholic social teaching” where “non-partisan reports on labor news-not found in the secular press” are published. Each chapter was “urged” to print a home edition of The Labor Leader containing material of local and national significance.

The Labor Leader was first issued on January 3, 1938 as a mimeographed newspaper for the local New York ACTU. Initially, it published rewrites of articles from other labor papers. As the ACTU became more established and membership increased, The Labor Leader had the financial resources to produce its own original material. It adopted the appearance of a conventional paper. The newspaper was the ACTU’s “official organ” for dissemination of “sound trade unionism based on Christian principles in the American labor movement.” The Labor Leader proudly claimed to be for the truth and declared that its journalistic impartiality made it the “only paper on the American scene today that is published for the good and welfare of the entire trade union movement.”

The Labor Leader’s position was “neither Capitalistic, Marxist or Fascist but Catholic” and that it published a “positive constructive viewpoint.” The paper maintained

792 “What Does ACTU Stand For?” AUP, Box 2, FF 6.
793 ACTU Inter-Chapters Memorandum #6, July 7, 1939. AUP, Box 2, FF 1. The Detroit Chapter printed its own edition titled The Wage Earner.
that its mission was to challenge the various political and economic systems, and labor racketeers, that oppose “good trade unionism…proper relations between employer and employee and the right function of the state in labor relations.” The newspaper acknowledged that workers have obligations but also natural rights and no “system” can impede those rights. This editorial established the standard that the newspaper adhered to in the following years. Throughout its run The Labor Leader was the tendentious scribe of the ACTU and organized labor.

The Labor Leader stressed that unity between the AFL and CIO was indispensable for labor progress and labor peace. The implications of labor unity, with the merger of the AFL-CIO were better efficiency in the operation of industrial collective bargaining and inroads to significant labor-management cooperation. It occurred when union membership was at its peak.\textsuperscript{797} For the ACTU, and many of America’s Catholics, the merger was a victory for those combating communist influences in the unions.\textsuperscript{798} Additionally, according to labor priest George Higgins, the CIO’s contributions in promoting racial harmony and social justice were now part of the larger national union organization.\textsuperscript{799}

The paper called on all laborers, even “white collar workers” to join a union and bring about equality. But true labor equality could only be achieved when the “Pope’s and bishops’ proposals” for social reconstruction were fully implemented. Application of those guidelines will achieve a labor-management partnership.\textsuperscript{800} For Catholics, and non-Catholics, this concept of labor equality benefited all workers. The principles of the

\textsuperscript{796} ACTU Report of the National Council Meeting, May 30, 1941, p. 12. AUP, Box 2, FF 5.
\textsuperscript{798} O’Brien, George G. Higgins and the Quest for Worker Justice, p. 90.
social encyclicals and the details of the American bishops’ 1919 plan for social
reconstruction were a blueprint for industrial harmony. This included just wages, safe
working conditions and a partnership between employer and employee as both share in
the viability of their industry.

*The Worker Schools*

The second, but most significant medium of the ACTU’s educational program
was the worker’s school. The executive council and many of the founders of the ACTU
were college graduates who believed in the necessity of training future labor leaders.801
Leadership was cognizant that the most effective type of learning came through personal
contact and the labor schools were devised for that purpose.802 While membership in the
ACTU was for Catholics only, the labor schools were open to all. The first worker’s
school was established by the ACTU on November 8, 1937 “under the auspices of the
ACTU and with the active assistance of Fordham University and the famous Dr. John
Boland, priest-chairman of the State Labor Relations Board.”803 The first classes in
midtown Manhattan, were free and open to “bona fide trade unionists” Catholic and
non-Catholic, men and women.804

Father John Boland, a priest from Buffalo and the first chairman of the newly
established New York State Labor Relations Board, was invited by the ACTU to plan a

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799 Ibid., p. 91.
800 *The Labor Leader*, April 30, 1938, p. 2.
802 ACTU Report of the National Council Meeting, May 30, 1941, p. 12. AUP, Box 2, FF 5. John Cort declared that the labor schools were the most important aspect of the ACTU, John Cort interview (AUND).
803 *The Catholic Worker*, November 1937, p. 3.
804 The initial courses of the New York ACTU consisted of labor history taught by Dr. Frank Downing of Fordham University’s History department; Labor Ethics training by Fr. John Monaghan the chaplain of the ACTU; Labor Relations lessons conducted by Fr. John Boland; Parliamentary Law instruction by Bernard O’Connell and Public Speaking lessons by Edward Scully, both of whom were labor lawyers. *The Labor Leader*, June 1, 1938, p. 2 & 4.
course of studies for the labor school. In outlining a program of study he considered the types of courses necessary to educate the worker in both spiritual and temporal matters. Boland presupposed that the laity was insufficiently conversant with the subjects of industrial ethics and the theology of the social encyclicals. Accordingly, due to the merits of a theological education, he wanted the clergy to teach classes on Industrial Ethics and how to apply the social encyclicals to the work floor. These classes were to instruct workers in the “spirit of Catholic social teachings.”

The Wagner Act (1935), sanctioned workers’ rights “to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing and to engage in other concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection.” However, Boland realized that the average laborer had negligible knowledge of the Act or “how to exercise this new right” against the illegal maneuverings of hostile employers or even union officials. He believed that lawyers were the best qualified to teach these subjects.

Boland was keenly aware that ordinary working men and women, and even union leadership, did not possess the skills or at times the courage to speak out on behalf of their rights. The priest identified two particular courses that were vital to Catholic labor education and fundamental to the ACTU educational program which were included at every chapter: public speaking and parliamentary procedure.

Public speaking empowered the weak to speak. These classes required all students

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to participate as either speaker, critic, chairman or discussion leader. Training workers to speak out for themselves at meetings assured that their voices will be heard and not drowned out by the foes of organized labor. Tribute to this came from Susan Bradley who organized the Domestic Workers Union in Westchester county, New York. She testified that as a result of her studies at the labor school she did not hesitate to address the New York AFL convention of 1400 delegates to advocate for her local.

The class in parliamentary procedure was usually conducted by a labor lawyer. The purpose of this class was to train union members in parliamentary procedures so they have the ability to “take the floor.” This strategic maneuver was to quiet Communists, racketeers or corrupt leadership from denying the membership their rights and empower workers to improve their union. Additional courses include labor history and eventually economics. Over the years, the curriculum incorporated subjects such as accounting, union organizing, the right to strike and collective bargaining.

The classes were fashioned to accentuate the concepts of the social encyclicals attuned toward “practical information and trade union angles.” The registration for the first year’s sessions totaled 221 men and women. In all, forty-seven different unions were represented: twenty-five from the AFL, fourteen from the CIO and eight

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812 The Catholic Worker, August 1937, p. 2.
815 Letter of John Cort to Fr. Rice, October 12, 1938. AUP, Box 2, FF 3 and The Labor Leader, April 30, 1938, p. 3.
independent locals.\textsuperscript{816}

The initial year of the New York labor school was deemed a success due to the significant number of enrolled students and the request for additional pertinent courses. Accordingly, the curriculum and venues expanded. For the second year of the school, sites at Manhattan College and St. Mark’s parish in Harlem were added. New courses also augmented the academic program. Dr. Friedrich Baerwald, professor of Economics and a former member of the German Ministry of Labor taught Economics. Classes in Trade Union Practices, which include collective bargaining, were conducted by William Treanor, a lawyer for the state labor relations board.\textsuperscript{817}

At the other sites, the classes were taught primarily by laymen although clergy such as Fr. Robert Brown and Fr. Michael Mulvoy both lectured on Labor Ethics. At the Manhattan College location Norman McKenna, who was the associate editor of \textit{The Labor Leader} and eventually a prominent member of the Detroit ACTU chapter, was an instructor of Labor History. Labor attorney Edward Sheen lectured students in Trade Union Practices. Courses at St. Mark’s parish in Harlem were taught by Harold Stevens, “a prominent Negro attorney” (Trade Union Practices) and William Harris, “well known in Negro educational circles” (Economics).\textsuperscript{818}

The classes were open to all with a nominal fee of fifty cents per course although many unions offered their members scholarships. Courses were divided into two ten week sessions and conducted as lectures and discussions in the evenings. After completion of a two year program a certificate of completion was awarded.\textsuperscript{819}

\textsuperscript{816} Vishnewski, \textit{Wings of Dawn}, p. 161.
\textsuperscript{817} News Release, October 7, 1938, AUP, Box 2, FF 7 and \textit{The Labor Leader}, October 17, 1938, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{818} News Release, October 7, 1938, AUP, Box 2, FF 7.
\textsuperscript{819} Certificate of Completion. Buffalo Diocese Labor College, from the 1950’s and the early 1970’s. ABD,
faculty consisted of university professors, lawyers and other professionals who were qualified to teach in a subject area. Services by these experts, naturally, was gratis.\footnote{Oberle, \textit{The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists}, p. 26.}

The ACTU and its labor schools became known nationally though “word of mouth” and “prominent mention and favorable comment” in Catholic papers throughout the United States.\footnote{The \textit{Labor Leader}, July 18, 1938, p. 1.} This generated a proliferation of the lay inspired labor schools around the country within a year or two after the inception of the New York’s.\footnote{The \textit{Labor Leader}, October 2, 1939, p. 4.}

But the ACTU’s education initiative varied from chapter to chapter and city to city as dictated by local distinctiveness. Even though Fr. Boland established a core curriculum, there was no national standardized syllabus or text. John Cort, co-founder of the ACTU for example, suggested to Fr. Rice in Pittsburgh that his “best bet” for worker education was to commence educational talks on labor ethics, labor history, labor relations and law, trade unionism and industrial organizations.\footnote{Letter of John Cort to Fr. Rice, October 12, 1938. AUP, Box 2, FF 3.}

The San Francisco chapter started its labor classes and forums just after the ACTU appeared. The basis of its curriculum was on specific and local needs. For example, State Senator John P. Shelley conducted a class on Labor Legislation in California which addressed that State’s specific labor laws as applicable to both labor and management. Other courses included Parliamentary Law by Casimir Norton and Fr. Richard Hammond teaches Public Speaking. Additional lectures consisted of: A Living Wage, by Larry Vail; Anti-trust Laws by Paul A. McCarthy; Problems of the State Labor Commission by H.C. Carrasco of the California Labor Commission and other pertinent
labor issues. In Chicago five labor schools were in operation; three were associated with local parishes. However, these schools were affiliated with the Archdiocese and not the ACTU. Detroit, with an expansive industrial base, presented vast opportunities for the Catholic labor apostolate. This produced an exceptionally active ACTU chapter. But worker education was under the direct sponsorship of the Church through the Archdiocesan Labor Institute which maintained forty-one schools. The Detroit ACTU sustained its presence in worker schools through coordination of educational programs between the Archdiocese and the ACTU.

A layman in Milwaukee, John Oswald, was tenacious in his efforts to establish a labor school there but his attempts were unproductive until the Holy Name Society intervened to form a labor school. Approximately fifty men and women, Catholic and non-Catholic, attended a ten week session on Parliamentary Procedure and a course on the Church and Labor Unions. This group became the basis for the foundation of the local ACTU chapter.

The Pittsburgh labor schools, according to the national leadership of the ACTU, were viewed as successful as New York’s if not more so. This was likely due to the

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824 Report of the San Francisco Chapter #6, ACTU. AUP, Box 2, FF 5.
825 “The Inner Forum,” The Commonweal, November 18, 1938, p. 111. By the late 1940’s the Archdiocese established twenty such schools.
827 The Holy Name Society is a canonically recognized international confraternity. The group’s purpose is to foster prayer, attendance at Mass and works of charity and Catholic Action. The Society was located in many American parishes and was particularly strong in the 1920’s-1960’s. See “Holy Name Society”, New Catholic Encyclopedia, (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), p. 74-75.
828 Brief History of the ACTU in Milwaukee, AUP, Box 2, FF 5 and The Labor Leader, September 26, 1938, p. 3.
829 ACTU National Director’s Report, August 31, 1941, p. 5, AUP, Box 2, FF 6. The Pittsburgh ACTU chapter was cited as one that “stands out above the rest” and that every chapter should “follow its example.” This chapter was very active in labor organizing, strike support, education and weekly labor
previous activities of the Catholic Radical Alliance and the persona of Fr. Charles Rice.830

Four workers’ school operated in the city and two others within the Diocese of Pittsburgh. While other chapters experienced fluctuating attendance, Pittsburgh’s student enrollment increased.831 The region’s large union membership, mostly Catholic, with the support of the bishop contributed to the success of the labor schools.

Bishop Boyle of Pittsburgh articulated his concerns that workers, and the general public, were misled by economic philosophies that opposed the fundamental rights of human dignity. He candidly declared that:

“Unfortunately, the efforts to solve the social question have been nullified sometimes by the subversive teachings of misguided agitators within the ranks of labor and a lack of understanding or appreciation of the problem on the part of the general public.”

To counter this, the Bishop urged “men and women, particularly union members, to attend sessions of the Catholic labor schools” where they will learn about solid Christian principles and solutions to the problems confronting labor.832

During the late 1930’s and into the 1940’s, diocesan sponsored labor “colleges” appeared which were not directly affiliated with the ACTU but modeled that program. The Detroit ACTU chapter managed its labor schools through the diocese. The Cleveland chapter did not specifically form a distinct labor school instead, it offered classes in labor organization and parliamentary law through the Institute of Social Education.833

By the late 1940’s, the ACTU claimed twenty-six worker schools: three in New

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831 *Annals of the Pittsburgh ACTU* (1940), p. 3, AUP Box 2, FF 7.
832 “Bishop Urges Use of School for Workers,” *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, September 29, 1941.
833 Pamphlets, Institute of Social Education. Archives Cleveland Diocese (ACD), Hoban File, Educational Institutions Folder. See Chapter 8 for specifics on the Cleveland ACTU and labor school there.
York, four in Pittsburgh, two in Saginaw, fifteen in Chicago and one each in Milwaukee and San Francisco. However, the ACTU asserted that “one hundred schools of a similar nature” existed throughout the nation that follow the curriculum inspired by the “success of the ACTU schools.” These schools organize in over forty cities such as Baltimore, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Hartford, Erie, Cincinnati and Omaha. Some cities accommodated labor schools at several sites. Additionally, the ACTU assumed credit for the Jesuit labor schools which were staffed by clergy.

The Benefits of Catholic Labor Education

Analysis of the Catholic labor schools indicated two evident components. First, even though the schools must be canonically sponsored by the local diocese to be recognized as a legitimate Catholic organization, they operated and were staffed predominately by the laity. Lay teachers, expert in a specific field of study, conducted class. The exceptions were subjects taught by the clergy that required a doctrinal background such as ethics or any lessons in religion and theology. The labor schools were explicitly an American lay Catholic enterprise customized for the laity.

Second, the central mission of the labor colleges and the purpose to educate and graduate students was to train lay leaders. These men and women were preparing for leadership roles not only in the union halls but in the parish halls of the American Catholic Church. Utilization of Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo Anno, and the formal education of the labor colleges, compelled America’s laity to be participants with the

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835 Diocesan Labor College File, Folder 1939, ADB and John Cronin, Catholic Social Action, (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1948), p. 229-235. A complete list of the schools with their directors and locations is contained in the appendix of this work.
836 John Cort, co-founder of the ACTU, claimed that the Jesuits started their schools after the ACTU’s schools were operational replicating the ACTU’s format. See Cort, “Catholics in Trade Unions,” p. 35.
clergy in the life of the Church.\textsuperscript{837} The labor colleges were an educational opportunity for a Catholic contribution to the life of the nation.\textsuperscript{838}

\textit{Decline of the ACTU}

The ACTU’s lack of a comprehensive master plan, and inability to progress contemporaneously with organized labor, ultimately weakened the organization. External opposition and internal disorder altered the course of the ACTU impeding its development.\textsuperscript{839} Examination of specific areas demonstrated how the ACTU, while at first an effective tool for labor, devolved into more of a rubber mallet rather than a sledge hammer for promotion of Catholic principles within organized labor in America.

From the time a small group gathered around a kitchen table to start the ACTU in 1937, discussions and plans commenced to take the local group national. The New York ACTU formulated a “preliminary” program for the establishment of chapters and their governance.\textsuperscript{840} The foremost matter of debate became the most effective type of organization for the ACTU and if the formation of industrial councils were viable for each chapter.\textsuperscript{841} Local chapters ultimately rejected this concept citing its divisiveness and that a “few others could use this as an excuse for stirring up Catholic bigotry” in the unions.\textsuperscript{842}

As the ACTU expanded throughout the country, it was the New York office that granted charters, generates national policies and attempts to apply control over the other chapters. But these events were done on a unilateral basis. The New York ACTU

\textsuperscript{837} Cronin, \textit{Catholic Social Action}, p. 42-43.
\textsuperscript{839} John Cort interview (AUND).
\textsuperscript{840} \textit{The Catholic Worker}, April 1938, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{841} Letter of Victor Lo Pinto of the New York ACTU to Fr. Rice, March 29, 1939. AUP, Box 2, FF 3.
\textsuperscript{842} Letter of Marie Connelly, Pittsburgh ACTU to Victor Lo Pinto, April 7, 1939. AUP, Box 2, FF 3.
“resolved that each chapter” submit their proposals to the New York executive board for consideration. Recognition could come only from the executive committee of the New York chapter.

To hasten the evolution of the ACTU into a nationwide organization, the New York chapter issued ACTU Inter-Chapter Memorandum #6 on July 7, 1939. It stipulated for a national convention to formally organize and regulate the ACTU chapters and establish operational rules and procedures for both local groups and the national office. The primary purpose of the initial national convention was to re-organize the Association on a countrywide level by adopting articles of confederation and the election of a national director, council and board.

In the interim however, the New York chapter independently announced that it should be “recognized as the main office” even though The Labor Leader reported that the “majority of chapters approved partial plans for a national organization” without formally recognizing the New York office as the national headquarters. Most of the individual chapters quietly acquiesced to this proposal to maintain a semblance of unity. However, other chapters would function more as a “franchise” rather than a “branch office” and often followed their own particular agenda.

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843 Letter of George Donahue, Executive Secretary ACTU to Fr. Rice, February 10, 1939. AUP, Box 2, FF 3.
844 The Catholic Universe Bulletin, September 6, 1940, p. 1. This is official newspaper of the Diocese of Cleveland.
845 ACTU Inter-Chapter Memorandum #6, July 7, 1939. AUP, Box 2, FF 3 and The Labor Leader, September 18, 1939, p. 4.
846 This is particularly true of the Detroit Chapter which, by its own initiative, published the “ACTU Catechism”. Its own newspaper, the Michigan Labor Leader later titled the Wage Earner, circulated throughout the Midwest and in other parts of the nation. See ACTU National Council Meeting. Report of the National Director, p. 12. AUP Box 2, FF 5 and Betten, Catholic Activism, p. 126-128. Other chapters such as Syracuse, NY and Rochester, NY never applied for an official charter and operate for a very brief time. See Robert McNamara, The Diocese of Rochester in America, 1868-1993, (Rochester: Diocese of Rochester, 1993).
**Attempts at Governance**

In the years leading to the first ACTU convention of 1940 in Cleveland, the executive committee concentrated more on a form and structure giving the ACTU the appearance of a union operation. Inter-chapter discussions centered on a design, emblem and trademark for the ACTU. Additionally, a national charter and constitution were under consideration. During the 1940’s the ACTU’s executive committee appeared exceedingly anxious about collecting dues from chapter members, affiliation and organization of chapters, creation of a logo and lapel pins, administration and the structure and authority of the national council. These minor distractions kept it from more significant work such as maintaining membership or promoting pro-labor legislation. The ACTU’s National Steering Committee justified these actions to maintain order and guarantee that a chapter was not “merely a paper organization.” Yet, the committee acknowledged that they have “no authority delegated to recognize a particular chapter.”

The executive committee session of August 31, 1941 illustrated an organization that sought a path but was not in unison on the future course of the ACTU. Wersing, a co-founder of the Association, suggested that they “became a small body and from us would come instruction and guidance.” Conversely Paul Weber, Detroit’s chapter president, viewed the ACTU’s future as a large influential organization on American labor whose responsibility was to “train leaders of labor.” The ACTU, he believed,

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847 Letter of George Donahue, Executive Secretary ACTU to Fr. Rice, February 10, 1939. AUP, Box 2, FF 3 and National Director’s Report to the ACTU 2nd Annual Convention in Pittsburgh, August 1941, p. 17. AUP, Box 2, FF 4.

848 National Council Meeting, Report of the Director, May 30, 1941. AUP, Box 2, FF 5 and letter of Victor LoPinto, National Director, to Edward Maloney, Pittsburgh ACTU. AUP, Box 2, FF 4 and *The Labor Leader*, May 15, 1939, p. 3.
should infiltrate and penetrate union organizations to change them. He also felt that ACTU “leaders must be paid.” His position was to shift the initial purpose of the ACTU from application of the social encyclicals to one that resembled other union organizations.

After several attempts and alterations, Articles of Federation were formally adopted at the 1947 national convention, again in Cleveland. This was the ACTU’s third convention and the first since 1941. A revised administration of the ACTU was established with a national chairman and a national council of members from the affiliated chapters. However, each chapter was autonomous subject to the provisions of the diocese where it was located. Voting privileges for the next convention were determined by the “average per capita membership” of each chapter.

