

1

CHAPTER

Remapping American Catholicism

Father José Antonio Díaz de León, the last Franciscan priest serving in Texas when it was still part of Mexico, died mysteriously in 1834 near the east Texas town of Nacogdoches. A judge exonerated an Anglo-American accused of murdering Díaz de León amid rumors that the priest's death of a gunshot wound was a suicide. Mexican Catholics decried this decision as a sham. How could their pastor, who had served faithfully on the Texas frontier for nearly all his years as a priest, have committed such a desperate act?¹

Seven years later Vincentian priests John Timon and Jean Marie Odin made a pastoral visit to Nacogdoches. They deplored the conditions of Mexican Catholics, whom, they said, Anglo-Americans had indiscriminately killed, driven away, and robbed of their lands. Father Odin also reported that Anglo-Americans had burned the local Catholic church building to the ground. Yet these and other visitors observed that Mexican Catholic laity continued to gather in private homes for feast days and weekly worship services and celebrated various rituals, such as funerals. Catholicism in Nacogdoches remained almost entirely a lay-led effort until 1847 when (by then) Bishop Odin was finally able to appoint two priests to replace Father Díaz de León. Parishioners' eager reception of the sacraments from their new pastors testified to their enduring faith amid a tumultuous period of social upheaval.

These largely forgotten events occurred simultaneously with more widely known episodes in U.S. Catholic history. General histories and survey courses of U.S. Catholicism inevitably examine the atrocities of the anti-Catholic mob that burned the Ursuline convent to the ground at Charlestown, Massachusetts (across the river from Boston), in 1834, the same year of Father Díaz de León's assassination and concurrent with the burning of the Nacogdoches parish church. Historical overviews also explore the saga of European Catholic

CHAPTER 1

immigrants, such as the Irish and the Germans, whose migration flows increased significantly during the very same decades that Mexican Catholics at Nacogdoches struggled in faith for their very survival as a community. Irish-born John Hughes became bishop (later archbishop) of New York in 1842, the same year that Odin, the first bishop of Texas (and later archbishop of New Orleans), was ordained to the episcopacy. But Odin's two decades of endeavor to advance the Catholic Church and faith in Texas are far less recognized than Hughes's simultaneous labors in New York.

U.S. Catholic historians' strong focus on the eastern seaboard and European settlers and immigrants mirror long-standing emphases in the broader scholarship of North American religious history. Studies in recent decades have addressed lacunae in this historiography such as the role of regionalism, the frontier, women, African Americans, and Asian Americans, to name but a few.² Collectively these studies reveal that while documenting "forgotten" peoples, histories, and regions is an essential intellectual endeavor, it is only a first step toward the longer-range goal of investigating how to remap general narratives of the past in a manner that more adequately encompasses the various peoples, places, and events that formed it. Building on the groundbreaking work of colleagues like Moises Sandoval, the leading figure in the 1975 founding and subsequent development of the U.S. chapter of the Comisión para el Estudio de la Historia de la Iglesia en Latinoamérica (CEHILA, the Commission for the Study of the History of the Church in Latin America), this chapter is part of the larger effort to rethink the narratives of U.S. religious history, and U.S. Catholicism in particular—in this case, through the lens of Latino Catholic experience.³

Interpreting the past is never a neutral endeavor, of course. A basic truism of historical studies is that those who control the present construct the past in order to shape the future. With this challenge in mind, how can we understand the past in a way that sheds light on the tragedies of Father Díaz de León and the Ursulines at Charleston; Catholicism in Nacogdoches and in New York; the contributions of bishops Odin and Hughes; and the experiences of Mexican, Irish, German, and other Catholics? More broadly, what are the basic themes of U.S. Catholic history? What gradual trends or dramatic turning points mark it into distinct time periods? How do Latinos fit into and shape the overall narrative? Obviously the answers to these questions are matters of interpretation, and no single response is unilaterally comprehensive. But how one responds is decisive for a number of the issues and topics that are fundamental to understanding the Hispanic presence and the future of Catholics in the United States. So we begin with an assessment of the historiography of U.S. Catholicism.

REMAPPING AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

It is no surprise that for Latinos the most contentious renderings of the U.S. Catholic past are those that obscure their contributions, sometimes to the point of near invisibility. While the strongest expressions of this critique are usually directed at more dated scholarly works, as recently as 2008 James O'Toole's *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America* encompasses only two brief references to Hispanics from the origins of U.S. Catholicism to the dawn of the twenty-first century. The final chapter of O'Toole's examination of U.S. Catholic history from the perspective of the lay faithful depicts Latinos as an important component of Catholicism's ongoing evolution in the United States in the new century, but unfortunately this leaves the impression that only now are Hispanics becoming a noteworthy element of the U.S. Catholic story.⁴

To varying degrees other recent general histories of U.S. Catholicism address the Hispanic presence and contribution more adequately. A number of historians begin their rendering of the U.S. Catholic story with the Spanish colonial era rather than the establishment of the later and overwhelmingly Protestant British colonies. Woven into the narrative of general works such as those of James Hennesey, Jay Dolan, Charles Morris, and James Fisher are discussions of immigration patterns, demographic shifts, and Latino Catholic leaders, organizations, movements, religious traditions, political involvement, and social activism. But these historical treatments often subsume Hispanics into an Americanization paradigm that is presumed to hold true for all Catholics in the United States. Morris concluded his acclaimed 1997 work with the assertion that there is a "standoff between the tradition of Rome and the tradition of America [the United States]." His claim is based on an understanding of U.S. Catholicism as, in the words of Dolan, a fledgling "republican" church after U.S. independence that expanded into an "immigrant church" in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and after World War II had "come of age" as "American," a process often depicted as culminating in John F. Kennedy's election as president, which signaled for numerous Catholics the authentication of their full acceptance in U.S. society. Explicitly or implicitly, scholars contend that these developments expanded Catholics' benefits and contributions as U.S. citizens.⁵

Even those who protest Americanization as a detriment to Catholicism divide the U.S. Catholic past into a similar series of historical eras. Distancing himself from previous authors he deemed "one-sided in a progressivist direction," Joseph Varacalli presented his 2006 work *The Catholic Experience in America* as "one of many more balanced and orthodox pieces of scholarship that . . . should be viewed, partly at least, as a result of the intellectual legacy of Pope John Paul II." Yet Varacalli follows the