The Articles of Federation detailed the mission of the ACTU whose purpose was to “aid, sustain and promote” unionism through the “Christianizing” of the workplace as outlined in the social encyclicals. Yet a main feature of the Articles was the new requirement that members “accept, adhere to and sign” a pledge. The membership pledge required that the Actists “see to it that their union perform its true function as a necessary means for men to win a better and more Christian life.” Consequently, ACTU members agreed not to “remain in a union that is run along Marxist or un-Christian lines.”

Actists now configured the ACTU to resemble the structure of a typical union or fraternal organization. Members were required to recite a pledge and wear an insignia

850 Minutes, Executive Committee Session, August 31, 1941. AUP, Box 2, FF 5.
852 Articles of Federation, 1947 & 1948; AKC, Catholic Trade Unionists, Folder 10722.
pin. There was a formalized structure with officers, an executive committee, a
sergeant-at-arms, rules for the collection of dues and policies for dealing with
uncooperative members and chapters.\textsuperscript{854} This development became an unintended
circumstance and not the original intention of the ACTU founders.

The ACTU continually encountered obstacles that hindered its ability to function.
Retaining members and adding new members was always an issue. At an animated
Executive Council session in late August 1941, a discussion ensued over this dilemma.
Peter Murphy of the New York ACTU, reiterated that the “ACTU is primarily a
membership organization. It was meant to have a vast number of people.” The
justification was that a “large enough force to influence” can have sway over the unions.
Murphy questioned the quality, and the numbers, of the new members. Many considered
the ACTU to be a “pressure group” that could resolve a labor-management issue and
these members came to the ACTU only “at a time of emergency.” Murphy expressed his
disappointment that many new members were often not retained.\textsuperscript{855}

At the same meeting Father Monaghan, chaplain of New York’s ACTU,
considered the matter from a religious perspective. He stated that “unless the ACTU
supplies a very definite need to Catholic men they will not join.”\textsuperscript{856} The priest felt that
membership will increase when members were provided something tangible. Martin
Wersing, a co-founder of the ACTU, endorsed this belief and further added that the
ACTU “must continue our efforts regardless of how unsuccessful they have been up to

\textsuperscript{853} ACTU Application for membership and pledge card. Hoban File, ACTU folder, ACD.
\textsuperscript{854} “What Does ACTU Stand For?” 1940, AUP, Box 2, FF 4.
\textsuperscript{855} Minutes, Executive Committee Session, August 31, 1941, p. 4-5. AUP, Box 2, FF 5. Membership is a
constant problem as is the collection of dues. The fees vary from chapter to chapter but were reasonable,
usually in the range of $2.00 to $5.00 per year during the 1940’s-1950’s. However, many members did not
pay or left if pressured to do so.
\textsuperscript{856} Ibid., p. 7.
this time, to get solidly within our ranks the Catholic man and woman. Without that we
are not going to have people in the trade union movement with a philosophy attached to
anybody.”

Post War Demise of the ACTU

This situation continued throughout the life of the ACTU but was more acute in
the post World War II years. John Cort described the condition of the Boston ACTU in
1946 as “moribund”; other chapters reported membership as “static.” In industrialized
and unionized cities such as Cleveland and Pittsburgh, lack of consistent membership
failed to make the ACTU a “mass movement.” Nationally the ACTU was “in the
doldrums” as chapters in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and elsewhere either disappeared or
remain stagnant. When the AFL-CIO merged in the mid-1950’s, the strong Detroit
chapter contemplated operating independently from the national organization.

Two other areas provided additional frustration for the ACTU: the Catholic Labor
Defense League (CLDL) and the official newspaper The Labor Leader. At the time the
labor schools commenced the ACTU created the CLDL which was staffed by attorneys
who offered their services pro bono. The CLDL was initially active and won legal
cases. But by the early 1950’s, only the New York City and Saginaw, Michigan,

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857 Ibid., p. 3.
858 Letter of John Cort to Fr. Rice, October 12, 1938. AUP, Box 2, FF 3; Cleveland Chapter Report to the
National Council Meeting, May 30, 1941, p. 1. AUP, Box 2, FF 5; Minutes, Executive Committee Session,
August 31. 1941, AUP, Box 2, FF 5.
860 Letter of Fr. Rice to “Frank” Unknown addressee, August 20, 1956. AUP, Box 1, FF 41 and interview
of John Cort (AUND).
861 The Labor Leader, January 31, 1942, p. 3, cites a case where the CLDL successful defends a fired union
worker. Another case occurs in 1948 when the CLDL wins a court injunction for his reinstatement. See
Unionists in the American Labor Movement. Unpublished Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1958,
which lists cases defended by the New York CLDL.
chapters had a functioning CLDL. The Cleveland chapter reported that there “are three attorneys but they have nothing to do for lack of activity.” At most ACTU chapters the CLDL was either underutilized or absent.

_The Labor Leader_ was the ACTU’s “official organ” as a national paper and each chapter was to publish its own local edition. However, most chapters did not print any paper and _The Labor Leader_ gleaned labor stories from other papers, mainly those from diocesan publications. This augmented the difficulties encountered by the newspaper throughout its run. Lack of financial support and qualified journalists diminished its ability to function as intended. Internal debate over the direction of the paper ensued over the years. _The Labor Leader_, previously a weekly publication, reorganized into a bi-weekly and eventually a monthly paper.

Maintaining a national paper was a daunting task. In the early-1950’s it sought assistance. _The Catholic Worker_ printed a request for new subscribers and financial aid for the struggling newspaper. Even though the Catholic Worker and the ACTU “have had many differences of opinion about fundamental questions in the labor movement,” Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement valued the opinions of these Catholics in the labor crusade. _The Labor Leader_, in its September 1959 edition, placed a full page advertisement warning that without financial assistance, the New York ACTU and _The Labor Leader_ will end and abandon its program of direct action and education. The last issue of _The Labor Leader_ was printed, without fanfare, in December 1959.

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862 National Director’s Report to the ACTU 2nd Annual Convention in Pittsburgh, August 1941, p. 13. AUP, Box 2, FF 4.
863 Cleveland Chapter Report to the National Council Meeting, May 30, 1941, p. 2. AUP, Box 2, FF 5.
864 Articles of Federation. AKC, Catholic Trade Unionists, Folder 10722.
865 Letter of John Cort to Fr. Rice, October 12, 1938, p. 2. AUP, Box 2, FF 3.
866 _The Catholic Worker_, July-August 1952, p. 2.
867 _The Labor Leader_, September 1959, p. 3.
Misperceptions of the ACTU

The ACTU’s mission, to Christianize the worker through action and education, often experienced opposition or misunderstanding from secular groups or even Catholics. Throughout much of its existence the ACTU was attacked primarily by the Communist in the *Daily Worker* newspaper and by Communist influenced unions.\(^{868}\) For many in the Catholic Church, it was more of a misunderstanding among conservative Catholics who did not favor organized labor and viewed the ACTU as a CIO operative. The Association’s purpose was not to be the standard bearer in the anti-Communist crusade rather; its mission was the integration of the social encyclicals into American organized labor.\(^{869}\)

Others misconstrued what the ACTU represented and this often depended upon the location of the chapter. Where negative views of organized labor were common, the ACTU was not received with enthusiasm. In Detroit and Pittsburgh, with higher concentrations of unionized workers, the ACTU was strong and viable.\(^{870}\) For some, the ACTU symbolized a “pressure group” to others it existed merely to assist with a work related grievance. According to Earl Krock the Cleveland chapter’s president, many there judged the Association simply as a “CIO propaganda organization” promoting their agenda.\(^{871}\)

Communists, The Cold War and the ACTU

From its inception, the assessment of the ACTU by many American Catholics,

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\(^{869}\) *The Labor Leader*, January 3, 1938, p. 3.


\(^{871}\) Minutes, Executive Committee Session, August 31, 1941, AUP, Box 2, FF 5.
was that it primarily focused on combating Communism.\textsuperscript{872} Editorials in \textit{The Labor Leader} denounced the lack of democracy in the Soviet Union hoping “that labor will never fall for the hypocritical cry of the Communists.”\textsuperscript{873} Pittsburgh’s labor priest Fr. Charles Rice founded an ACTU chapter in that city with a desire to offer active opposition to Communists in the labor movement.\textsuperscript{874}

Examining the influence of the communists on organized labor in the 1940’s and 1950’s, Catholic labor priest Fr. John Cronin, saw three types of a Catholic response. First there was denunciation and avoidance which was simply to criticize communism. Second, there was the positive approach, meaning the work done by the clergy. Finally, there were “counter organizations” which consisted of Catholic lay organizations such as the ACTU or the All-American Conference to Combat Communism.\textsuperscript{875} During this time, Catholicism and Communism became habitually linked. The ACTU then was sometimes perceived by many as an anti-communist organ of the Catholic Church and not as an educational or spiritual partner with organized labor.

As the Cold War commenced, the Catholic Church concentrated its attention on anti-communist activities and communists in the CIO. According to historian Steve Rosswurm, this was due in part, to Soviet activities in Eastern Europe, the perception by many American Catholics that the family was disintegrating because of social programs that were equated with communism and most importantly, the Catholic concern that communists operated the CIO’s political action committee.\textsuperscript{876} The National Association

\textsuperscript{872} Davin, \textit{Crucible of Freedom}, p. 99.
\textsuperscript{873} \textit{The Labor Leader}, February 28, 1938, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{874} McGreever, \textit{Rev. Charles Owen Rice}, p. 94. However Rice’s initial perception of the ACTU is that of a “debating society for dilettantes.” See also Heineman, \textit{A Catholic New Deal}, p. 151.
of Manufacturers circulated a pamphlet entitled “Join the CIO and Help Build A Soviet America.”\footnote{Nicholson, \textit{Labor’s Story}, p. 225. The pamphlet is dated 1938 and is reissued a few years later.} The implications against the CIO were tremendous and any linkage to them was suspect. Unfortunately the ACTU was incriminated when it supported a local CIO chapter.

Senator Joseph McCarthy’s investigations into communist influence in America garnered considerable attention creating a national paranoia. However in 1953, Catholics in general had an unfavorable impression of the Senator.\footnote{Donovan, \textit{Crusader in the Cold War}, p. 190. The polls indicate that 17.4\% of American Catholics in March 1953, have an unfavorable view of McCarthy; 16.6\% favorable and a staggering 66\% have no opinion at all.} The American Catholic Church did not identify its social mission with or indulge in the rhetoric of McCarthyism.\footnote{John J. O’Brien, \textit{George G. Higgins and the Quest for Worker Justice. The Evolution of Catholic Social Thought in America}, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), p. 331.} The AFL-CIO merger minimalized much of the left’s influence and Walter Reuther employed an anti-communist platform enabling him to narrowly wins the presidency of the UAW.\footnote{Robert H. Zieger, \textit{The CIO, 1935-1955}, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), p. 257.} The CIO commenced open warfare against communists purging twenty percent of them from the union with assistance from anti-communist liberals, the federal government and Catholic organizations such as the ACTU.\footnote{Ibid., p. 277 and Nicholson, \textit{Labor’s Story in the United States}, p. 254.} Some of these activities portrayed the ACTU as only an anti-communist Catholic organization neglecting the group’s other activities such as labor education, combating racketeering and union organizing.

The ACTU gained, albeit briefly, from these events.\footnote{The ACTU complains about union and worker apathy which will result in a loss of any gains. \textit{The Labor Leader}, December 1955, p. 2.} Membership increased and religious and spiritual events often attracted more participants than the chapter’s secular

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\item 128-130.
\item 877 Nicholson, \textit{Labor’s Story}, p. 225. The pamphlet is dated 1938 and is reissued a few years later.
\item 878 Donovan, \textit{Crusader in the Cold War}, p. 190. The polls indicate that 17.4\% of American Catholics in March 1953, have an unfavorable view of McCarthy; 16.6\% favorable and a staggering 66\% have no opinion at all.
\item 882 The ACTU complains about union and worker apathy which will result in a loss of any gains. \textit{The Labor Leader}, December 1955, p. 2.
\end{thebibliography}
activities. However, ignoring the ACTU’s fight against the communists in unions, many Catholics continued to attach a stigma to the Actists. Speculating on the causes, my analysis is that many Catholic lay and clergy were still in opposition to organized labor while others continued to view the ACTU as part of the CIO.

Catholic Misunderstandings

Within the Catholic Church there were some who cynically viewed the intentions of the ACTU. Various clergy consider the ACTU to be a divisive force. Fr. John Cronin, noted for his work with organized labor and as the assistant director of the Social Action Department at the National Catholic Welfare Conference, was guarded in his overall judgment of the Association. He alleged that “bitter factional disputes based on religious issues can entangle the labor movement” and that “simple attendance at a labor school hardly seems to fulfill the Pope’s desire for continuing religious instruction to the workers.”

Labor activist, Msgr. George Higgins, disapproved of the ACTU’s “doctrinaire attitude” in handling labor problems. He argued that labor issues were not “as black and white as they are alleged to be” and the Association’s resolution of them created more problems. He regarded the ACTU as a “pressure group”, to some degree, and argued that its actions created suspicions “even among very decent labor groups in some parts of the country.”

Fr. William Smith, SJ, who operated a Jesuit labor school in New York, criticized the ACTU’s principle that workers had a duty to join a “bona fide trade union.” Even

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884 Cronin, Catholic Social Action, p. 115. Cronin, a somewhat conservative cleric, offers his own opinion but does not supply any examples of how religious disputes will “entangle” the labor movement.  
though this idea was contained in the social encyclicals, Smith claimed that there were no pertinent theological justifications for it. However, he felt that a measure of credit was owed to the Actists for at least wanting “to do something about it.”

Some of the hierarchy in the East who condemned New Deal programs, and the CIO, claimed that the Actists were causing some working class parishioners to look unfavorably upon the Church. It was the working class Catholics who saw economic recovery as possible through New Deal legislation and those clergy who denounced these recovery efforts were not respected by those Catholics. The true and most important legacy of the ACTU was the formation of labor schools to educate the laity and the worker. But as the Catholic labor school concept proliferated, many dioceses established their own labor colleges as they suspected the ACTU was either influenced by the Communists or a wing of the CIO.

**Secular Criticisms**

Fr. Rice and the Pittsburgh chapter were assailed in their attempts to eliminate Communist agitators from unions. The ACTU’s activities in New York concerning the Transports Workers Union agitated their president, Michael Quill. The Actist intervened on behalf of some TWU workers who were punished by their local when they alleged corruption and extortion by officers of the union. Quill, an avowed communist, labeled only his opinion and no specific examples to support his argument.

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886 See *Rerum Novarum*, paragraph 49 and *Quadragesimo Anno*, paragraphs 83-87.  
890 Jay P. Corrin, *Catholic Intellectuals and the Challenge of Democracy*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 276-278. Additionally, Buffalo’s Bishop Duffy was an example of this mindset. See Chapter 7 on Buffalo for a further treament of this.  
the ACTU as a “bunch of trade union busters” and the Labor Leader as a “scab sheet.”

An article in The Nation magazine had the potential to instill mistrust and inflict damage to both the ACTU and organized labor. The author asserted that religion, particularly a Catholic labor bloc, “divides authority” with a result that unions configured along religious lines means “the virtual Europeanization of the American labor movement.” The article maintained that Catholics, like Communists, were controlled by “forces beyond the vision of most Americans.” The ACTU executive council condemned the article for its anti-Catholic rhetoric and the distortions of comparing Catholics to Communists and dividing the American labor movement.

Secular Labor Education

The ACTU was not the only agent of worker education. Labor education in the United States during the 1920’s and 1930’s was an invaluable means for workers to achieve positions of leadership. Organized labor, both the AFL and CIO, established labor schools and colleges that could specifically address the needs of unionists and their problems. The most notable program was the Brookwood Labor School in the Hudson Valley town of Katonah, New York.

Its educational program, which remained structurally intact throughout the school’s history, devoted considerable effort to supporting the basic goals of craft unionism. Brookwood’s intention was to provide a technically trained leadership and an intelligent membership. Course offerings were in “Trade Union Organization”;

892 National Director’s Report to the ACTU 2nd Annual Convention in Pittsburgh, August 1941, p. 9. AUP, Box 2, FF 4; The Labor Leader, March 25, 1940, p. 3 and Zieger, The CIO, p. 82
894 National Council Meeting, Report of the National Director, May 30-June 2, 1941, p. 10. AUP, Box 2, FF 5.
“Structure, Government and Administration of Trade Unions”; “Labor Journalism”; “Labor Legislation and Administration”; “The Strategy of the Labor Movement”; “Public Speaking” and “Training in Speaking and Writing.” The curriculum represented a pragmatic approach to labor education but also equipped the student to confront the hostility toward organized labor at this time.896

During Brookwood’s history, it combined the objectives of being a training ground for union organizers with the visionary goal of emphasizing the need for social reform. Yet Brookwood evolved into an intensely ideological forum where all forms of social and political persuasion from conservative ideas to radical doctrines were cultivated. This encouraged open dissent and while the college maintained an official non-sectarian viewpoint, the majority of students were sympathetic to socialist ideals.897

Other labor colleges emerged during the Depression.898 Commonwealth Labor College in rural Arkansas, described as a “Marxists institution”, operated for several years with a limited and unimpressive curriculum.899 Additional worker schools were primarily urban based such those in Portland, Denver, Seattle, Boston, San Francisco with a purpose “to prepare the individual worker, as well as the organization, for a share in the responsibilities of democratic control of industry.”900 These labor schools closed within only a few years due financial constraints, poor attendance, “courses of no

896 Ibid., p. 58. The curriculum appears similar to that developed by Msgr. Boland. However, there is no evidence that Boland or any labor priest visited Brookwood or other secular labor colleges. A close yet faint link was that David Saposs taught at Brookwood and he wrote about the Catholic Church and unions.
practical value to the worker” or indifference by some in organized labor toward worker education.901

**Mutual Defeat for Labor and the ACTU**

The war years impacted industry, unions and the ACTU. The post World War Two decades of the 1940’s and 1950’s became a time of contradictions. Controls on labor were instituted in the form of the Taft-Hartley Act. Yet the AFL claimed an increase in membership and the CIO distanced itself from Communist influence. Consequently the unions merged.902 The Catholic labor schools received valuable publicity that endorsed the adult education program which produce “some tangible results” for both labor and management.903 The ACTU continued to conduct yearly conventions and some chapters became innovative in their programs establishing credit unions.904

But there was a shift in America’s direction. For the nation’s Catholics and others, the tensions between labor and management did not dissolve in the 1950’s and 1960’s it was merely superseded by issues of civil rights or the Cold War.905 Business unionism replaced the crusading spirit of the rank and file as a unionized work force continued to shrink.906 Better wages and living conditions assuaged any discomfort that was encountered by the working class as it ascended into the middle class.

Catholicism in the post war years encountered an unprecedented growth and success not previously experienced. The overall national Catholic population increases

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904 *The Labor Leader*, July 31, 1952, p. 3.
from 1940 to 1960 from twenty-one million to forty-two million adherents.\textsuperscript{907} Returning war veterans enrolled in institutions of higher education and Catholics were attending college in extraordinary numbers.\textsuperscript{908} Additionally, America’s Catholics were now earning wages that placed them into the middle class. They were now upwardly mobile economically, socially and politically.\textsuperscript{909} On the eve of the Second Vatican Council, America’s lay Catholics “had arrived.”

At this same moment, the ACTU began to fade away. By the late 1960’s, due to a lack of national coordination and factionalism within the group, the ACTU disappeared.\textsuperscript{910} Labor education, the hallmark of the ACTU, was now incorporated into secular college curricula. In 1945, Cornell University, in conjunction with the state and some assistance from the Catholic labor schools, institutes the School of Industrial and Labor Relations as a labor extension program.\textsuperscript{911} Its program of study echoed that of the ACTU except for courses in theology.

The ACTU eventually vanished because the American Catholic Church, like the labor movement, has gone from working class to middle class.\textsuperscript{912} Interest in the social encyclicals and social justice waned in the economic surge of the post World War II years providing the illusion that all social ills had been remedied.\textsuperscript{913} Social and union activism was relegated to a lower status.

\textsuperscript{907} Hennesey, \textit{American Catholics}, p. 283.
\textsuperscript{910} Interview of John Cort (AUND) and McGeever, \textit{Rev. Charles Owen Rice}, p. 153.
\textsuperscript{912} Cort in Thorn, \textit{Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement}, p. 261.
But it was the ACTU’s educational programs that remained, in some form or substance, to this day. The labor schools, that concentrated on blue-collar adult education, were quietly absorbed into university curricula and became institutes of industrial relations, with emphasis on training labor and industry leaders as well as scholars who could do objective research in the field of labor relations.\footnote{914}{Gladys Gruenberg, “The American Jesuit Contribution to Social Action,” p. 535. Similar programs are established nationally at colleges and universities such as Cleveland State University, Wayne State University, University of Wisconsin and locations.}

Father Monaghan, chaplain of the New York ACTU complained in 1938 that “The Church has given labor too little leadership.”\footnote{915}{The Catholic Worker, March 1938, p. 6.} The mission of the ACTU was to provide training for Catholic lay leadership in organized labor. John Cort, co-founder of the ACTU, rightly argued that the Association suffered from some bad publicity and lack of support. Yet it was the ACTU’s educational programs that became the “motivator” for the establishment of labor schools throughout the nation. The value was in the courses that train “young trade unionists” and sustained an idealism in the labor movement.\footnote{916}{Troester, Voices from the Catholic Worker, p. 13-14.}

Social reconstruction, via the encyclicals, did occur although to a lesser degree than originally envisioned by the Popes. In the United States the ACTU acceded to a position in the reconstruction effort. Initiated by the laity and centering on labor education, the application of the social encyclicals was a paradigm shift as it was a bottom up rather than a top down program. Further evidence of this occurred in Buffalo, New York and Cleveland, Ohio, as the Catholic laity offer labor education programs and become a valuable partner with organized labor.
Chapter 7

Catholic Labor Education On The Great Lakes:

The Diocesan Labor College of Buffalo

Many urban areas in the Great Lakes region are habitually overlooked in historical inquiry as relevant or cogent since sizeable metropolitan areas tend to dominate any discussion in the application of scholarly activity. Yet in the narrative of Catholic labor education, Buffalo and Cleveland become significant. These locations provide the appropriate methodology to educate the worker about his rights and duties. The ACTU’s national program for labor education was a solid foundation yet Catholic worker education in these two cities evolved and became more than classroom instruction. Each city started comparable programs but they diverged and adjusted to address specific dilemmas. Guided by the principles of the social encyclicals, they expand to become a fundamental part of organized labor. Catholic labor education in Buffalo and Cleveland, confront the challenges to unionism and endeavored to build a partnership of labor and management to ensure industrial democracy.

These following sections examine the two Great Lake cities of Buffalo first then Cleveland as a manifestation of how the convergence of Catholicism, immigration and industrialization were motivating forces for the establishment of the ACTU and lay formation of worker education. The foundations of these cities were linked by location, commerce and religion. The demographics of their work force was essentially similar and both experience the growth and decline of industrialization. The collaboration of laity and clergy propelled the labor schools forward through the distressing decades of
labor-management strife. This collaboration, in response to the social encyclicals, ensured that an educated worker was equipped with proficient leadership skills to Christianize the workplace.⁹¹⁷

The story of Buffalo, was also that of Cleveland and other urban industrial centers. As corporations succeed profits increased. Yet as workers enter the middle class in the post World War II era, looming industrial issues such as static production values and standards were largely ignored. Buffalo remained primarily a steel oriented town and did not adequately diversify its industrial base. By the early 1980’s, deindustrialization, inexpensive foreign imported steel and a reduction in demand facilitates the shut down of the steel plants in the area. The economic conditions of the Niagara Frontier never fully recovered from these events.

**Buffalo’s Geographic Position**

April 23, 1847 was a significant but now forgotten date in American Catholic history. On that day Rome created three new dioceses: one on the Hudson River in Albany and two on the Great Lakes at Buffalo and Cleveland.⁹¹⁸ The sites manifest the expansion of a bourgeoning Catholic population as participants in the economic and social composition of the United States.⁹¹⁹ The completion of the Erie Canal produced implications for these three towns that reach far into the heartland of the country as it

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⁹¹⁷ “Christianizing the workplace” means the application of Christian principles and the teachings and the doctrines of the Catholic faith at the workplace and in the union. Oberle, *The Association of Catholic Trade Unionist*, p. 9-11.
⁹¹⁹ In 1847 there are 40,000 inhabitants in city of Buffalo with approximately 10% (4000) who are Catholic. William Smith, *The History of the Diocese of Buffalo, 1847-1867*, Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Catholic University of America, 1967, p. 17-19. Percentage of Catholics in relation to total population from 1900 to 2000: Diocese of Buffalo averages from 46%- 54% (1966 was highest percent); Diocese of Cleveland ranges from 35%-52% (1980 was the highest). Complied from assorted years and editions of *The National Catholic Almanac*, (Patterson, New Jersey: St. Anthony’s Guild Press).
transformed frontier outposts into major ports. As these villages developed into cities they epitomized the financial and political climate of the nation.

Albany secures its position as the state’s capital but was more aligned with New York City than with the rest of the state.\(^{920}\) Buffalo and Cleveland intently mirrored the westward expansion of America as immigrant populations sough employment and new opportunities in a new nation. Initially, both settlements struggled to evolve into potent commercial hubs. However the Erie Canal, for Buffalo and Cleveland, enabled both communities to expand into urban centers of commerce and industry.\(^{921}\) The Canal facilitates the shipment of goods from Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo and the Midwest destined for New York City.\(^{922}\) The increased commerce stimulates the development of business interests for both Great Lakes towns that continued into the twentieth century.

Traveling south from Lake Ontario in the late seventeenth century, French and then British traders, trappers, explorers, missionaries, soldiers and the native indigenous population, portaged at Niagara Falls and then continued onto the Niagara River. At the confluence of the river and Lake Erie, a settlement that is later called Buffalo Creek, gradually emerged as a hub of trade, business and industry.\(^{923}\) Buffalo’s geographic placement makes it strategically significant both militarily and commercially. As a result,

\(^{923}\) Debate continues on exactly how Buffalo receives its name. Some sources state it is named after the old French Fort Le Boeuf near Erie, Pennsylvania. Others contend that indigenous peoples refer to that area as a hunting ground for bison (buffalo). Some scholars cite the derivation as a corruption of the French “beau fleuve” beautiful river, but that is regarded more for the Niagara River while French explorers refer to Buffalo Creek as *Rivière aux Chevaux* or “Horse River.” The settlement is officially incorporated in 1808 as Buffalo. See J. N. Larned, *A History of Buffalo*, (New York: The Progress of the Empire State Co., 1911), p. 12-14.
the village was burned by the British in the War of 1812 but survived the conflict. Within a few years it emerged as a lakeside settlement positioned to become one of the predominant economic center of the Great Lakes.924

**The Erie Canal and Buffalo Commerce**

Soon after the war, shipments of wheat, flour and corn arrived at the docks from Mid-western farmers who desire entry into the markets of the East coast. Buffalo rapidly became a grain mill center constructing storage elevators along its waterfront. An industry that continues to the present.925 But it is evident that to reach those markets better transportation systems must be developed due to Buffalo’s isolated location. The need for a canal system was obvious and New York state constructed “Clinton’s Ditch” which opened at the Buffalo terminus in October 1825.926 Ohio’s grain crop, which exceeded other states, can now be shipped to the more profitable eastern cities. During the next fifteen years, before the railroads surpassed the canal for commercial transportation, vessel traffic in the harbor increases nearly 950%.927

The antebellum years were prosperous ones for Buffalo and the Niagara Frontier region. As entrepreneurs and immigrants settled in the area, industries materialized almost instantaneously utilizing the area’s resources. With the harbor, ships and sailors the city became a transportation hub and did a robust business in supplies, sails, iron works and alcohol. The lumber industry also dominated the area’s economy into the next

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925 Fr. John Boland, *Labor in Buffalo and Along the Frontier,* Unpublished manuscript, no pagination, date of authorship was approximately 1937. Archives University of Notre Dame (AUND), Box 1, Folder-History of Labor in Buffalo.
America’s production during the 1830’s-1850’s based manufacturing on a small scale. It was more artisan or craftsman in nature and Buffalo reflected this business model. Basket makers, cooperages, gun shops, harness and saddle manufacturers, iron and tin smiths were predominant in the city’s business district near the water front. Buffalo also established itself as a center for larger industries: brick producers, tanneries, shipbuilding, engine and pump factories, soap and candle makers, book binderies, grist mills and shoe factories where significant numbers of immigrant laborers worked.

Buffalo’s fortunes, however, reversed on the eve of the Civil War. The Panic of 1857 bankrupts many industrialists and the Erie Canal was no longer the economic provider it was once. But with Reconstruction comes a renewal of commerce and industry. The railroads replaced the Erie Canal as an economic lifeline. The resources of the Great Lakes, coupled with improved transportation systems, facilitated the growth of heavy industries on the Niagara Frontier. Iron and steel foundries appeared setting in motion the establishment of dependent and new industries. The production of locomotives and supplementary parts; rolling and cutting mills for nails; stoves, shovels, boilers and engines were fabricated in Buffalo at production levels that rivaled any city.

The late nineteenth century placed western New York at the forefront of heavy

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929 Unsigned. The Industries of Buffalo. Bricks were an especially important product. Local clay deposits were suited for this industry and most of the finished product was shipped via canal to New York city in the construction of the city.
industry and as a leading railroad center.\textsuperscript{931} The mineral resources surrounding the Great Lakes, the transportation links to the East and expanding markets in the West all merged at Buffalo. This preferential location, and the lack of organized labor at the time, initiated the relocation of the Lackawanna Steel Company from Pennsylvania to the eastern shores of Lake Erie.\textsuperscript{932} The steel industry, principally Bethlehem Steel, U.S. Steel, Republic Steel and others, came to dominate the economy of the area. Auto manufacturing located to the area capitalizing on the cheaper production and labor costs and a convenient supply of steel.

\textit{Immigrant Workers, Nativists and Industrial Growth}

With the completion of the Erie Canal, many of the foreign workers who helped in the digging of the ditch became permanent residents in the new town.\textsuperscript{933} The largest of these work groups were Irish Catholics. However, the influx of these immigrants during this period, along with the German Catholics who earlier established a presence in the region, were viewed as an economic and political threat which only fueled the flames of nativists against Catholics.\textsuperscript{934}

The large foreign element with its clannishness and European customs created a stir among native born Americans in the city. Suspicion grew as these groups stayed within their neighborhoods speaking in a foreign tongue and not mingling with the general population.\textsuperscript{935} The Germans and French occupied the area north of the city and

\textsuperscript{933} William Ketchum, \textit{An Authentic and Comprehensive History of Buffalo}, (Buffalo: Rockwell, Baker & Hill Printers, 1865), p. 78.
\textsuperscript{935} Leonard Riforgiato, \textit{The Life and Times of John Timon}, (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006),
the Irish to the south. These foreigners, unlike the native population, lived cheaply, worked at reduced wages and very often replaced native labor in factories and shops.\textsuperscript{936} Politically, the region was Whig territory.\textsuperscript{937} Spiritually, it was a Protestant area. Buffalo during this part of the nineteenth century was a contradiction of values as tolerance apparently existed, except in matters of church and state, as the true religion of Buffalo was business.\textsuperscript{938}

While the Irish and Germans were the prevailing laborers in the first part of the nineteenth century, other nationalities found their way to Buffalo for work after the Civil War. During the Reconstruction Era and into the industrial age, immigration to western New York aided in the growth of industry. The most prominent group were the Polish who began their emigration to Buffalo in the late 1860’s due to the consequences of the Polish insurrection against Russia in 1863.\textsuperscript{939} They, like most immigrants, settled into their own neighborhoods usually near their work places. In 1881, there were approximately 10,000 Polish immigrants residing in the city employed in factories and other semi-skilled jobs. By 1900 that number increased substantially; there were over 80,000 Polish residents of Buffalo, second only to Chicago, and most owned their home.\textsuperscript{940} The local observation was if all the Poles went away overnight many of the large factories in the city might go away as well.\textsuperscript{941}

\textsuperscript{937} Richard Brown and Bob Watson: \textit{Buffalo: Lake City in Niagara Land}. (Buffalo: Windsor Publications, 1981), p. 20. This is due, in part, because the Whigs advocate for protective tariffs to prevent cheap foreign goods from entering the city while actively seeking Federal funds to build the city’s maritime infrastructure.
\textsuperscript{939} Boland, “History of Buffalo’s Working Men,” no pagination. AUND- Box 1, Folder: History of Labor in Buffalo; Boland Papers.
\textsuperscript{940} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{941} Goodman, \textit{High Hopes}, p. 178.
Italians immigrated to the area but their numbers increased significantly at the start of the twentieth century. Most arrived as a family unit with an agrarian experience and sought to purchase farmland on the Niagara Frontier. Others found employment as stonemasons, tailors and cooks. Those who worked in factories also grew produce by their house and some started neighborhood groceries.\footnote{Boland, “History of Buffalo’s Working Men,”, no pagination. AUND- Box 1, Folder: History of Labor in Buffalo and Goodman, \textit{High Hopes}, p. 178.} At the start of the Depression, over 80,000 Italians resided in western New York. The demographic profile of the Niagara Frontier at this time consisted of Germans (14%), Irish (12%), Italians (12%) and Polish (12%). These percentages remained consistent for the next several decades.\footnote{\textit{Courier Express}, August 25, 1931, p. 5; “U.S. Census Summary. Population Bulletin, 1930.” U.S. Department of Commerce, 1933 and \textit{Buffalo Business News}: September 1942, p. 20 and May 1943, p. 25. United States Census: 1890, 1900, 1910 and \textit{Buffalo Evening News}, August 5, 1935, p. 1.}

\textit{Labor Turmoil}

With a new century, Buffalo was poised to be an international epicenter of modern industry. Harnessing the water power of Niagara Falls, only thirty miles from the city, implied cheap electricity to operate factories and the need for more workers. The population of the city in 1870 is recorded at 117,714. By 1900, that number increases to 352,387 and the city ranks as the eighth largest in the nation.\footnote{United States Census: 1890, 1900, 1910 and \textit{Buffalo Evening News}, August 5, 1935, p. 1.} As a center for shipping, industrial production and agricultural distribution, Buffalo was in position to become one of the largest cities in America.\footnote{\textit{Buffalo Express}, October 21, 1901, p. 5 and Goodman, \textit{High Hopes}, p. 131. Buffalo celebrates and promotes its economic and industrial achievements by hosting the international Pan American Exposition}

The account of Buffalo’s success as an industrial and commercial center also included the narrative of worker unrest and the fight for organized labor. As a burgeoning railroad center labor strikes among railroad workers were often marked by violence. The railroad strike of 1877, to protest pay reductions, produced extensive rioting, property
damage and the intervention of the militia to maintain order. A similar strike occurred in August 1892 over wages and working conditions. At first, there was public sympathy for the railroad workers and the Catholic Church supported the laborers in their “just cause” for better wages. But when violence and destruction arose, the newspapers denounced the strikers claiming that “the whole strike principle is wrong.”

The city, as a major port for grain storage and milling, witnessed several incidents of worker strife at the docks and mills. The most notable happened in April-June 1899 when the grain shovellers struck for a reduction in hours, increased wages and recognition of their union. The militia responded as violence erupted and deaths were reported. With the intervention of Buffalo’s pro-labor prelate, Bishop James Quigley, a settlement was negotiated and the strike ends. Work stoppages became rare but tensions remain at the docks for the next several years.

Buffalo became a principal international producer of steel when the Lackawanna Iron and Steel Company relocated from Scranton, Pennsylvania to the shores of Lake Erie. The company claims reduced production costs as the primary reason for the move. However, labor turmoil in Pennsylvania motivated the owners’ to leave. Strikes over wages, hours and conditions follow the steel industry to Buffalo and were ingrained in the narrative of union-management relations until the steel industry permanently ceased in 1901. At this event President McKinley is assassinated by Cleveland resident Leon Czolgosz.

Catholic Union and Times, August 18, 1892, p. 4.
Buffalo Courier, August 15, 1892, p. 1, Catholic Union and Times, August 18, 1892, p. 4 and Boland, “Labor in Buffalo and Along The Frontier,” p. 10. AUND- Box 1, Folder: History of Labor in Buffalo.
Goldman, High Hopes, p. 132-140.
operations there in 2001. Probably the most egregious event took place in September 1919 when company guards fired on the local police and striking steel workers killing one and wounding several.

Organized Labor and the Local Clergy

Efforts to unionize laborers in the Buffalo area commenced with the printers, shoemakers, carpenters, blacksmiths, tanners and tailors in the 1820’s but those associations were not viable. The local court in 1824, found the tailors’ union guilty of conspiracy. Strikes were common during the next few decades over wages and working conditions. Some of the labor unrest, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed violence, deaths and the insertion of the state militia to end the conflicts.

The laborers’ problems became a matter of consternation for many of the local clergy who realized that traditional religion was failing the working class. Methodist minister Dr. Thomas Slicer, a Social Gospel reformer, advocated for the formation of unions. Dr. Henry Adams of St. Paul’s Episcopal Cathedral, another promoter of the worker, preached that the churches must “turn their eyes from heaven and worry instead about the evils on earth.”

For Buffalo’s Catholic Church, support for the working class was heralded on August 16, 1888, when the Vatican issued its statement on labor and unions in America.

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952 Interview with Mike Malyak and Don Williams August 1, 2012, retired Bethlehem Steel workers each with over thirty years at the mill. They state that labor-management relations were always “rocky and never that great” during their tenure at the mill and in their conversations with “the old timers” who worked there before they did, those workers allude to a similar experience.

953 Buffalo Morning Express, September 21, 1919, p. 5 and Goodman, High Hopes, p. 207.


955 Buffalo Morning Express, August 17, 1890, p. 7.

956 Sunday Morning Truth, November 22, 1891, p. 9.
Rome did not specifically identify any union but granted conditional approval for Catholics to join such associations provided they do not operate in secrecy nor promote socialism.957 Catholics were now free to join unions without fear of excommunication. Pope Leo’s pronouncement of *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, further linked the Church to the workers’ as the document promoted the dignity of the worker and the right to organize.958 These events will help move the Catholic Church in Buffalo to the forefront of support for workers and organized labor.

**Organized Labor and The Diocese of Buffalo**

The city’s religious demographics shifted due to the influx of immigrants. A predominately Protestant town in 1847, Buffalo contained an overwhelming Catholic majority by the end of the 1800’s.959 Laborers in the area who were primarily Catholic, viewed local government and corporate management as entities against the worker. However, they considered the Church as their friend who can guide and assist the worker.960 With *Rerum Novarum*, Catholic workers and the clergy in Buffalo now unite in their attempts to implement change.


958 See *Rerum Novarum*, paragraphs 49-53 and Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

959 In 1847 there are 40,000 inhabitants in the city of Buffalo with approximately 10% (4000) who are Catholic. By 1880, the population of Buffalo is 155,134. Nearly 70% of that are foreign born or an immediate descendant of a foreigner. The Catholic population in Buffalo is approximately 88,000 or 57% of the total. Percentage of Catholics in relation to total population from 1900 to 2000 for the Diocese of Buffalo averaged from 46%- 54% (1966 was highest percent). U.S. Census Report, various years; City Directory of Buffalo, New York, various years and Carl Bucki, *A Stacked Deck: Frustration and Politics in Buffalo’s Polish Community*, Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Cornell University, 1974, p. 9-14; William Smith, *The History of the Diocese of Buffalo, 1847-1867*. Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Catholic University of America, 1967, p. 17-19 and complied from assorted years and editions of *The National Catholic Almanac*, (Patterson, New Jersey: St. Anthony’s Guild Press).

960 Catherine Mary Collins, *A Brief History of the Labor College of Buffalo, New York* (1939-1948), Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Canisius College, 1948, p. 7. Collins was the appointed to the Executive Committee of the Buffalo Diocesan Labor College and was a personal friend of Msgr. Boland. Her master’s thesis was based on her actual work with and reminiscences about the Buffalo Labor College.
The collaboration of Church and labor in Buffalo started with Bishop James Quigley (1896-1903) who became directly involved in resolving the grain scoopers’ strike in 1899. The bishop, like those of his time, opposed any form of Communism or Socialism and sought to keep it out of organized labor. Quigley reaffirmed that the Church “does not condemn labor unions” but only those unions that are “imbued with the poisonous doctrines” of socialism. The prelate recommended that employers and employees study Leo’s encyclical on the labor question as a method to secure the “material, spiritual and religious interests of the working man.” Quigley’s suggestion for Catholic employer-employee education was the first such known mention of labor education in Buffalo.

With the turmoil of the Great Depression, the local clergy and hierarchy became acutely aware of the struggles of the worker and realize that action must be taken to defend the laborer. During the next few decades prelates such as John Duffy (1937-1944), John O’Hara (1945-1951), Joseph Burke (1952-1962) and Edward Head (1973-1995) all supported workers, organized labor and the development of a labor school. Bishop Duffy, at the opening of the Buffalo labor school’s second year, stated that it was the “most valuable in the entire state of New York” because those attending were “Crusaders” in social reconstruction and labor reform.

**Buffalo’s Forgotten Labor Priests**

The history of the American Catholic Church, from approximately the time of

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963 Bishop Burke, at the Labor College Commencement in 1952, declares that the Church will “defend the rights of the laboring men right down to the end.” The Catholic Labor Observer, March 27, 1952, p. 1.
964 Address by the Most Reverend John Duffy, Opening Forum of the Labor College, Diocese of Buffalo, October 7, 1940; AUND Box 1, Folder-Talks, Labor.
*Rerum Novarum*, shows an increased involvement of clergy in the labor movement and the beginning of the labor priest tradition. Buffalo also had its own labor priests who collaborated with unions and workers in both the AFL and CIO and who were integral in the local Church’s support of labor. In the 1930’s and 1940’s Fr. William Kelley directed the educational program of local unions affiliated with the AFL. Fr. Charles Maxwell served as spiritual director and organizer for both the Textile Workers’ Organizing Committee and the Steel Workers’ Organizing Committee which were CIO affiliates.

In the 1950’s Msgr. Stanley Kulpinski, a highly regarded labor priest and the second director of the Buffalo Diocesan Labor school, was a powerful force against Communist sympathizers in organized labor. Much of his work to combat these negative influences was accomplished through private meetings with local unionists who were searching for ways and means to rid their unions of Communists.

The Monsignor also denounced union racketeering and corrupt labor leaders such as James Hoffa and David Beck who promoted a “philosophy that holds that labor is a commodity, something to be sold in the marketplace for a price.” Kulpinski was highly respected among local labor and management in this battle.

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968 United Steel Workers Local 2604 News, November 18, 1957. Special Collections, Butler Library, Buffalo State College, Folder-Local Unions, USW.

was known as a pro-labor and anti-corruption labor priest he was often asked to supervise secret votes at the various locals. 970

**Fr. John Boland**

The most prominent labor priest in western New York, and possibly the nation, was Fr. John Boland. In the Buffalo area he actively supported workers picketing with them and often preached and wrote in defense of organized labor. 971 Due to the priest’s experience with labor relations and mediation, New York’s Senator Wagner advised Boland that President Roosevelt had appointed the priest to be the first chairman of the New York State Labor Relations Board. 972 After the Second World War, Boland was sent to Japan where he assisted many unions in their attempts to halt communist infiltration of organized labor. Throughout his life Boland remained active as a labor mediator and educator but regarded education, particularly the education of the worker, to be his primary mission. 973

Fr. Boland’s interest in labor issues and the treatment of workers germinated when as a young boy, he delivered his father’s lunch at the Erie Canal docks. Boland’s father was a grain scooper and active in organizing the workers into Local 51 of the International Longshoremen’s union. As a witness to the antagonistic labor-management environment, the strikes, violence and hazardous working conditions, Boland was

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970 United Steel Workers Local 2121 News, September 28, 1962. Kulpinski supervises Local 2121 vote on a wage reduction request by Bethlehem Steel. Special Collections, Butler Library, Buffalo State College, Folder-Local Unions, USW.
972 “Catholic Priest First Regional Director in Buffalo,” James J. Palermo, Assistant to the Regional Director, Region Three, Buffalo, New York. ABD, Diocesan Labor College, Folder-Boland Articles and Sullivan, Go To The Workingman, v.2, p. 8, AUND: Box 2. Wagner suggests to FDR that he appoint Boland to be the Chairman, Boland is appointed in 1937 and shuttles between New York city and Buffalo in his capacity as both priest and mediator. He serves as the Chairman until 1942.
973 Speech to nurses at Sister’s Hospital, Buffalo, NY; October 18, 1920; AUND- Box 1, Folder: Talks and Labor Reports and The Catholic Laborer Observer, August 25, 1949, p. 1.
determined to secure an education and become a priest. He resolved that his ministry will concentrate on labor with a personal dictum of “go to the workingman.”

Born in Buffalo in 1888 of Irish immigrant parents, Boland was ordained at Rome in 1911 and served in many positions within the Diocese of Buffalo. Boland’s priestly career as a pastor, a judge on the marriage tribunal and director of the local Catholic hospital association illustrated his profound spiritual and professional development. These pastoral and administrative skills prove invaluable in his service as an innovative labor priest. His eventual appointment, as a vice president, to the National Catholic Industrial Conference and professor of labor relations at Fordham University brought him into contact with members of the Catholic Association of Trade Unionists (which becomes the ACTU). His relationship with the ACTU alters the course of Catholic labor education in the nation as Boland developed a core curriculum of labor courses that were implemented nationally.

Foundations of the Buffalo Labor College

Buffalo’s position as an industrialized and union city, was ideally suited to host a regional meeting of the Catholic Conference on Industrial Problems in November 1927. This symposium on industrial problems, held in various industrialized cities, brought together union officers and corporation executives, economists and others versed in Catholic social thought to discuss resolutions to labor-management issues. A second

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977 Archives Buffalo Diocese (ABD), Diocesan Labor College, Folder-Conference on Industrial Problems.
conference convened at Buffalo in December 1934. This conference was critical to Buffalo’s labor priest, Father John Boland, as it was the genesis of the Diocesan Labor College. Boland was a featured speaker at the conference. There he listened as others spoke about the social encyclicals as a catalyst to implement labor reform through education.

Linna E. Bresette, a laywoman and the field secretary of the Social Action Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference who sponsored the symposium, described the conference as a method for “translating the word and principles of Catholic social teaching into living knowledge of how the teaching is to be applied to the United States.” At the conclusion of the conference, Bresette advised Fr. Boland to commence a Study Club to examine the problems of wages and working conditions. He acts on the laywoman’s advice and formed a Study Club which eventual evolved into the Diocesan Labor College several years later. Because of Bresette’s impetus, Fr. Boland titled her as “foundress of the labor school.”

The Catholic Study Club groups assembled weekly to discuss pertinent topics on labor, the resolution of labor problems and the Church’s role in these matters. Boland was moderator to one of these clubs designated as the “Institute For Social and Economic Problems” that met monthly. These groups read and studied the social encyclicals,

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979 The Echo, December 6, 1934, p. 1-2; Catholic Labor Observer, April 26, 1951, p. 3; Sullivan, Go To The Workingman, p. 44-45. AUND, Box 2 and Boland: “Catholic Industrial Conference on Industrial Problems”, December 18-19, 1934, AUND, Box 2, Folder: Editorials and Speeches.
980 The Echo, December 6, 1934, p. 1-2.
981 Some of Bresette’s duties at the NCWC included “unofficial” assistance to dioceses in the formation of labor educational programs. See The Labor Leader, March 25, 1940, p. 3.
982 The Buffalo Courier Express, October 1, 1939, p. 2.
983 Catholic Labor Observer, April 26, 1951, p. 3. The Catholic Labor Observer was the official newspaper of the Buffalo Labor College and was published from 1945-1958. Msgr. Boland was the editor.
Fr. John Ryan’s *A Living Wage* and examined Communism, Fascism, the Medieval guild system and trade unionism.\textsuperscript{985}

However, the priest realized that the Study Clubs were insufficient to fulfill the needs of the workers and attendees. Workers were improperly trained in a solid foundation of industrial relations or how to execute those elements of the Wagner Act, and other components of New Deal legislation, that were vital to their employment. Fr. Boland maintained that knowledge and leadership in this matter can from worker schools.\textsuperscript{986}

In 1937, Boland commenced a personnel management course at the University of Buffalo eventually transferring some of that curriculum into the educational agenda of the ACTU which he developed later that year.\textsuperscript{987} Boland wanted to replicate an educational platform like the ACTU’s in Buffalo in order to combat worker ignorance and indifference.\textsuperscript{988} In the Summer of 1939, he requested permission from Buffalo’s Bishop John Duffy to establish an educational institution to teach laborers how to utilize the social encyclicals in the work place and to study subjects pertinent to their employment.

**Organizing the Labor School**

The Bishop promptly approved the school and named Boland as the director.\textsuperscript{989} Bishop John Duffy regarded the laborer with utmost esteem as he was an active member of the International Boilermakers Union having worked as a boiler maker in Elizabeth and Bayonne, New Jersey. “I speak of the laboring man not from an academic

\textsuperscript{985} Fr. Fortan, who was an assistant director of the Labor College, interviewed Msgr. Boland who provided his recollections of the founding of the Buffalo Labor College. See Fortan, *History of the Diocesan Labor College of Buffalo*, p. 8. Also, Collins, *A Brief History of the Labor College of Buffalo*, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{986} *The Labor Leader*, September 26, 1938, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{987} *Buffalo Courier Express*, September 24, 1937, p. 12.

professorial chair but from practical experience,” he declared. Duffy, with some pride, stated “I heated rivets in the middle of August and know the hours and the efforts demanded of the laborer to earn his inadequate wage.” Hereafter, Buffalo’s endeavor at labor education received unwavering hierarchical backing throughout its tenure.

Boland appointed the lay leadership of his Study Club to organize the labor school and form an executive committee. It was his intention that the labor school be the work of the lay apostolate. The Christian Brothers offered the use of their high school, St. Joseph’s Collegiate Institute, as the initial site for the labor college. Wanting to attract the greatest number of students, no formal education was required and similar to the ACTU, no fee was charged. Enrollment was “open to anyone who is interested in Catholic social teachings and in social, economic and industrial problems.” Publicity for the labor school was conducted through talks by the Study Club to Catholic groups, advertising in the diocesan newspaper, through flyers distributed at union meetings and Fr. Boland’s request to his confrères to promote the school to their parishioners. Courses and lectures were scheduled for Monday evenings from 8:00 PM to 10:00 PM conducted over two semesters.

The primary function of the labor school, initially, was simply to promulgate the principles of economic and social justice as stated in the social encyclicals. The courses were to teach the worker to seek economic solutions to the problems of the time and

989 Fortan, History of the Diocesan Labor College of Buffalo, p. 10.
990 The Labor Leader, October 16, 1939, p. 1.
991 Collins, A Brief History of the Labor College of Buffalo, New York, p. 11.
992 ABD: Diocesan Labor College, Folder-“Labor College, Diocese of Buffalo. Resume, October 16-December 31, 1939.”
993 The Union & Echo, October 19, 1939, p. 2 and Collins, A Brief History of the Labor College of Buffalo, New York, p. 11 and advertisements for the labor school in different parish bulletins spanning several years, ADB: Diocesan Labor College, Folder-Miscellaneous.
train the laborer for intelligent and conscientious leadership. The school was to serve both labor and management although in the early years laborers comprised the majority of the students. Many years later, individuals from management attended the school.

Boland selected the term “labor college” instead of labor school as he considered it to be an institution of higher education in labor problems. The original plan of Fr. Boland and the executive committee, was to train lay teachers at the “college” who will then present a less extensive version of the program at parishes. The graduates from the parishes will advance to the labor college however, this arrangement never materialized. Although throughout its tenure the official title remained Diocesan Labor College.

With auspicious anticipation, the school opened on October 16, 1939. Bishop Duffy detailed the reasons for the urgent necessity of such an institution. “Probably the most pressing social need in America today is the well informed workingman” asserted the Bishop. He announced that the Diocese of Buffalo was establishing a labor school because:

“The purpose of this institution is to make clear the rightful claims of the workingman and to justify on the grounds of reason and moral principles a rightful position in the face of the industrial situation prevailing in America today.”

He urged every workingman of the various unions to “avail themselves of the opportunity to learn the underlying principles and the Christian teaching relative to labor and industry.” With knowledge and moral principles, the Bishop declared, can the
workingman better his condition. 998

The first class totaled seven hundred eighty-four students. It was overwhelming and unexpected. 999 Fifty unions were represented consisting of one hundred occupations of skilled and unskilled labor, predominately Catholic with some non-Catholics. The men outnumbered the women two to one and “several Negros attended regularly.” 1000

Initial Curriculum and the Early Years

The courses mirrored those of the New York ACTU, which Boland had formulated, and the faculty provided their services pro bono. Fr. Thomas O’Connor, C.M. and Fr. Francis Hinton, C.M., professors at nearby Niagara University taught Catholic Labor Ethics. The Labor Relations course was conducted by Cyril Kavanagh, regional attorney for the New York State Labor Relations Board. Attorneys Edward Flaherty and Peter Crotty, later Erie County Democratic Chair, lectured on Parliamentary Procedures. American Labor History, Court Practice and Labor Law instruction was taught by Daniel Shortal, regional attorney for the National Labor Relations Board. Brother Dominic from the faculty of St. Joseph’s high school taught Labor Economics. 1001

The preliminary weeks of the labor college were so successful that representatives from labor and some companies requested the addition of a course on Industrial Management. This was added and taught by Dr. Horace Frommelt, formerly from Marquette University and editor of the diocesan Catholic paper. 1002 The objective was to instruct employers and employees to recognize workers, labor organizations and

999 Fortan, History of the Diocesan Labor College of Buffalo, p. 18.
1001 Buffalo Courier Express, October 1, 1939, p. 2; The Labor Leader, October 16, 1939, p.1; The Union and Echo, October 19, 1939, p. 2 and Fortan, History of the Diocesan Labor College of Buffalo, p. 18-21.
1002 The Union and Echo, November 16, 1939, p. 8 and Collins, A Brief History of the Labor College of
managers as effective allies in an industrial society as capital and labor were natural partners. Frommelt’s course stressed that man came before profits and that a living wage must follow. The class, according to Frommelt, was to be a straightforward method for the reconstruction of society by utilizing Christianity “in unions, homes, clubs- as workers, as employers and as citizens.” This particular course proved extremely popular among both workers and employers as an agency and opportunity for analysis of labor-management relations. It became the foundation for the Labor College’s future method for mediation between employer and employee.

Bishop Duffy awarded Certificates of Attendance to three hundred twenty-five graduates in April 1940. The Labor College was initially successful because it responded to the workers’ need for specific labor education. Boland’s intention was to maintain peaceful labor-management relations utilizing the social encyclicals to instruct laborers about their rights to organize, to a living wage and to be partners with management. He additionally wanted Catholics to be knowledgeable about the social doctrines of their faith.

Even though the New York ACTU chapter started its school before Buffalo’s, Fr. Boland’s Labor College garnered considerable local and national attention from the start. Paul Benjamin of the Buffalo Council of Social Agencies requested information from the school’s executive committee on how his graduate students at the University of Buffalo

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*Buffalo, New York,* p. 12.

Outline of Course in Industrial Management, 1939-1940. ABD- Diocesan Labor College, Folder-Course Description, 1939-1942.

*Buffalo Evening News,* December 12, 1939, p. 8.

*Buffalo Evening News,* April 29, 1940, p. 13. After a strong initial enrollment, over half the students discontinue their studies by the end of the school year. The records suggest that many came to see if this was pertinent for them while others did not want to continue with course work. See ABD: Diocesan Labor College, Folders- Pamphlets; Annual Reports.

*The Catholic Labor Observer,* October 10, 1946, p. 1 and *The Catholic Laborer Observer,* June 28,
could attend. Several union officials wrote to Boland and Bishop Duffy praising the school’s curriculum.

The Archdiocese of Baltimore contacted Bishop Duffy for information on the college’s program so they can create their own. The Archdiocese of Philadelphia also solicited material on the labor college and a resume of the program was forwarded.

The most intriguing correspondence comes from Fr. William Smith, S.J. who was director of the Crown Heights Labor School established contemporaneously with the ACTU’s school in New York. Fr. Smith sent a congratulatory letter to Bishop Duffy on the opening of the Buffalo school with self-satisfaction on the use of Smith’s booklet on “Christ the Worker.” Yet just a month later he wrote to the Bishop stating that the Crown Heights school was “still in the struggling stage while the Buffalo school seems to have begun with such brilliant success.”

The Labor College entered its second year in a developmental mode. Attendance increased and lay faculty were added. At the opening of the college’s second session, Bishop Duffy addressed the students and faculty encouraging them to “have a molding influence” to Christianize social and moral life at home and at work. The Bishop conveyed how a “prominent industrial leader in Buffalo” was critical of the local Catholic Church for “stepping outside its sphere” in operating the labor school. Duffy

1007 Letter to Frances Engel, Secretary, October 13, 1939. ABD: Diocesan Labor College, Folder-Correspondence, 1939-1942.
1008 Miscellaneous letters; ABD: Diocesan Labor College, Folder-Correspondence, 1939-1942.
1009 Letter of Fr. Paul Meyer to Bishop Duffy, October 20, 1939. The Archdiocese starts a program titled “School for Catholic Workers” that encompasses Catholic social teaching, worker rights, social legislation such as worker’s compensation and Christian ethics. ABD: Diocesan Labor College, Folder-Correspondence, 1939-1942 and Folder-Pamphlets.
1011 Letters of Fr. Smith to Bishop Duffy: October 31, 1939 and November 20, 1939; ABD: Diocesan Labor College, Folder-Correspondence, 1939-1942.
considered the industrialist to be something of a “heel” who likely did not comprehend that laborers and employers were the “salt of the world.” The Bishop insisted that the purpose of the school was to “direct interested men and women to learn how to become exponents of a new social life… with justice and human rights as its foundation and basis.”

During the academic year of 1940-1941, Boland added forums and panel discussions to the school’s curriculum. Panelists comprised members of labor, management and the Church such as Joseph Moloney of the Steelworker’s Union and Buffalo’s auxiliary bishop. At the Diocesan Industrial Convocation, Fr. Boland assembled labor advocates such as Fr. Raymond McGowan from the National Catholic Welfare Conference, Philip Murray of the CIO the successor to John L. Lewis, and Edward Flore who represented William Green of the AFL. At the January 1941 forum, both labor and management praised the efforts of the labor college for applying the encyclicals to the labor problem. Forums such as these, continued throughout the years of the Labor College.

Boland’s view was that these panel discussions promoted labor-management unity resulting in better wages and that worker education was the “only solution to fight racketeering and corrupt union officials.” He also resolutely believed that, following the precepts of the social encyclicals, labor-management committees and management councils should form not to “bust the union but for the specific purpose of collective

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1012 Address by Most Reverend John Duffy, Bishop of Buffalo. Opening Forum of Labor College, October 7, 1940. AUND: Box 1, Folder-Talks, Labor Reports.
1013 Union and Echo, February 28, 1941, p. 1.
1014 Union and Echo, January 10, 1941, p. 3.
1015 Forum topics reflect the issues of that day and comprise areas such as Conciliation and Arbitration, the Labor Press and the New Federal Education Extension Act. The Catholic Labor Observer, February 12, 1948, p. 1 and Union and Echo, April 3, 1955, p. 7.
bargaining. Industrial democracy and therefore industrial harmony were achieved through collective bargaining and the partnership of labor-management.

**Decline During the Second World War**

The years of World War Two acutely impacted the Labor College. Key faculty and students were diverted to war effort production or service in the armed forces. Factory shift work with increasing hours resulted in a significant decline in class enrollment and attendance. At the start of the January 1942 semester, two hundred twenty students register but with a shortened school term only forty-five completed their studies. During the war years, Boland implemented a system of parish labor schools where fundamental course work is taught. His proposal was to stir interest in students who could then transfer to the main college.

Five parishes sponsor schools: four in the city of Buffalo and also at Our Lady of Victory in Lackawanna, the home of Bethlehem Steel. These parish/branch schools conducted classes in industrial ethics, public speaking, parliamentary law and grievance procedures. The faculty consisted of laymen and parish priests. However, the war years harmed and threaten the existence of both the main college and these parish schools. Attendance at the parish schools averaged three or four students and the main labor college graduated only thirty-seven in 1943.

With the end of the Second World War, Msgr. Boland inaugurated an annual

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1019 Flyer. ABD: Box-Diocesan Labor College, Folder-Pamphlets.
1020 *Union and Echo*, February 26, 1943, p. 4 and Fortan’s interview of John Cassidy, executive secretary of the college as found in Fortan, *History of the Diocesan Labor College of Buffalo*, p. 34.
Labor Day Mass in 1945. The War Department sent Boland to Japan in 1947 as a consultant to General MacArthur to assist workers and employers in efforts to organize labor there. His main purpose was to keep Communists out of the unions and he even attempted to start a chapter of the ACTU. However, his duties as a pastor, mediator and chairman of the state mediation board resulted in health problems. In September 1950, Bishop O’Hara replaced Msgr. Boland as director of the Labor College although Boland still remained active with the school as Director Emeritus and he continued to mediated labor disputes. Msgr. Stanley Kulpinski was appointed as the new director.

The Catholic Labor Observer

However, Boland was still vital to the local labor environment and the labor college. He established The Catholic Labor Observer in 1945 as the official bi-weekly newspaper for the school. Its initial circulation was eighteen hundred copies and a paid subscription list of twelve hundred. Published in the basement of his rectory, it printed local and national labor articles and was to “supplement the work of the classroom and the pulpit” and it must be “apostolic” which “leads to the saving of souls.” It was as essential publication for Catholics as the official diocesan newspaper did not publish any articles on labor and rarely mentioned the Labor College. As a Catholic paper for the worker, there were often articles in support of efforts to rid

1022 Boland letter to Roger (unidentified), February 15, 1947; AUND: Box 4, Folder-Correspondence 1945-1947.
1023 Fortan, History of the Diocesan Labor College of Buffalo, p. 97
1025 Review of the official diocesan newspapers during the school’s tenure (The Echo, The Magnificat and the Western New York Catholic) reveals only an occasional mention of the diocesan labor education program or any issues pertaining to labor in general.
communists from the unions and denounce corrupt union officials.

Boland was the editor with Fr. Kulpinski as associate editor. Thomas Rose, who was the editor of the Buffalo CIO council newspaper, was named as news editor of the Observer.\textsuperscript{1028} The editors hoped to sell the paper after Sunday Mass at the churches. Unfortunately, publication of the paper was received with ambivalence by many local pastors.\textsuperscript{1029} The last issue was printed on December 25, 1958.\textsuperscript{1030}

\textit{Branch Schools in the Post War Years}

The late 1940’s evolved into a transitional period for the Labor College. Boland sought to reinvigorate the Labor College and requested the assistance of Bishop Joseph Burke. Boland asked the bishop send a letter to the clergy, to be read at Sunday Mass, appealing to their parishioners to attend the labor college.\textsuperscript{1031} Enrollment did increase slightly but class attendance remained low.\textsuperscript{1032} But it was labor’s gains during the War, coupled with the Taft-Hartley Act and the infiltration of Communists in the United Electrical Workers Union after the War, that stimulated new interest in Buffalo’s Labor College.

Father Stanley Kulpinski, who taught Ethics at the Labor College, and two laymen Thomas Murphy and John Cassidy commenced classes at St. Agnes Church in Buffalo in 1947.\textsuperscript{1033} The classes at St. Agnes had a dual purpose: they were to provide worker education but more importantly, enabled Kulpinski to better monitor union

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\textsuperscript{1028} The Catholic Labor Observer, October 4, 1945, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{1029} Fortan, History of the Diocesan Labor College of Buffalo, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{1030} The Catholic Labor Observer, December 25, 1958. No formal statement was made that this was the last issue.
\textsuperscript{1031} Union and Echo, November 17, 1944 p. 1.
\textsuperscript{1032} Union and Echo, March 5, 1948, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{1033} The Catholic Labor Observer, October 10, 1946, p. 1 and April 8, 1948, p. 3. St. Agnes Parish was within the city limits of Buffalo but very near Cheektowaga, NY where the Westinghouse facility was located.
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conditions at the Westinghouse plant. The facility and the local union were active with communist agitators.\footnote{Interviews of Kulpinski, Murphy and Cassidy in Fortan, \textit{History of the Diocesan Labor College of Buffalo}, p. 41-42. Review of archival material neither confirms or disputes this assertion but the author sustains the veracity of this episode as Fortan was directly involved with these individuals. Furthermore, the Westinghouse facility was investigated by the House Un-American Activity Committee in 1953 and 1954 examining Communist infiltration of the union. See Mark Goodman \textit{High Hopes. The Rise and Decline of Buffalo, New York.} (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), p. 244.} This experience subtly altered the course of the Labor College and Kulpinski’s direction of the school for the next several years.

Kulpinski and the executive committee of the Labor College considered the St. Agnes “experiment” as sufficiently successful. This produced the emergence of branch schools in the diocese over the next decade in locations where industry and organized labor were prevalent. The cities of Buffalo, Batavia, Dunkirk, Jamestown, Lockport, Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda and Lackawanna became satellite locations of labor education.\footnote{The Catholic Labor Observer, April 27, 1950, p. 1 April 26, 1956, p. 3 and School Announcement flyers, ABD: Diocesan Labor College, Folder-Pamphlets.}

The schools remained independent of external influences from unions or business concentrating only on education. While all courses were non-credit, a more relaxed atmosphere prevailed at these branch schools. Kulpinski maintained a simple approach to the discussion, education and resolution of labor problems. Union members, and faculty, referred to it as the “factory floor” approach.\footnote{Annual Report, 1956, ABD-Diocesan Labor College, Folder-Labor College and \textit{Union and Echo},} This concept fostered suitable attendance at the branch schools.

\textbf{Reconstituting the Labor School}

The 1950’s witnessed a shift in the culture of local labor; consequently the Labor College adjusted to those conditions. Due to wartime necessity, women in sizeable numbers entered the work force and this extended to the labor school when Patricia
Harding became the first woman instructor teaching public speaking. The lay faculty of the labor schools increased significantly during this time and the position of Executive Secretary remained with the laity. Kulpinski’s pastoral duties required him to turn over more administrative duties to the laity but he remained as the executive director since a priest was canonically required to be in that position. All instructors and teachers were laity with occupations in the unions or on the factory floor. This further solidified the role of the Catholic laity in the operation of the Buffalo labor school.

The post war years exhibit a national prosperity that posed a new threat to unionism as some workers became disinterested in the affairs of their union. Locally, Buffalo was hailed by the Chamber of Commerce as a “workingman’s town” where in 1955 the per capita income of $2500 exceeded the national average by twenty-five percent. As the working class morphed into the middle class, concerns about industrial democracy waned.

This indifference to union membership also infected many Catholics. The Catholic laity according to Charles Halloran, president of the Buffalo Federation of Labor, had become too “apathetic and lacks commitment in exerting the full impact of Catholic social doctrine at the work place.” He encouraged the laity to take an active interest in their unions and the labor schools to “build the tremendous social order envisioned by Catholic social teaching.”

Halloran called on the nation’s eight million unionized Catholics to adopt the

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1037 Harding was secretary to Charles Halloran the President of the Buffalo council of the AFL. From Kulinsitski letter to editor of Everybody’s Daily, Buffalo, NY, January 2, 1954.

1038 Fortan, History of the Diocesan Labor College of Buffalo, p. 54-55.


1040 The Catholic Labor Observer, September 27, 1956, p. 4.
principles of the ACTU and to Christianize the work place. The result will be “no danger of Communism or any other ‘ism’ gaining control of the American labor movement.” However, other issues dominated the labor landscape assigning wages and work conditions to a lower priority.

Kulpinski and the school’s staff realized that worker inertia could result in racketeering, dishonesty and corrupt union leadership. This allowed for a less militant organized labor that would willingly accept a false prosperity in exchange for management manipulation. The labor school’s purpose was to teach workers about their rights and the social encyclicals where application of those principles can bring “peace and justice on the factory floor or in the executive’s business office.”

Kulpinski and some members of the executive committee began to reconstitute interest in labor education through personal contact with union officials, laborers and managers.

The result was that attendance slowly but steadily increased. There were two key contributing factors for this. First, corporations began sending their managers and executives to the Labor College in the mid to late 1950’s. As collective bargaining became the norm in union negotiations, management personnel from the larger local corporations such as Bethlehem Steel, Republic Steel, Bell Aircraft, General Motors, Ford Motor, Dunlop Tire & Rubber, du Pont, Carborundum Chemicals and Westinghouse enrolled their “white collar” supervisors and executives in the school confident that the labor college was a conduit for industrial harmony.

1041 The Labor Leader, April 30, 1951, p. 1.
Furthermore, attendance improved due to the significance that unions placed on the quality of the curriculum at the labor college. Training in ethics and labor relations was essential for union officials in their interaction with membership and management. Unions, especially the United Steel Workers, required their officers and shop stewards to complete the course of study at the labor college. Familiarity with the school’s faculty and program make the labor college an attractive preference. The rank and file innately considered those graduates of the labor school to be both properly trained and trustworthy.1045

**Labor-Management Forums**

Boland’s vision coupled with Kulpinski’s zeal empowered the labor college to achieve success beyond the parameters of an educational institution in the 1950’s and into the 1960’s. After the War, Boland introduced a labor relations counseling service for “individuals, workingmen and plant executives.” It was part of the Labor College program and was described as the first of its kind in the state.1046 With the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act, labor was again besieged creating an adversarial atmosphere. Some Catholic bishops denounced the Act. Bishop Buddy of San Diego described Taft-Hartley as a “barrier to that mutual cooperation that should be fostered between management and organized labor.”1047

The emphasis of the Diocesan Labor College was to maintain good relations between labor and management. Within that framework, the concept of the labor relations counseling service became an integral part of Buffalo’s process for settling labor

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disputes. This service operated under the guidance of the laity not the clergy and was a specialty of the Labor College. The classroom for the labor school was more than a site for education, it was the setting for indirect labor-management conflict resolution. The Executive Committee considered the labor college a success due to a “hunger among labor and management people for the counsel the school supplies.” Sitting side by side were union representatives, employees, managers and strikers who only hours earlier disregarded the other’s rights.

At the labor college, either at the main school or at the branch level, students had access to federal and state mediators, labor lawyers, union officials and company managers where all parties can “unofficially” meet to attempt a resolution. The New State Department of Labor credits this service at the labor school for creating an atmosphere of impartiality “where everyone removed from the bargaining table can express his own viewpoint.”

At the labor schools lay faculty were often approached by labor, management or both for private consultations and as a labor arbitration setting. The process remained simple and informal in a calm atmosphere and usually involved an informal meeting between the conflicting parties or an unofficial arbitration hearing to rectify any issues. These counseling sessions at the labor college worked as local industry acknowledged it

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1047 *The Labor Leader*, October 18, 1947, p. 3.
1051 The process was confidential and many of the participants remained anonymous. Fortan, *History of the Diocesan Labor College of Buffalo*, p. 107. In researching the archives of the Buffalo labor school I found references to and material about the service but no records of the parties or results of any arbitrations hearings were discovered.
as the source that “headed off many strikes and settled others.”

**The Diocesan Labor College Verses Union Corruption**

Throughout the 1950’s and into the 1960’s, the Labor College continued to confront the challenges of corruption and racketeering by union officials. The program of the labor schools, that instruct participants in the principles of the social encyclicals and ethics, was more essential than before. On this matter, both labor and management were in agreement on the value of Catholic labor education. Two cases define these concerns.

Lackawanna was the location of Bethlehem Steel in western New York since the late nineteenth century. Efforts to unionize laborers throughout the decades were met with violence but with the passage of the Wagner Act, unions at the steel mills became commonplace. However, there were always the faint intrusions of corruption into the unions.

The city of Lackawanna presented a natural location for a labor school to combat the potential external interferences in the union. By 1953, a permanent diocesan labor school was established there. This was made possible due to financial support of USW Local 2604 and the use of its union hall. More importantly, USW District Director Joseph Moloney, a graduate of the Labor College, and some of the local unions supported the school throughout its existence. Moloney, like Kulpinski, denounced corrupt union officials as “these thugs who invade the labor movement.” Moloney, and other union officers in Local 2604, cited the labor college’s presence in the steel town, educating workers and offering industrial relations counseling, as a direct reason for a lack of union

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corruption. While labor strife still existed industrial democracy was prevalent.\textsuperscript{1055}

\textbf{The Diocesan Labor College Confronts the Communists}

The most dramatic and enduring impact of the Diocesan Labor College on the Buffalo area was its ability to diffuse Communist manipulation of the United Electrical Workers at the Westinghouse plant. The Diocesan Labor College, through education, publicity and even religious ceremonies, was able to combat the Communists and the UEW. It was viewed as the local “answer to Communism.”\textsuperscript{1056} The Labor College maintained this position as a challenge and threat to the UEW throughout the school’s existence.

\textit{The Catholic Labor Observer}, as early as 1946, condemned Communists misleading organized labor.\textsuperscript{1057} Then in late 1947, some worker’s from the Westinghouse facility in Cheektowaga, a Buffalo suburb, approached their parish priests for advice on how to deal with the Communist agitators in their union at the plant. The priests consulted the Diocesan Labor College for advice on how best to proceed. This eventually proved to be a pivotal moment for the labor school. The situation at the Westinghouse plant alarmed local labor leaders and the Church as openly Communist literature was distributed.\textsuperscript{1058}

\textsuperscript{1054} United Steel Workers Local 2604 News, November 18, 1957. Special Collections, Butler Library, Buffalo State College, Folder-Local Unions, USW.
\textsuperscript{1055} Fortan, \textit{History of the Diocesan Labor College of Buffalo}, p. 79-82.
\textsuperscript{1056} \textit{Buffalo Courier Express}, October 2, 1951, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{1057} \textit{The Catholic Labor Observer}, January 24, 1946, p. 3. \textit{The Catholic Laborer Observer} often printed editorials denouncing union corruption and communist infiltration in the unions. Archival research indicates that the “agitators” were mostly members of the Communist Party USA although some appeared to be disgruntled employees not affiliated with any particular political “ism” who joined in the labor unrest to protest working conditions or wages. \textit{The Observer} published its censure of the UEW in 1951; Msgr. Boland denounced the local UEW elections as “a hideous thing.” He was vilified by the UEW for his remarks but CIO leaders supported Boland and chastised UEW officials for their comments. See \textit{The Labor Leader}, August 30, 1951, p. 1 and October 15, 1951, p.1; the section in this chapter on \textit{The Catholic Laborer Observer} and ADB-Labor College, Kulpinski folder.
\textsuperscript{1058} Fortan, \textit{History of the Diocesan Labor College of Buffalo}, p. 40.
To address this matter, a branch school started at St. Agnes Parish near the Westinghouse facility. The justification for a branch school there was to train Catholic workers about their rights but more importantly, to conduct clandestine meetings with workers who were privately guided on an action plan for disposing the Communist threat at the Westinghouse plant. Over the next several years the labor school graduates an average of ten students annually who were Westinghouse employees.

Yet the best method for stabilizing labor-management relations, and to force subversive elements from the plant floor, came through more divinely inspired means. As a gesture of good will, the manager of industrial relations at Westinghouse inaugurated religious services, on the plant floor, at Christmas of 1952 for members of all faiths. He requested that Msgr. Kulpinski conduct the Catholic Mass. It proved to be extremely popular so liturgical services for Good Friday and Easter were added. These Masses averaged an attendance of hundreds of employees. Spiritual and temporal sustenance also solidified labor-management cooperation. In June 1956, members from both labor and management suggested a Communion Breakfast, to Msgr. Kulpinski, to be sponsored by the Labor College. The Mass and Communion Breakfast, held at Kulpinski’s parish, became a yearly event.

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1059 Interviews of Kulpinski, Murphy and Cassidy in Fortan, *History of the Diocesan Labor College of Buffalo*, p. 41-42. Review of archival material neither confirms or disputes this assertion but the author sustains the veracity of this episode as Fortan was directly involved with these individuals. Furthermore, the Westinghouse facility was investigated by the House Un-American Activity Committee in 1953 and 1954 examining Communist infiltration of the union. See Mark Goodman *High Hopes, The Rise and Decline of Buffalo*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), p. 244.


1061 The Good Friday Mass of 1954 had 2000 adherents. Letter of James Newman to Kulpinski, April 22, 1954. ADB: Diocesan Labor College, Folder-Kulpinski and Folder-Programs, Brochures; Fortan, *History of the Diocesan Labor College of Buffalo*, p. 114. By the 1970’s Mass is conducted to accommodate each shift at the Westinghouse plant. There are no exact numbers of the percentage of Catholics to non-Catholics at the plant but the liturgical services were conducted between shift changes so no time was lost from work and the services would not interfere with regular plant operations or be a hindrance to non-Catholics. Letter of Joseph Funk, Employee Services, Westinghouse to Msgr. Kulpinski, March 11,
These events by the Buffalo labor schools contradict what was happening at Westinghouse plants in various parts of the nation. While there was labor animosity, at various times, at the Cheektowaga plant it never resulted in labor violence. Unfortunately in 1955, tensions at the Pittsburgh factory ignited into hostility as striking workers fought for better wages and for control of their local. Other Westinghouse facilities in Sharon, Pennsylvania, Trenton, New Jersey and elsewhere endured similar experiences.1062

The direct involvement of the labor school enabled labor and management to gather and discuss their mutual interests and how to cooperate.1063 While not all parties preferred to be part of the discussions, for example some elements of the UEW, a forum was available to initiate conflict resolution. With these factors operating in tandem, dissidents within the unions vanished and harmony was present on the factory floor.1064 These events reinforced what Msgr. Boland previously stated years earlier that “only the Catholic Church has the authority to resolve labor-management issues.”1065

**Adjustments to Industrial Human Resources**

The triumphs of the 1950’s were overshadowed by events of the 1960’s. Buffalo began to experience changes, subtle at first, to its industrial base. Technological advances translated into job elimination. While Buffalo was largely a “blue collar town”, increasing numbers of managers and executives occupied positions in industry. Colleges and universities offered a new type of competition to the Diocesan Labor College as

1063 ADB: Diocesan Labor College, Folders- Pamphlets; Annual Reports.
higher institutions of learning inaugurated their own industrial relations curricula that conferred academic degrees to their graduates. Unions and corporations moved toward those programs as they were not linked to theology.

The Labor College adjusted to the shifting conditions. The school altered its formal name to the Labor Management College in 1962 to properly reflect the organization of its student base. But there was a fundamental modification to its course structure. The core courses of Industrial Ethics, Parliamentary Procedures, Public Speaking and Labor History remained in addition to the industrial relations counseling. But additional courses were added that considered the new needs of the workers and management. Subjects titled: Pension and Pension Funds; Steward Training; Grievance Handling; Health and Welfare Benefits; and Job Evaluation were inserted into the syllabus.

The Labor College continued instruction on collective bargaining but with a modification. There was now a separate section for employees and another for employers. Employees were tutored in specific areas such as “negotiation strategies” the “pitfalls in wording a contract”, “objectives and attitudes of companies and their unions” and “get protection for your rights into the contract.” The instructors were lawyers, a field examiner from the National Labor Relations Board and union representatives.

Employers were versed on how best to present the company’s objective in contract negotiations with an understanding of “union demands and tactics as essential preparation for getting a ‘sound contract.’” This section focused on strategies for presenting the company’s requirements and successful “bargaining techniques and

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1066 ADB: Diocesan Labor College, Folders: Pamphlets and Annual Reports.
problems involved” in the eventuality of a strike, conciliation, mediation or arbitration. In addition to the course work, both groups conducted separate simulated contract negotiation sessions.

The industrial base of Buffalo, in the early 1970’s, started an accelerated descent due to technology, competition from foreign imports and relocation of plants to areas with “less oppressive taxes.” Workers, with their demands for a just living wage, were viewed by many as the culprits that forced the corporations to leave western New York. A dwindling workforce combined with escalating unemployed meant less demand for Catholic labor education even though the instruction was free. Interest vacillated during this time.

The labor schools at the parish level quietly ceased operations in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s. The main branch of the labor college continued into 1975 but after thirty seven years of continuous service the school quietly closed after the Spring term of that year. Msgr. Kulpinski retired from active ministry in 1979 as the diocese’s last labor priest. The concepts of a “labor priest” and “Christianizing the work place” had become something of an anachronism in the labor movement by this time.

**An Independent Buffalo Diocesan Labor College**

Throughout its existence the Buffalo Diocesan Labor College functioned separately from the ACTU. Yet laity and clergy from the Buffalo labor school attended ACTU conventions. Bishop Duffy praised the ACTU in 1938. He cited the need for

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1070 Directories for the diocese list 1977 as the last year of the Diocesan Labor College but examination of the material reveals that the last classes were conducted in 1975.
labor education among the workers and lauded the efforts of the ACTU whose purpose was to “foster and spread in the American labor movement sound trade unionism built on Catholic principles.” Duffy maintained that if a Catholic philosophy of worker associations was properly channeled by “such organizations as the ACTU” unionism can be a “powerful aid for the workers’ welfare.” He added that it was his “fervent hope that organizations similar to the ACTU” formed in every industrial parish in the nation.\textsuperscript{1072}

Writing to the ACTU’s national director Victor LoPinto in 1941, Duffy again extols the work of the Actists. The bishop mentioned their endeavors for improving the working conditions of laborers. He exhorted the ACTU to further pursue management to apply Christian principles in the work place so that “a new era in labor relations would inevitably result.”\textsuperscript{1073}

Although Bishop Duffy was an ardent promoter of the ACTU on a national level he preferred that the diocese fully sponsor his local labor college not the ACTU. After Bishop Duffy’s death in 1944, attempts were made by members of the labor school’s executive committee to merge with the ACTU in 1946. Some even labeled themselves as the \textit{Buffalo ACTU}. The national council acknowledged that Buffalo was not a component of the ACTU but viewed it as an associate of the organization with the hope that this “potential chapter” will join in the future.\textsuperscript{1074}

\textbf{Bishop O’Hara and the ACTU}

In 1949, Buffalo’s Bishop O’Hara “requested” that the unofficial Buffalo ACTU

\textsuperscript{1072} \textit{The Labor Leader}, September 5, 1938, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{1073} \textit{The Labor Leader}, May 5, 1941, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{1074} ACTU, National Director’s Report to the Second Annual Convention, August 1941. Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh, (AUP), Box 2, FF6.
group dissolve and that the school remain independent of the ACTU. Examination of the available records does not clearly state the bishop’s reasons for rejecting the ACTU. But O’Hara was an avowed anti-Communist often in conflict with the National Catholic Welfare Conference’s support of labor.

For Bishop O’Hara, the ACTU may not be representative of honest labor since it supported “bona fide” labor unions which included the CIO. With the perception of the CIO as an organization infiltrated by Communists its honesty was often questioned. Yet some labor priests, such as Pittsburgh’s Fr. Charles Rice, asserted that those concepts were “stretching the truth” as the CIO was not a Communist operation. Rice believed the problem was Catholics “watering down” the social encyclicals so they can apply those parts in a convenient fashion.

O’Hara’s activities as the Archbishop of Philadelphia offer further insight regarding his opposition to Buffalo’s admission into the ACTU. O’Hara defended the rights of business and considered the concept of industrial councils, with the active participation of the government and the CIO, as not relevant to papal teaching. The Archbishop never declared that he was anti-union but appeared contradictory in his assertions that labor in America has already achieved a high standard of living and that

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1075 Fortan, History of the Diocesan Labor College of Buffalo, p. 102. Review of the ABD for the labor college and Bishop O’Hara’s correspondence, albeit limited in scope, reveals no direct indication of why he did not favor an ACTU chapter in Buffalo. Shortly after O’Hara’s “request” an autonomous group of workers then establishes the St. Joseph’s Guild which operates similar to the ACTU. However, it was a separate entity from the labor college. The Union and Echo, March 13, 1955, p. 7.


1077 O’Hara writes in the Catholic Labor Observer that the mission of the Church is the “saving of souls” otherwise the Church should not be involved because work was “honorable and noble” only if “performed in accordance with the will of God.” He concludes his piece invoking God’s blessing on “all honest labor.” The Catholic Labor Observer, October 4, 1945, p. 1.

1078 Editorial, America, April 1, 1939, p. 612.

1079 Echo, May 5, 1938, p. 2.
organized labor “receives better treatment from the Church than is deserved.”

Yet O’Hara appreciated the work of Philadelphia Jesuit Fr. Dennis Comey who established the Institute of Industrial Relations and was active in the labor movement at the city’s shipyards and docks. Examination of the Institute’s program offers some clue to this attraction. The Institute’s program revealed a curriculum more anti-Communist in scope than what was offered at the Buffalo labor college or at the ACTU schools.

Many clergy and hierarchy, while supportive of laborers, mistakenly perceived the Catholic Worker Movement as too radical and the ACTU as closely allied with the CIO and Communists. The reality was that the ACTU attacked Communist insurgency in unions, especially the CIO and the Catholic Worker Movement was not sympathetic to Communism.

But harm may have started at the Catholic Conference on Industrial Problems when Buffalo labor priest Fr. Charles Maxwell was critical of capitalism’s impact on workers. Maxwell was later appointed as chaplain of the Textile Worker’s Organizing Committee of the CIO. At a union gathering, the priest declared that the Church backed their efforts to unionize and that he supported them in their “unfettered drive” toward one hundred percent unionism. This likely was an irritant for the local bishop.

Additionally, Fr. Boland may have impaired his interests when he denounced employers who seek a “return to rugged individualism” in economic matters and later, at the New York state CIO convention, called for “equality in industry and a wider

1081 Schedule of Courses, various years from 1940-1975. Archives St. Joseph’s College (ASJC), Box-School of Social Sciences, Folder-Worker’s Schools.
1084 The Labor Leader, September 26, 1938, p. 1.
Boland viewed the Church and organized labor as partners: “the Church not only favors trade unions,” he stated, “but demands that they be formed. It demands that they be formed and operated along Christian lines.” This had the potential to place the labor priest in conflict with the bishop. But these potential gaffes never interfere with the mission of the labor college.

**Mutuality of Purpose**

Although the Buffalo Diocesan Labor College was never formally part of the ACTU, the evidence of its accomplishments as a Catholic labor educational institution were remarkable. Inspired by the advice of a lay woman, the labor college champions for change among laity and labor. During its tenure, the school was a cooperative venture between the laity and clergy but it was the laity that assumed positions as directors and its faculty was overwhelmingly staffed by the laity. The Labor College also advanced women to the status of directors on the executive council and as teachers. In the late 1930’s and into the next decade this was a significant move. The faculty, all volunteer and mostly Catholic, were noteworthy union officers, state mediators, judges, labor lawyers and managers from various companies.

Workers saw the labor college as a source of guidance. Labor and eventually management, valued Catholic labor instruction, and the principles of the social encyclicals, as a source to repel Communism and deter corrupt union officials. It was a refuge from labor-management strife where opposing parties could openly discuss their differences and seek resolution.

A review of the school’s graduates over the decades lists a variety of occupations

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from skilled, unskilled to professional. While the majority of students were listed as laborer, machinist or metal worker job titles also included supervisor, manager, vice president and president. All job levels, from over a hundred companies and sixty-eight unions sent their employees for training and education sometime over thirty-seven years to the Catholic labor schools in the Diocese of Buffalo. Educational levels of the students ranged from high school to college and graduate school. Analysis of the student roster revealed that approximately ninety percent were Catholics, eight percent non-Catholics and usually two percent registered as “no religion.”

The labor college can boast that its graduates included two mayors for Buffalo, several mayors from other cities, some future politicians, numerous judges, lawyers and union officials (some who assume state and national positions). But the most noteworthy graduate was the worker, the laborer, who was sufficiently educated to be a leader who was empowered to Christianize the work place.

Utilizing a strategy of a central school and parish satellite locations with tuition free courses, the labor college had the capacity to reach an optimum number of workers and managers. A graduate of the college wrote to Bishop Duffy praising the school as “being on the right track” because labor ethics were taught at time when “labor crooks” were “worming their way into labor without any opposition.” For the graduate, the most important aspect of the labor college was to enlighten the individual worker.

Buffalo’s labor college was a success because it materialized at a time when

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1087 *Buffalo Courier Express*, October 1, 1939, p. 2 and ADB: Diocesan Labor College, Folder-1939-1942.
1088 Review of enrollment records and annual reports from 1939-1975; ADB: Diocesan Labor College, various folders.
1089 Review of enrollment records and annual reports from 1939-1975; ADB: Diocesan Labor College, various folders.
workers desired and needed labor education. As a Catholic institution a sense of trust was already manifest. The educational program was straightforward. The courses were relevant and realistic as the lay instructors had practical experience in the field. The Labor College trained leaders in labor, and eventually in management, to utilize the social encyclicals on the factory floor ensuring industrial democracy.
Chapter 8

The Cleveland ACTU and Catholic Labor Education

The Great Lake ports of Buffalo and Cleveland provided near similar portraits of genesis, evolution and decline. Cleveland’s narrative, however, supported a different model of lay Catholic labor education focusing on its particular function and the requirements of its industrial base and labor force. The establishment of a lay Catholic labor school in Cleveland illustrated marked contrasts to other similar institutions. The Cleveland ACTU chapter was instrumental in labor education and the training of lay leaders but other considerations eventually altered that program. In this study of Cleveland’s Catholic labor education, examining a divergent model demonstrated that the necessity of lay inspired labor and lay directed education was so vital that adjustments to the curriculum did not diminish its ultimate purpose.

Cleveland at the Crossroad of Industry

Northeast Ohio traces its origins to the state of Connecticut which, by a seventeenth century colonial charter, retained the rights to the territory west of the Pennsylvania border. Known as the Western Reserve, the 3.3 million acres of land were surveyed by Moses Cleveland in 1796, and the city that bears his name, was settled corresponding to the model of New England towns. The selection of Cleveland as the northern terminus of the Ohio and Erie Canal further enhanced the economic potential for that area. As the hamlet expanded into a village and eventually a city, the lake port, the

canals, railroads and industry determined the future configuration of the area.

During the antebellum era, Cleveland emerged as a center of commerce and manufacturing fueled by the technological advancements in shipping, the canals and railroad transportation. This also supported the increasing population and wealth of the area. The production of farm tools and machinery in addition to barrels for shipping grain, flour and produce, reflected the agricultural nature of northeast Ohio. Small businesses such as garment production, soup and candle works and iron foundries and engine manufacturing expanded into larger industries.

From the Civil War through the Reconstruction Era and onto the end of the nineteenth century, Cleveland’s industrial landscape is permanently altered as it converts from a light manufacturing base to heavy industries. The mineral resources of the Great Lakes region, combined with strategic transportation systems, coalesce at Cleveland in the formation of iron and steel production. The city further diversified its industrial base with petroleum refining, chemical processing, paint manufacturing, pharmaceutical companies and milling all which augmented the city’s economic worth.

The development of the automotive industry became the economic engine which sustained the city and the region deep into the twentieth century. The production of vehicles consequently resulted in ancillary support industries such as automotive parts,

1092 Rose, Cleveland. The Making of a City, p. 224.
1094 Van Tassel and Grabowski, The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, p. 548.
1096 Miller and Wheeler, Cleveland. A Concise History, p. 82.
engines, axles, batteries and tires. Cleveland’s heavy industry focused largely on automotive production so that by the 1920’s seventy percent of the region’s steel output was destined for vehicle assembly. By the late 1940’s, the automotive industry and its supplementary manufacturing, employed over ten percent of the total industrial work force. The boom years came during the early 1960’s but with foreign competition and overproduction, the automotive industry in general and Cleveland’s economy, in particular, declined throughout the 1970’s.

Immigrant Workers

As Cleveland shifts from an agricultural economy to an industrial system, immigrants settled in the area seeking employment at the factories, mills and docks. The last half of the nineteenth century witnessed a massive infusion of unskilled or semi-skilled foreign laborers who filled the city’s need for workers. Many came in search of economic opportunity. Some settled to escape religious oppression or political persecution. Others remained because of family considerations.

By 1870, forty-two percent of the city’s total population of 98,829 are foreign born. The largest group came from Germany followed by Ireland, England and Bohemia. By 1890 that percentage declined to thirty-seven percent however, the city’s total population increased to 261,353. The numbers indicate that at the midpoint of the nation’s industrial age, seventy-five percent of Cleveland’s residents were either foreign born or the children of foreign born parents.

The earliest immigrants to Cleveland were mostly from Germany or Ireland and

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1098 Van Tassel and Grabowski, The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, p. 59.
this parallels national trends. After 1870, during the period of the “new immigration,” the demographics shifted revealing a substantial increase of newly arrived from Southern and Eastern Europe: Poles, Russian Jews, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenes, Italians, Serbs, Croats and others. Moreover, the two world wars and the Cold War impacted the influx of immigrants with the Ukrainian and Hungarian communities experiencing growth.

Each nationality in Cleveland, similar to other cities, created their own distinct ethnic neighborhoods and enclaves which tended to be near their house of worship and place of employment. The Poles established neighborhoods close to Otis Steel Works near 33rd and St. Clair Streets. They, along with the Czechs, Irish and Scots located near the Cleveland Rolling Mills facility where all nationalities were employed. The Slovaks, Poles and others, moved in along Madison Avenue close to their jobs at the National Carbon Company.

_Cleveland: A Union Town_

The history of labor in the United States, and Cleveland, was enveloped in the specter of strikes and hostility toward the worker. After the Civil War, the city experienced strikes over wage reductions. During the 1880’s workers agitated for improved working conditions. Labor associations such as the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions convened in Cleveland in 1882 demanding an eight hour work day.

1101 Miller and Wheeler, _Cleveland. A Concise History_, p. 82.
1102 Ibid., p. 82.
1103 With the Depression in the 1930’s, the city’s foreign born population is registered as: Czechs (15.1%); Poles (14.2%); Italians (10.3%); Germans (9.8%) and Hungarians (8.3%). U.S. Census records 1920, 1930, 1940 and census data as located in Miller and Wheeler, _Cleveland. A Concise History_, p. 131.
1104 Van Tassel and Grabowski, _The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History_, p. 773.
Cleveland, considered as the “crossroads of industry,” acquired national recognition as an energetic site for organized labor as relations between capital and labor became less cordial in the following decades.

This impression was bolstered by major strikes at the Cleveland Rolling Mills in 1882 and 1895, involving Pole and Czech workers. The Fisher Body strike in 1939 by the CIO’s United Auto Workers union, was marked by tear gas, bricks and Cleveland’s police “constantly interfering with the legal rights of the pickets.” As a center of manufacturing and mechanical industries, Cleveland’s reputation as a union town, with a militant work force, was solidified.

*The Diocese of Cleveland and the Right to Organize*

The influx of immigrants in the last part of the nineteenth century, who were from traditionally Roman Catholic nations, produced conditions for expansion of the Diocese of Cleveland. Parishes and schools were constructed to accommodate these newly settled Catholics. By sheer force of numbers, and a concerted effort to educate and assimilate, Catholics in the Cleveland area materialized as an essential part of the social, political and labor scene at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Bishops of the Diocese exhibited a progressive attitude in support of workers and worker’s rights. In an address before the Builder’s Exchange convening in the city

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5. Percentage of Catholics in relation to total population in 1900 slips to 43%. From 1910-2000 it ranges from 35%-52% (1980 was the highest). Compiled from assorted years and editions of *The National Catholic Almanac*, (Patterson, New Jersey: St. Anthony’s Guild Press).
7. Some Protestants also support laborers. In the antebellum years, Presbyterian minister Rev. James Thome promotes workers’ “inalienable rights” and condemns the abuses of capitalism but Protestants place a priority on economic development. For further treatment see Michael J. McTighe, *A Measure of*
in 1907, Bishop Ignatius Horstmann (1891-1908) emphasized the social encyclical
*Rerum Novarum* and condemned any form of labor that “squeezed immense profits from
the blood of the laboring man.” The Bishop asserted that workers have the right to
unionize and that industrialists needed to respect the dignity of their employees. He
directed his clergy to “help unions with their counsel and advice.”\footnote{Hynes,*The History of the Diocese of Cleveland*, p. 236.}
However the proliferation of strikes for higher wages and corresponding worker violence resulted in
many clergy, who supported the industrial capitalists, advising laborers to accept
conditions as they were.\footnote{Miller and Wheeler,*Cleveland. A Concise History*, p. 88.}

**Labor’s Bishop: Joseph Schrembs**

Social justice and worker justice was personified in Cleveland’s Bishop Joseph
Schrembs (1921-1945). As a prominent member of the National Catholic Welfare
Conference, he assisted in charting its future course and sustainability. He was one of the
four original bishops of the NCWC and contributed to the formation of the monumental
Schrembs desired that his Diocese reflect the area’s industrial character crusading for workers,
supporting unions and inviting the Catholic Conference on Industrial Problems to
convene in Cleveland in 1926, 1931, 1933 and 1936.\footnote{The CCIP was instituted by the National Catholic Welfare Conference at Chicago on December 29, 1922 to address the issues of labor and remediation of industrial problems through discussion and conferences. It was available to both lay (employees and employers) and clergy but the lectures and programs were tailored more toward the clergy. See Linna E. Bresette, “The Catholic Conference on Industrial Problems in Detroit,” *Catholic Action*, Vol. 21, February 1939, p. 17-18 and Archives Cleveland Diocese (ACD) Catholic Conference on Industrial Problems Folder.}
He was an early supporter of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists. In 1939, Schrembs invited the Association
to participate at the Catholic Social Action Congress in Cleveland and, in 1940, cordially welcomed the delegates to the ACTU’s first national convention in Cleveland.\textsuperscript{1115}

Schrembs always advocated for the worker defending their right to organize. The Archbishop often received correspondence from corporate leaders critical of his position. A particular example was a lengthy letter from B.L. Semtner, President of SEMCO Color Press in Oklahoma City. Semtner, who claimed that he is a “practical Catholic,” disapproved of the Catholic Church’s pro-union position and Schrembs’ condemnation of the open shop. The writer firmly believed that labor’s troubles were caused by unions and that any solution should come from the employer not the worker.

The Archbishop responded that there were some abuses by unions however, the open shop system was a “half way measure” and not a true economic solution.\textsuperscript{1116} The employers had the “upper hand” in this system and weak unions permitted the employee to “become a potential slave.” Unions were the workers’ only defense and provided protection to all laborers both union and non-union equally. The Archbishop requested that Semtner continue to exercise his policy of “justice and fair play” yet also asked that he consider economic conditions from the workers’ perspective.\textsuperscript{1117}

In June 1937 Pittsburgh labor priest, Fr. Charles Owen Rice, obtained Archbishop Schrembs’ permission to address striking workers in Youngstown, Ohio at a CIO rally. The priest’s objectives were to encourage the workers to unionize and to remind labor and capital that workers have “dignity and rights under God” to do so. His remarks were also to calm industrialists who “view the march of labor with alarm.” Organized labor

\textsuperscript{1116} Schrembs’ lengthy letter to Mr. Semtner of the Semco Color Press Co. becomes the Archbishop’s informal declaration of his support of Rerum Novarum and the worker, April 4, 1931 letter. ACD, Schrembs Folder-Issues Organized Labor, 1931.
was not part of a Communist plot but Rice chastised the “white collar snobbery” of those who exploit labor as responsible for class warfare. Rice stressed that the “laboring man in this county did not demand a godless Soviet system” but that the “godless features of our own system” must cease and allow Christian charity to enter the work place where human dignity and justice become standard.1118

This event prompted the assistant general manager at Truscon Steel Products in Youngstown, Ohio to write directly to Schrembs. In that correspondence, he reprimanded the Archbishop for allowing Rice to address the strikers and expressed disbelief that “the Church as an institution would sanction the use of its name and the influence that it carries… in a dispute such as is confronting the steel industry today.”1119

The Archbishop responded, indirectly to him and directly to those critics of organized labor, in the Catholic Universe Bulletin and the Cleveland Plain Dealer on July 23rd and 24th, 1937. Schrembs unequivocally decreed that the “right of labor to organize and the great benefit to be derived from workingmen’s associations” was established in Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo Anno. “My heart goes out to the striking laborers in their hour of trial,” he professed and further guided employers to be faithful observers of organized labor and to honor all contracts and agreements. The Archbishop accentuated that “these pontifical pronouncements have been partially written into the law of the land by the Wagner Act.”1120 With this, Cleveland’s Catholic leadership further substantiates that it was resolute in its defense of labor.

1117 Correspondence of B.L. Semtner to Archbishop Schrembs of March 23, 1931 and response by Schrembs of April 4, 1931. ACD, Schrembs Folder-Issues Organized Labor, 1931.
1120 Catholic Universe Bulletin, July 23, 1937 and Cleveland Plain Dealer, July 24, 1937 from ACD,
Fr. Aloysius Bartko and the Formation of Cleveland’s ACTU

The origins of the Cleveland ACTU date from June 1939 after the second national Catholic Social Action Congress convention in Cleveland. Here ACTU delegates from throughout the national participated in forums and discussions concerning future development and expansion of the organization. Fr. Aloysius Bartko, an assistant pastor at St. Emeric’s, a Hungarian blue-collar parish in the industrial heart of the city, was asked to lead an ACTU forum session. It was there that he befriends Fr. John Monaghan, the New York Actist chaplain and also came in contact with labor priests Fr. John Boland of Buffalo and Fr. Charles Owen Rice of Pittsburgh.

During the session that he moderated, Bartko listened as the editor of The Labor Leader, Edward Donahue, lectured on the “reawakening” among Catholic men and women to bring the values of the Catholic faith to the union movement. Donahue further elaborated on the necessity of labor education, the Catholic Defense League and the importance of The Labor Leader in disseminating trade union news. Bartko and several Cleveland laymen, inspired by the convention, anticipate the need for an ACTU chapter in Cleveland.

Several weeks later, Bartko again encountered Fr. Monaghan in Chicago who inquired about the new ACTU chapter in Cleveland. Bartko advised that nothing was yet established even though many lay Catholic union men were “very desirous of a chapter.”

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1121 The Labor Leader, June 12, 1939, p. 1 and June 26, 1939, p. 4.
1123 Those laymen included: Earl Krock, Joseph Virag, Leo Sammon, Joseph Burns and several other.
an ACTU chapter for Cleveland but the priest informed them that only through “the
initiation from the Bishop” could this occur. However Bartko, anxious to proceed,
eventually acted unilaterally and formed a temporary chapter of the ACTU at St.
Emerc’s that consisted of thirty-five “paper members” and twelve active members. Schrembs, a solid supporter and promoter of the worker, was not initially
enthusiastic about an ACTU chapter in Cleveland. His concern was over the future
viability of the ACTU as a voice for labor. The auxiliary bishop, writing for the
Archbishop, replied to Bartko that Schrembs could not permit the establishment of the
ACTU “at present” but the priest should continue counseling these laymen in their
activities and report back to him. Fr. Bartko and the laymen were undeterred. Earl
Krock, a Cleveland attorney and de facto director of this “unofficial” chapter, contacted
the Pittsburgh ACTU for information on a worker’s school. Concurrently, Bartko
wrote to the national director of the ACTU to secure a charter for Cleveland.
Bartko and Krock were determined to bring the ACTU and the principles of
“Christianizing the unions and unionize all Christians” to Cleveland. Prudently, they
conducted a mass rally for Catholics to generate interest in the ACTU and labor issues in
general. It was characterized as “an open meeting of the ACTU” and implied that the
organization was operative in the diocese. Laity and clergy spoke on the Church and

References:

1126 Letter of auxiliary bishop, unsigned but likely sent by Bishop McFadden, to Fr. Aloysius Bartko. August 3, 1939. ACD: Schrembs Folder: Organizations, ACTU-1939-1945. There is no evidence that Bartko ever incurs any warnings or penalties for his action from the Bishop or the Diocese.
labor and the aims of the ACTU and labor legislation.1129

But Schrembs applied a degree of intrigue to form a final opinion on the possibility of the ACTU in his diocese. Using his auxiliary bishop as cover, Schrembs assigned Fr. Albert Murphy, the diocesan director of Catholic Charities to investigate both Fr. Bartko and the ACTU in June 1940.1130

Bartko continued to correspond with the Archbishop requesting formal approval to establish an ACTU chapter in Cleveland. Schrembs, in return, praised the priest for his zeal but still did not grant hierarchical approval. The Archbishop suggested that the priest confer with Fr. Murphy on this matter.1131 However, Bartko ingenuously assumed that this grants him “private but written permission late in 1939” to form an ACTU chapter in the diocese.1132

Fr. Murphy commenced an examination and analysis into the ACTU and Fr. Bartko. This exploration comprised attendance at meetings, inquiries and conversations with union members and discussions with several priests. Murphy’s report to Schrembs described Bartko as “a splendid young priest doing a very zealous piece of work in behalf of unionists.” He advised that Bartko was earnest with proceeding forward with an ACTU chapter. Since Bartko had “misgivings as to where exactly his program will lead eventually” he was advancing cautiously and Murphy commended the priest for this judicious act. 1133

1129 The Labor Leader, November 13, 1939, p. 3.
1130 Letter of auxiliary bishop, unsigned, to Fr. Murphy, June 19, 1940. ACD: Schrembs Folder: Organizations, ACTU-1939-1945.
Murphy recommends that the Archbishop sanction the “movement” and appoint a director as this will stimulate interest among the priests of the diocese. He felt that Fr. Bartko should continue with his agenda but with some provisos. Bartko’s primary goal is worker education. Murphy suggested that this should be at a central location not at the parish level as Bartko prefers. Consolidation connoted a diocesan organization not an individual effort that was subject to the consent of individual pastors. Murphy directed that a future labor school’s curriculum require courses that were practical. He also proposed laymen as active instructors in the program because the Church was “too disposed to give the laboring man what we think he needs rather than consult him for the purpose of finding out what he needs.”

Schrembs eventual approbation of the ACTU, and appointment of Fr. Bartko as chaplain of the Cleveland chapter, attracted both local and national attention. The Cleveland chapter issued a flyer sent to parishes and work sites addressed “to our labor union brothers and sisters in the Cleveland area.” It was an invitation to Catholics of bona fide trade unions to join the ACTU as it was their “solemn duty” and the ACTU’s objective to make “Christian principles count in the labor movement.” The announcement detailed the local mission of the ACTU: “to fight defensively and offensively for the workers’ natural God given right to decent wages, hours and working conditions, and an additional fair share in industry’s profits.”

**Cleveland and the ACTU National Convention**

As an active affiliate of the ACTU, this permitted national recognition. Consequently, Cleveland was selected to host the organization’s first national convention.

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Cleveland’s ACTU director, Earl Krock, commenced preparations for the event to be held over the Labor Day weekend of August 31-September 2, 1940. The main purpose of the convention was the formation of a national organization that could formulate policies and coordinate the activities of the chapters, to adopt a constitution and plan future activities. This constitution and mandate were based on the principles of Quadragesimo Anno. The group’s more powerful statement was its resolution that denounced “the activities, policies and tactics of the Communist Party and of its members in the American labor movement.”

Cleveland was a logical meeting site for many reasons. As a solidly unionized area with a large Catholic population, and with approval from the local ordinary, the city would eagerly support the convention. This first national convention of the ACTU was originally set for June 1939 in Cleveland as the Catholic Social Action conference was there a week before the ACTU’s planned meeting. However the ACTU decided to postpone its event so as not to conflict with the other conference.

Placing the ACTU convention in Cleveland was also a tacit rejoinder to the Communist agitators in the unions. The Communist Party USA held its eighth national convention in Cleveland in 1934 declaring that the “United States are most favorable for

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1136 ACTU “Convention Call”, July 26, 1940 and letter of Earl Krock to Marie Connolly, August 8, 1940. AUP, Box 2, FF 42. The Labor Leader, August 26, 1940, p. 1.
1140 The Labor Leader, May 29, 1939, p. 1
the establishment of socialism.” But Cleveland was developing an identity as a staunchly Catholic, unionized and anti-Communist community. Later at the CIO’s 1949 convention in Cleveland, the organization renounced the Communists and purged them from the group. At this gathering, the attendees listen intently as Archbishop Edward Hoban (1945-1966) addressed the delegates praising them for defending the rights of labor. Cognizant of this, the ACTU utilized that strength and conducted additional conventions at Cleveland in 1947, 1949 and 1954 as well as the ACTU’s last one in 1959 with a theme titled “Industrial Harmony.”

**The Chapter Seeks Its Mission**

With the conclusion of the national conference, the Cleveland ACTU sought a more meaningful purpose. Krock described the first year as “educational” and admitted that the chapter was not fully organized. The group sponsored labor rallies and commemoration ceremonies honoring the social encyclicals yet felt compelled to accomplish more. The membership began to organize non-union shops and invited union men and women to attend chapter meetings. During this interval, the Cleveland branch fully supported a newsboys’ strike and assisted them in securing a city ordinance that protects their rights. A Catholic Labor Defense League office opened with three staff attorneys but was fundamentally inactive due to a lack of cases.

Late in 1940, the Cleveland chapter organized a Labor Supper attended by eighty

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1142Rose, *Cleveland. The Making of a City*, p. 916 and Fr. Richard McKeon, SJ article on the Jesuit labor school in Philadelphia. (ASJC), Box- School of Social Sciences, Folder-Worker’s Schools.
“union minded” men and women and a dozen local priests. Fr. Robert Navin, from St. John’s College in Cleveland, gave the principle address titled “The Program of the ACTU.” Additional talks were presented by representatives of the CIO and AFL. Bartko deemed the event a tremendous success as laity and clergy expressed an acute desire for programs, such as labor education, administered by the ACTU.

**Cleveland’s Catholic Labor School**

It was the incessant objective of Fr. Bartko, and some Catholic lay workers, to establish a labor school for the diocese. Labeling the worker’s school as the Diocesan Labor Institute, Bartko prepared a preliminary curriculum for the school to teach the encyclicals, parliamentary law and “union tactics.” The courses paralleled those at other Catholic labor schools. He discussed this concept with the lay members of the local ACTU, and fellow priests who coordinated class locations at parishes in urban industrialized sections of the city. Bartko conceded to the Chancery that this was preliminary pending approval of a faculty and the courses.

Throughout 1941, discussions continued among a committee of diocesan clergy, appointed by Schrembs and with some select laity, on how to move forward with labor education. Fr. Bartko and the committee, however, were determined to proceed with this endeavor and that the bishop’s approval was more assumed rather than anticipated.

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1147 Report of Cleveland Chapter to the National Council, May 30, 1941. AUP: Box 2, FF 5.
1153 Letter of Fr. Bartko to Archbishop Schrembs, July 9, 1940.
In September 1941, “the priests decided to begin the first labor school at St. Augustine’s Parish.” 1153 Unceremoniously, and somewhat after the fact, approval was granted to commence a workers’ school by the Chancery.

Fr. John Lees, assistant pastor at St. Augustine’s Church on West 14th Street offered, with the approval of the pastor, the parish school as a site for labor education. Another venue was St. Joseph’s at St. Clair and East 144th staffed by parochial assistants Frs. Fleming and Cummings. 1154 These priests were on the clergy committee and recommended their parishes for the labor school.

Preliminary courses were listed as: The Encyclical and Christian Principles in the Labor Movement; History of the Labor Movement; Parliamentary Procedure and Public Speaking. 1155 The course offerings mirrored those of the other ACTU chapters as Bartko had previously consulted with the national chapter. 1156

Under the sponsorship of the laity, the ACTU labor schools opened on October 30, 1941 with an initial enrollment of sixty students. 1157 The classes, scheduled for two six week semesters, were structured more as lectures than classroom sessions. Fr. Charles Hogan, who lectured on the encyclicals at St. Augustine parish, commented that “this school is intended to educate labor to know its rights and how to gain them, and it is not

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1156 There is no indication that he receives any guidance about the courses or was in communication with Msgr. Boland in Buffalo who crafted the curriculum for the New York branch.
intended to promote a Catholic labor union.” Fr. Leroy Fenstermaker offered instruction on the history of labor, particularly on labor disputes. Parliamentary law and public speaking were taught by Elizabeth Gorman who also taught those courses at John Carroll University’s night school and wrote a weekly column on the subject in the diocesan newspaper. Bartko continued to seek qualified lay men and women to teach courses in what he envisioned as a workers’ school operated by the workers.

Within weeks after the fledgling labor school inaugurated its program the Second World War commenced. The labor school, like those throughout the nation, was challenged to persevere during the war years. Attendance fluctuated. However the Cleveland schools were smaller in comparison to other cities because classes were conducted at only two parishes during this time. Additionally, the war’s impact was felt in other ways at those parishes. Fr. Fleming, coordinator at the St. Joseph’s school, served as a chaplain in the Army. The ACTU’s Earl Krock, the layman responsible for the “building up and keeping the Cleveland chapter going” was drafted into the Army; Joseph Virag replaced him as director.

Yet the Cleveland ACTU remained active. William Donovan of the Cleveland Industrial Union Council, an affiliate of the CIO, considered the union movement as an answer to Communism. He valued the ACTU’s labor school as a means for training labor leaders to contend for better wages and working conditions. Donovan maintained that the ACTU should be in every parish developing the “right kind of labor leadership.” He boasted that the “greatest thing ever written about the labor question was the labor

1158 *Catholic Universe Bulletin*, November 7, 1941, p. 1. Fr. Hogan was on the faculty at the diocesan seminary.
1160 *The Labor Leader*, March 10, 1941, p. 3 and Report of Cleveland Chapter to the National Council,
encyclicals” but faults the clergy for not “breaking down and explaining” them for the benefit of the workers. Only when this happened, would workers and employers understand their “mutual rights and duties” therefore leading to “Christian industrial democracy.”\textsuperscript{1161} Even with this endorsement there was no evidence that enrollment increased at the labor schools.

**Post-War Changes to the Labor School**

The conclusion of the War brought several changes that modified the structure and direction of the diocese and the Cleveland ACTU. Archbishop Schrembs, who died in 1945, was succeeded by Edward Hoban. The new bishop also defended labor declaring that the “workingman should be restored to his place of dignity.”\textsuperscript{1162} He was a dedicated promoter of the ACTU. He affirmed that “it is our Catholic duty to put into practice the principles outlined in the social encyclicals of Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI. The primary purpose of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists was to make known those principles and to train men and women to apply them precisely in their particular walks of life.”\textsuperscript{1163}

Msgr. Robert Navin replaced Fr. Bartko as chaplain of the ACTU in 1946.\textsuperscript{1164} However, Bartko remained active with the organization as an assistant chaplain throughout his life. The chapter’s postwar lay director and board members were also

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\textsuperscript{1161} May 30, 1941. AUP: Box 2, FF 5 and Hynes, *The History of the Diocese of Cleveland*, p. 389.

\textsuperscript{1162} The Labor Leader, June 17, 1942, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{1163} Catholic Universe Bulletin, September 14, 1945, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{1164} Statement of Bishop Hoban, April 8, 1949. ACD: Hoban Folder: Organizations, ACTU 1949-1959.

Msgr. Robert Navin was a prominent local priest and activist. His academic background was in sociology and he eventually became dean and president of St. John’s College where he further developed its academic programs. His interests were in labor-management relations and so he was interested in the ACTU and worker education at the College. In the 1940’s, he was chairman of the Cleveland Area Rent Control Board and later served on the mayor’s advisory boards of housing and urban renewal. See Van Tassel and Grabowski, *The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, p. 715.
The most significant transformation involved labor education. In 1945 the labor schools, under the directive of the Bishop, moved out of the parishes and transfer to St. John’s College.1166

St. John’s College, which started as Sister’s College in 1928, relocated adjacent to the Cathedral in 1946. This was a diocesan operated institution to train teachers for elementary schools and Bishop Hoban instructed all diocesan educational programs to consolidate their programs at that site. An adjunct to the college was an adult educational program designated as the Institute of Social Education under the direction of Fr. Francis Carney that started in 1948. Evening courses were offered in the fundamentals of Catholic faith and morals and their application to contemporary issues.1167 The labor school would be part of the Institute’s curriculum offering.

The Institute’s mission was to nurture and sustain a “strong unified and enlightened public opinion” that was achieved only through “an intelligent, orderly and true presentation of sound social principles.” The programs were for the benefit of the “general public” for the “effective training of potential and actual leaders in the fields of labor, government, politics, economics, youth, religion, education, literature and the family.”1168 The Institute’s solemn duty was to bring the “social message of Christ to more people, Catholic and non-Catholic, in the area of greater Cleveland.”1169

The College conferred four year degrees in teaching and nursing. As the Institute

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1165 Catholic Universe Bulletin, January 10, 1947, p. 3.
was not a degreed program it only issued a Certificate of Merit upon completion of the course work.\footnote{Van Tassel and Grabowski, {	extit{The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History}}, p. 856.} The Institute, however, was not nor should be considered singularly as a labor education program. The Institute’s syllabus listed several areas of study in addition to labor education: Religion and Philosophy; Education; Social Relations; Family Life; Youth Organization; Government and International Relations and Literature and Speech.\footnote{Various pamphlets. ACD: Hoban Folder: Educational Institutions, St. John’s College-Social Education Institute, 1948-1966.} Over the years additional courses included “Popular Psychology”, “Investments and Securities”, “Art Appreciation”, “Problems for Catholics” and various programs on theology, the encyclicals and Vatican II.\footnote{Various pamphlets. ACD: Hoban Folder: Educational Institutions, St. John’s College-Social Education Institute, 1948-1966.}

The ACTU sustained the lay Catholic component of labor education as it continued to sponsor the labor school even though it was now incorporated into the Institute. In the late 1940’s, the ACTU offered a program titled Labor and Industrial relations. This became an expanded version of the parish labor school initiative. Courses now encompassed: the trade union movement; union procedure and leadership; labor law and current legislation; industrial relations; principles of good management; ethics and industrial relations.\footnote{Brochures, 1948-1955. ACD: Hoban Folder: Educational Institutions, St. John’s College-Social Education Institute, 1948-1966.} With labor education removed from the parish more laity taught courses.\footnote{Class rosters: 1948, 1949, 1950. ACD: Hoban Folder: Educational Institutions, St. John’s College-Social Education Institute, 1948-1966.} Albert Evans, treasurer of the local AFL teamsters affiliate, lectured on the “History of American Trade Unionism” while Gene Kelley of the CIO newspaper guild, was the instructor for “Procedures in Union Meetings.”\footnote{322}
The Cleveland Chapter’s Deterioration

In the 1950’s, the Labor School maintained its status within the Institute as an educational program for organized workers. The school not only trained workers’ about their rights but also designed courses on Christian principles to have a practical application in union affairs. As in Buffalo, this was directed to counter Communist agitators influencing organized labor and corrupt union officials.

Student rosters during this decade typified the industrial diversity of the nation and particularly Cleveland. Attendees came from Westinghouse, East Ohio Gas, American Steel and Iron Works, Republic Steel, General Electric, General Motors, Cleveland Electric, Fisher Foods, Cleveland Plain Dealer, Parker- Hannifin, Scovill and other corporations. These students were employed as union carpenters, machinists, pipe fitters, steel workers, auto workers, welders, meat cutters, molders, seamstress, line workers, teachers and the occasional policeman, lawyer and banker.

By the mid-1950’s, the Cleveland chapter of the ACTU steadily declined in prominence as an educational tool for the worker and as a powerful voice for organized labor. During this time, the labor school developed and flourish at the Institute under the direction of Fr. Carney. He was now able to realign the labor education program at the college and gradually phased out the ACTU as sponsors.

The ACTU’s removal from the program should not be construed as a malicious act since Carney and Bartko were supportive of each others’ endeavors in the labor

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1175 The Labor Leader, November 16, 1948, p. 4.
movement. To further improve the school’s curriculum, Carney established a “labor advisory council” of union officers and workers to assist with the formation of educational programs more attuned to local union requirements. The ACTU was not listed as a member but constituents of the ACTU, who were union members, serve with the group.

*Cleveland’s Jesuits and Labor Education*

At this time, the Institute’s labor school had local competition. The Jesuits, at Cleveland’s John Carroll University, proceeded with their own labor school in 1945 to promote industrial peace “rooted in Christian principles of the Constitution.” Similar to the diocesan program, courses at the University consisted of: Parliamentary Procedure, Oral and Written Expression, Labor Ethics, Labor History, the Labor Encyclicals, Labor Legislation and a Christian Philosophy of Labor. A pronounced difference between the programs was that the courses at John Carroll University were free while the Institute of Social Education charged a fee of two or four dollars per class.

The enrollment at the University comprised unionized men from the various locals of plumbers, steel workers, auto workers, carpenters, truck drivers, electrical workers, truck drivers and other unions. There were many companies represented at the Jesuit school not present at the diocesan program such as Colgate-Palmolive, Graphite Bronze, Standard Oil, White Motors and others. But some such as the Cleveland Plain

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1181 *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 11, 1945.
1182 Brochures, 1948-1955. ACD: Hoban Folder: Educational Institutions, St. John’s College-Social Education Institute, 1948-1966 and AJCU: John Carroll University Labor School. Additionally, the
Dealer, East Ohio Gas, General Electric and Republic Steel sent attendees to both schools.\footnote{1183}

There was a subtle but significant difference in the programs. The Jesuit school, while intended for the “ordinary, sincere and earnest worker” who sought an “intelligent solution to employer-employee problems,” also invited supervisors and managers to attend.\footnote{1184} The diocesan program focused exclusively on “blue collar” education. However, the moderate success of the local Jesuit program almost certainly persuaded the Institute to broaden its appeal to the entire work force of Cleveland. The Jesuit program was brief, lasting only a few years, yet its influence on the Institute’s labor education program was appreciable into the next decade.

**The Cleveland ACTU in the 1960’s**

The Cleveland ACTU’s role in local labor education diminished significantly by 1960 but it continually stressed the need for worker instruction in all Catholic schools. The chapter embarked on a reconstitution of the group to meet the needs of local workers and diversify into areas of social justice. The Cleveland Actists were intensely vocal in support of a living family wage, worker unity and condemnation of Communists.\footnote{1185} The group campaigned for the continuation of federal rent control measures in the city by attending hearings and promoting rallies.\footnote{1186}

The chapter remained visible in its support of workers marching with picketers and launching labor rallies. This was evident particularly during the three month long

\footnote{1183} ACTU did not charge a fee for its program at the parishes.
\footnote{1184} AJCU: John Carroll University Labor School folder.
\footnote{1186} Letter of ACTU to the Chancery, September 17, 1952 and The Labor Leader, September 30, 1952, p. 2.
textile workers strike at the Cleveland Worsted Mills. The ACTU also ventured to organize “white collar” workers into a distinct union and chapter officers spoke at parish communion breakfasts and Holy Name Society meetings. At this time Bartko sought permission to publish a Cleveland ACTU labor paper but Bishop Hoban advised that it was “too big a venture” so the newspaper never materialized.

The organization’s primary form of publicity came every Labor Day when the ACTU sponsored a Labor Day Mass at the Cathedral. At this time, a statement in support of unions and workers was proclaimed by the bishop. The ACTU, specifically the current chaplain and Fr. Bartko, counseled the bishop on specific items to feature in the address. Additionally, the group promoted “Encyclical Day” in mid-May to commemorate Quadragesimo Anno.

The Cleveland ACTU encountered the same issues that confronted other chapters in the 1950’s and 1960’s. Principally, as the American worker achieved success and the middle class was attainable, union organizing efforts diminished. The “American dream” and other national interests, combined with worker apathy provided an excuse to abandon the ideas of the ACTU movement. Labor education moved away from religious themes to manifest a more academic perspective. These factors erode the purpose and agency of the Cleveland ACTU. The organization was still vigorous in the early 1960’s

1187 The Labor Leader, November 1955, p. 3.
1192 The Labor Leader, April 1958, p. 2.
with members planning to attend a National Social Action Conference. However after 1965, the Catholic directories for the Diocese of Cleveland no longer listed any activities associated with the ACTU. The Cleveland chapter, like those in other cities at this time, quietly vanished.

**Catholic Labor Education Continues**

Catholic labor education at the Institute persevered into the 1960’s adapting to the changes in industry and the work force. Fr. Carney and his lay labor advisory board adjusted the curriculum to reflect current needs that emphasized the employee-employer relationship. In a modern industrialized society both workers and managers required additional training in new fields of labor relations. The value of the Institute to industry and adult education was to offer that instruction while continuing to bring the social encyclicals “from the recesses to the light of conversation and public discussion” and stimulate a Christian social order.

To achieve this the Management Institute on Labor Relations opened in 1959 as a section of the labor school. This program was for management executives and supervisors with instruction by human resource or corporate labor relations professionals. Now the laity, not the clergy, were the most experienced teachers at the Institute. The sessions were titled: History of Unions in the United States; Legal Background of Collective Bargaining; Labor Relations Policies; The Supervisor’s and Line Manager’s Role in Labor Relations; White Collar Unionization and The Moral Basis of Labor

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Simultaneously, the labor school now retitled simply as Labor Education, modified its agenda so that courses similar to the management group were taught for workers and non-management personnel. The AFL-CIO field office, as well as the local Federal Mediation Service, took an active interest in the program and offered assistance in both course selection and furnished instructors. These classes were conducted by union members who were either employees or union officials and included classes such as: Training for Union Members and Leaders; Training for Union Stewards and Committeemen and Insight into Labor Unions.

In subsequent years, additional courses were included such as Arbitration; Grievance Handling; Labor Law; How to Chair a Meeting and Modern Collective Bargaining.

The apex of Catholic labor education in Cleveland transpired in the Fall of 1963 when the Institute, in cooperation with the United States Small Business Administration, offered a nine week Labor-Management Conference program titled “Beyond Collective Bargaining.” It was intended for management executives, supervisors, labor executives and shop stewards as an “open minded study” of the complex issues of contemporary industrial relations. The program afforded a unique opportunity for labor and management in Cleveland to assemble as partners rather than adversaries.

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1196 Course descriptions. ACD: Hoban Folder: Educational Institutions, St. John’s College-Social Education Institute, 1948-1966.
The lectures were by local and national leaders in the field of labor relations.

Ralph S. Locher, mayor of Cleveland, lectured on “Labor Relations and the Public Good.” Other classes included: “An Overall Look at Labor Relations,” presented by Daniel Patrick Monahan, Assistant Secretary of Labor, United States Department of Labor. His course addressed the distinctive position of the Federal government which spanned both labor and management interests. Marvin Miller, assistant to the president of the United Steel Workers Union lectured on “The Human Relations Committee Approach—A Union View.” Miller was praised for his efforts in unifying the USW and Kaiser Steel on cost saving programs. The Church was represented by Fr. Benjamin Masse, SJ, who was an arbitrator, a member of the national Industry Council and taught industrial relations at Columbia University. He presented a session on the “Pressures of Collective Bargaining.” The program was well attended, considered a success by the Institute but not repeated at the school.

The unions and the industrial base of Cleveland began a decline in the late 1960’s and into the 1970’s due economic and unexpected forces. This impacted the labor force and the conditions of daily life. St. John’s College and the Institute of Social Education were less valuable and viable within the academic field of labor-management relations. The Institute reduced labor education to classes in training for union leadership positions taught by members of the rank and file. Courses on the social encyclicals, ethics or

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1201 The mayor was credited with settling the newspaper strike of 1962 and the dispute over admittance of African-Americans into the trade unions working on the Cleveland Mall project. Course description “Beyond Collective Bargaining.” ACD: Hoban Folder: Educational Institutions, St. John’s College-Social Education Institute, 1948-1966 and Van Tassel and Grabowski, The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, p. 669.

The Cleveland Perspective

The purpose of the Catholic labor school was uncomplicated and simple: educating the worker so the laborer is cognizant of his rights. Consequently this empowerment facilitated the Christianizing of the work place. For the Actists that meant infusing the principles of the social encyclicals into unions and the workplace. To properly achieve this goal requires educating the worker. The labor school did that by enhancing its curriculum to reflect contemporary needs and promote industrial harmony. But the meaning of labor education at the Institute advanced to a more profound level. This was ascertained through a review of the student records.

Analysis of the enrollment records from 1950 to 1965 revealed that education at the Institute averaged approximately four hundred fifty students for all courses taught per year but, specific to the labor school, enrollment averaged at one hundred fifty to one hundred seventy-five students. On average, the general student body comprised 67% men to 33% women with the majority (43%) who had completed high school and were between 25-45 years old. At the labor school, the students consisted of 90% men to 10% women. Consistently throughout all courses the student body was 90% Catholic to 10% non-Catholic.

Parishes, lay faculty and attendees represented at the diocesan labor school characterized their neighborhoods in the 1940’s-1960’s. They came from ethnically

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1203 Catholic Directory, Diocese of Cleveland; multiple years 1969-1976: ACD. However, courses in labor-management relations, of a secular nature, continue at Cleveland State College’s Department of Management and Labor Relations.

1204 The last full year of educational records was 1965. Enrollment records, rosters and semester
distinct congregations for example St. Emeric (Hungarian), St. Colman (Irish), St. Mary (Slovenian), St. Casimir (Polish), St. Peter (German), Holy Rosary (Italian), St. George (Lithuanian) or churches like Holy Name, St. Agnes, St. Joseph and Sts. Cyril and Methodius (Slovak) that were located in industrialized areas. Catholic labor education in Cleveland represented an American lay Catholicism. The Church backed labor and organized labor supported education; this blending expedited the Americanization of the immigrant class. It also encouraged lay leadership in the local church.

**Achievements in Buffalo and Cleveland**

Buffalo and Cleveland were representative of an industrialized America that was predicated on an immigrant work force. Each had a population that was predominately Catholic in relation to the total population. Catholic labor education in Buffalo and Cleveland followed parallel routes as both were advanced by the Catholic laity as a response to worker needs. These cities developed educational programs to instruct employees about their civil and secular rights but it also taught workers about the dignity and legitimacy of their work. While both labor schools were initially formed by labor priests, it was the laity that staffed, taught and continued the programs of the schools. Each school, in near simultaneous fashion, responded to the challenges of industrial democracy by expanding the curriculum to be more inclusive of management issues.

Buffalo and Cleveland differed in some aspects as well. Buffalo was never an official member of the ACTU as was Cleveland. Buffalo operated from both a central and

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1206 Percentage of Catholics in relation to total population from 1900 to 2000: Diocese of Buffalo averaged
parish school model where Cleveland’s labor school was housed at one site. The labor college in Buffalo continued to teach theological doctrine while Cleveland concentrated more on union leadership. Buffalo’s program evolved as a challenge to local Communist influences in unions. Catholic labor education in Cleveland built a trained unionized labor body that sustained industrial democracy and mutuality between labor and management.

These two Great Lake cities played significant local roles in educating and training Catholic workers and leaders over the span of several decades. They both outlasted similar programs elsewhere. When larger cites such as New York, Detroit, Philadelphia and Chicago ceased their full time labor education the Great Lakes schools continued. Their contribution was not only to the worker but to the employer and the Church.

In Buffalo, some graduates of Catholic labor education were union officers such as George Seibold or George Wessel, President of the Buffalo AFL-CIO Council. A future mayor of Buffalo, Stanley Makowski and a mayor from Dunkirk, New York, Leonard Damian were also graduates and Catholics. In addition to union officers, the Cleveland labor school claimed state representative Elizabeth Gorman and Thomas Clement of the National Conference of Christians and Jews as notable graduates.

Catholic labor schools on the Great Lakes were American institutions that assisted in forging a work force of responsible citizens through education. The reward from 46%- 54% ; Diocese of Cleveland ranged from 35%-52%. Complied from assorted years and editions of *The National Catholic Almanac*, (Patterson, New Jersey: St. Anthony’s Guild Press).

1207 Labor College Report, Archives Diocese of Buffalo: Diocesan Labor College, Folder-Kulpinski, 36th Anniversary Year Report, 1973-1974, p. 4. The list of noteworthy graduates during the years that both Buffalo and Cleveland were in operation was extensive. These represent a mere sampling.

was the inculcation of Catholic values into the unions and the work place. An anonymous class evaluation form, in simple eloquence, best summarized the impact of Catholic labor education: “this is great, we need more of this.”

1209 Undated course evaluations. ABD: Diocesan Labor College, Folder: 1939-1942.
Chapter 9
The Implications of American Catholic Labor Schools

In the decades since the Catholic labor schools ceased operating what has been their value to the laity and to the American Catholic Church? This analysis of Catholic labor education in the United States, specifically focusing on Buffalo and Cleveland, is a treatment of the amplification of the Catholic laity’s role in organized labor that initially proceeds with the pronouncement of *Rerum Novarum*. This is later personified by the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists’ application of *Quadragesimo Anno* and the formation of labor schools.

This work examines a new perspective of the historiographic evidence not previously considered. It is my contention that the ACTU and Catholic labor education are the laity’s response to Americanism, that is, the “Americanist heresy” and the Vatican’s condemnation of those particular tendencies. By reviewing materials not previously utilized, or only partially so by other historians, this dissertation challenges the earlier narratives of labor historians and others that discount the role of the American Catholic laity in organized labor.

The account of the laity’s development as labor leaders has American and European components. In the past, some historians judge the available material on a literal basis and from an American national perspective that tends to undervalue European causation. Yet American Catholicism, particularly the laity, are evolving within a transnational identity with implications in multiple arenas. The American Church from the 1890’s to the Second World War is both an immigrant and, in many instances, a
militant corpus of the faithful who function within the tensions of a universal Catholicism with its pronounced European influences. American Catholics want to adapt American traits into their Church. This is evident with lay attempts to move the Church into the areas of social reform. For workers and organized labor this is especially relevant as the social encyclicals concentrate on them and the reconstruction of the social order. But the laity are often thwarted by a hierarchy who consider any policy changes as reserved for the clergy based on tradition.

Reviewing the substantial literature on this topic, the fundamental purpose of this dissertation is to correct previous historical inaccuracies and to revise the current narrative. To presume that this work is simply a linear history of American Catholics and organized labor is an inadequate appraisal of the project. My analysis of the primary and secondary sources, some which are obscure if not totally forgotten, challenges the scholarship on the role of America’s lay Catholics and their participation in organized labor. This conclusion is based on how some American Catholics read and interpret the social encyclicals and then apply them.

**Support for the Evidence**

In this study, four areas of evidence are submitted as proof of this assertion. First, my assessment of the literature maintains that American Catholics apply American exceptionalists expectations in their reading of *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*. American Catholics perceive and employ these messages differently from their European brethren as the Church in the United States persists in its native practice of

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1210 See Chapter 3.
independent interpretation of Rome’s directives.\textsuperscript{1212}

Second, this work illuminates the Americanist crisis, a complex and complicated issue, that is central to my argument which many scholars neglect or treat as a footnote in American Catholic history.\textsuperscript{1213} But a contemporary reading of the literature demonstrates how the laity advances into leadership positions while the hierarchy recoils when challenged by Rome. The Americanist crisis is an oblique acknowledgment by the Vatican that democratic ideas are infiltrating the American church; however, these are undesirable notions.

Third, my contention is that the establishment of the ACTU, and the subsequent labor schools, are lay initiatives that activate an educated lay leadership within the rank and file and also at the parish level. American Catholic labor education is not an adjunct of Catholic fraternal associations or social gatherings. Rather, the labor schools, founded by the laity, are for the laity based on the principles of the social encyclicals.\textsuperscript{1214} The laity do not act in a provocative or hostile manner toward the Church in this matter. Instead, labor education is the culmination of lay action to not only democratize the American Catholic Church but to place the laity in a position of collegiality with the clergy. This bottom-up venture is a radical departure from the standard practice of a clergy instigated endeavor.

The fourth aspect of this dissertation contributes innovative scholarship in two areas. In American Catholic Church history I present a new major view of lay action in

\textsuperscript{1212} Chapter 2 on \textit{Rerum Novarum} and Chapter 5 on \textit{Quadragesimo Anno} address this in detail.
\textsuperscript{1213} Chapter 3, \textit{Exceptionalism and the Americanism Heresy}, is a detailed treatment of this subject and challenges many of the accepted ideas on this matter.
It is an activist position that works toward labor reform and social reconstruction. This scholarship illuminates the ground between the standard studies of the American clergy and lay groups in the period prior to Vatican II. In American labor history, this work demonstrates the localized effectiveness of the Catholic Church and Catholic labor education in efforts to combat Communist influences in the work place and the unions. Many labor historians often dismiss or disregard this part of labor history. These segments are seldom considered within the historical narratives of the Church and organized labor however this dissertation reveals the implications of both. A review of the compelling historical proof will buttress these assertions.

American Catholic Laity

The Catholic Church in America, removed from the proximity of immediate Vatican interference, cautiously advances corresponding to the tenor of the nation. The American nation acquires a religious and moral purpose as its destiny. This characteristic is most explicit at the level of church authority and governance which establishes itself on the democratic qualities of voluntary associations and the majority vote as a legacy of America’s freedoms. This affect of democratic values differentiates

Chapter 4, Evolution of American Catholic Social Engagement, details how America’s lay Catholics develop a strategy for comprehensive involvement in social reform. Chapter 6 on the ACTU provides an extensive historical narrative and analysis of the American Catholic laity’s developing role in leadership positions within the Church, unions and industry through labor education.


American religion from its European brethren. Eventually this notion infuses all American religious groups, including Roman Catholics.

American Catholic lay involvement in Church affairs fluctuated during the nineteenth century. At first, Catholic parishes adopted the American congregational model but during the 1820’s to 1850’s, the clerical model gradually replaced communal lay authority with clergy dominance. By the late nineteenth century, some of the American Catholic hierarchy hoped to change this by promoting the laity to a better position within the Church. Archbishop Ireland stated that: “Laymen are not anointed in confirmation to the end that they may merely save their souls and pay their pew tax.” Ireland challenged the laity to “think, work, organize, read, speak, act as circumstances demand” and avoid “too much dependence upon priests.” Discussions among laity and clergy slowly developed concerning the relationship of the laity to the church. This will define the parameters of lay activity on social reform into the next century.

A Novel Strategy for the Laity

However, the distinctive American attitude of democratization and individuality within the American Church was ultimately condemned by Pope Leo XIII with his encyclical Testem Benevolentiae. This censure created an American clergy more loyal to Rome but unfortunately paralyzed the intellectual progress of the American clergy and hierarchy. America’s Catholic laity wanted to proceed into the modern world but the

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1222 Thomas T. McAvoy, “Americanism and Frontier Catholicism,” The Review of Politics, Vol. 5, No. 3,
clergy are now hesitant to do so. Within this arena, America’s lay Catholics sought a unique method for their response to the Americanist crisis. This solution was twofold: to establish themselves as a potent entity within American Catholicism that was not singularly focused on the clergy and to advance Catholicism into the public arena as a force majeure.

Accordingly, lay Catholics utilized a *via media* strategy. Labor education, based on the social encyclicals, became the lay response to the “Americanist heresy” and its resultant effects. The pragmatic American culture conflicted with the Church’s orientation of social goals above individual practice. However, the labor schools blended both Catholic dogma with American values into a collaborative assimilation that is an instinctive, if not subtle, answer to the European perspective of Americanism. This was more than just a reaction to the Americanist heresy. The laity formulated a clarification of what constitutes an American Catholic. In this way, Catholic labor education becomes *the* definition of Americanism.

It is the Church that defines social doctrine but it is the laity that gives Christian principles meaning by applying them in their daily experiences. The original purpose of Catholic labor education is to bring Catholic workingmen and women a knowledge of the social encyclicals and to promote unionization among non-union Catholic workers and apply Catholic doctrines to the problems of the trade union movement. It is the laity, not the clergy, who promote social justice and labor remediation on the factory floor and in the union halls. It is the responsibility of the laity, not the hierarchy, to navigate around the barriers to labor reform and toil to bring about industrial democracy at their

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workplace.

The lay leaders of this movement are not antagonists but seek to work within the official established parameters of the Church. The American Catholic labor schools empower the laity to rediscover their role in the composition of the American church and to recreate themselves as a viable partner with the clergy. This accommodation enables the laity to operate the schools from a position of collegiality and cooperation with the clergy. This accelerates a shared identity of American Catholicism before it is prevalent in the post Vatican II era.

Catholic Labor Schools in Buffalo and Cleveland

Analysis of the historical attestation was that the Catholic labor schools in the Great Lake cities of Buffalo and Cleveland, in concert with the national worker programs of the ACTU, were the vehicles for promoting social justice at the work place and within the local Church. It was the lay educators in Buffalo and Cleveland who trained workers to be leaders. These two specific labor education programs were efficient and dominant in their curriculum and purpose. This enabled them to continue into the 1970’s when other more predominate venues ceased operations years and decades earlier. It was also an indicator of the ascendancy of the laity as this transposition of influence, from clergy to laity, was not only inevitable but reflective of the direction of the American Catholic Church. This will later come to fruition with the Second Vatican Council.

Catholic labor education met an unfilled need for training workers in realistic social and ethical principles not political doctrine. This as the difference between the Catholic labor schools in Buffalo and Cleveland in comparison to secular institutions. Leaders were trained who could influence the rank and file in moral conduct. The
Curriculum was customized to the workers’ needs and adjusted over the years as conditions changed. The labor schools progressed as the worker and industrialized America also advanced.

The primary reason why Catholic labor schools flourished was due to the mission of the program based on a principle rooted in Catholic theology: to Christianize the workplace.\(^\text{1225}\) For many Americans, morality came through religion and education. The longevity of the Buffalo and Cleveland programs affirmed this.

**Critics of Catholic Labor Education**

However, during the decades that the American Catholic Church participated in labor reform and worker education, critics castigated the Church as irrelevant or disruptive. Writing in the *Nation* in 1941, journalist Richard Rovere, a former communist turned anti-communist liberal, describes the Catholic Church and the ACTU as divisive in their attempts to establish religious authority in the unions. Rovere asserts that the American Catholic Church and the ACTU’s goals are similar to those of the Communists which are “so grandiose that almost any means seem justified to their attainment.”\(^\text{1226}\)

His contention is that the Catholic laity have become “Protestanized” in their social thought allowing for greater Catholic activity in organized labor. Rovere obviously lacks an accurate historical perspective of the evolution of Catholic and Protestant social doctrine in its relationship to the worker.\(^\text{1227}\) The effect is that Protestants and Catholics became more enthusiastic about the works of the ACTU.\(^\text{1228}\)

\(^{1224}\) Chapter 7 examines the Buffalo labor schools and Chapter 8 explores the labor schools in Cleveland.
\(^{1225}\) “Christianizing the workplace” means the application of Christian principles and the teachings and the doctrines of the Catholic faith at the workplace and in the union. Oberle, *The Association of Catholic Trade Unionist*, p. 9-11.
\(^{1227}\) See Chapter 4.
\(^{1228}\) *The Labor Leader*, January 29, 1941, p. 3.
Another distinct indictment, on the validity of the Catholic commitment to organized labor in a more contemporary period, is Douglass Seaton’s 1981 work *Catholics and Radicals*. He dissects the ACTU and the labor schools claiming that they are conservative organizations controlled by the clergy.\textsuperscript{1229} I disagree with Seaton’s assessment. It is overly simplistic and lacks a fundamental understanding of Catholic theology and the principle of subsidiarity. Seaton is also selective in his utilization and analysis of the historical evidence. A comprehensive review of the historical narrative reveals the validity and vitality of Catholic labor education in lay leadership development in unions, at the workplace and in the Church.

Seaton classifies Catholic social teaching as conservative because it rejects a socialist-communist agenda of class struggle. He misconstrues Catholic social teaching believing that it is viable at a only a solitary level. In daily experience it is multifaceted in form and function. The social encyclicals and the Bishops’ Program of Social Reconstruction, by the nature of their content, cannot be branded as conservative. The Church’s demands for a living wage, equal pay for equal work performed by women, just redistribution of wealth, a safe work environment and the Christianizing of the workplace present themselves as radical forces not conservative programs.

Seaton continues his argument that the ACTU is clergy controlled which depends heavily on “Church authorities and lower clerics” to influence the rank and file.\textsuperscript{1230} John Cort, co-founder of the ACTU, confirms that the ACTU and its adjunct activities are established by laymen not the clergy. He emphatically proclaims that “we never had

\textsuperscript{1229} See Douglas P. Seaton, *Catholics and Radicals*, (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1981) particularly Chapter 5 in his discussion of the Church, the ACTU and their collaboration with organized labor.

\textsuperscript{1230} Under guidelines established by the National Catholic Welfare Conference on November 19, 1936,
priests telling us what to do.”

Subsequently, the chaplains to the labor schools such as Fr. Monaghan, Msgr. Boland, Fr. Bartko and others are on a part time basis and their influence is not as forceful as implied by Seaton.

John Cort further describes the relationship of the priest and laity in this venture:

“Ordinarily we think of lay organizations as sponsoring activities in which the lay people help the priest to do the priest’s work. But the real lay apostolate is one in which the priest helps the laymen do the laymen’s work.”

For the ACTU and labor education it is the laity that includes the clergy and not the inverse of this paradigm as misunderstood by some scholars.

Based on my examination of the historical record, I view Seton’s contentions as deficient if not astray. The work of the ACTU and the labor schools is lay inspired, lay oriented and produces lay leaders. It is the layman, grounded in Catholic theology and principles, who applies that knowledge directly at the workplace and the union hall. Further, it is the ACTU members, not the clergy, who petition the American Catholic hierarchy to teach the social encyclicals in all Catholic schools and seminaries.

Other historians appear to not adequately comprehend the purpose of the ACTU and labor education. Historians such as Neil Betten, David O’Brien and John McGreevy portray it more as a Catholic anti-communist organization than as a comprehensive agent for labor reform and social change. They do not address Catholic labor education in detail nor consider it as a positive force for change in the labor movement.

“diocesan organizations are entirely subject to the Ordinary of the diocese.”


This resolution was adopted at the ACTU convention in Cleveland. Catholic Universe Bulletin, July 9, 1954, p. 9.

The significance of Catholic lay labor education was best categorized in 1955 at the Cleveland Social Action Conference. Catholic labor education was praised by laity, union officials and clergy as they asserted that the “labor school apostolate” publicly and firmly identified the Church with the workers’ cause making the laborer aware that the Church was interested in the worker not only spiritually but materially. Catholic labor education was proclaimed to be “the most constructive outside influence for the American labor movement.”

The ACTU and the labor schools were not fraternal organizations or mutual aid societies. They became an integral part of the national labor environment. They were formed on the doctrine of the social encyclicals by progressive thinking lay Catholics who subtly and indeliberately assimilated the traits of Americanism, through education, into the American Church. The implications of the Catholic labor schools varied yet reflected a simultaneous national and parochial approach to labor.

Catholic labor education prepared the laity to be leaders for both unions and for the Church. Responding to the principles of the social encyclicals, the Catholic labor schools in Buffalo and Cleveland were an American response to the initiatives in those pastoral documents. It was a proactive approach that differed from what was accomplished, or rather not instigated, in Europe.

In Buffalo, the Diocesan Labor College was a solid bulwark against communist influences in the union and repelling corrupt union officials. It was also responsible for the establishment of secular labor education at the college level in New York State.

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In Cleveland, Catholic labor education and the ACTU were influential in union organizing and training the city’s “blue collar” and management work force to be moral influences at the workplace. In both cities, labor education was a forum for labor and management to meet and discuss their differences. In this arena, reconciliation of labor issues became possible averting potential strikes.

This work illustrates how the laity melded American traits into labor education and therefore offered a rebuttal to the phantom heresy of Americanism. It proves that the American Catholic laity, not the clergy, were poised to democratize the American Church and occupy leadership positions. This occurred at a time when the worker needed a fundamental education in labor issues to maneuver within the union hall and on the factory floor. The absolute value of Catholic lay labor education then was the formation of leaders and the promotion of industrial democracy.

The convergence of Catholic social doctrine with worker instruction moved the laity and the Church to the forefront of labor reform and social reconstruction. This lay apostolate established them as equals with the clergy and hierarchy. Yet it required the pronouncements of Vatican II to elucidate this principle. The labor schools were the American laity’s unique method as a response to the Europeans, the Vatican and the American Catholic hierarchy. It clearly demonstrated that the concept of equality did have a place in the Church and that for American Catholics it was a component of Catholicism. The authentic implications of Catholic labor education in America were evident in the union halls and the Church halls.

The Catholic laity’s operation of labor schools qualified them to be a central
operative in American labor. Unfortunately, at a time when American labor is once again under attack and some of the Catholic hierarchy enervate in their support for organized labor, rudimentary instruction for the rank and file is no longer available especially when it is most appropriate. Teaching workers about their rights and Christianizing the workplace are beliefs conceived and practiced decades ago. Yet, those concepts are still current, relevant and required more today than ever to sustain the worker.

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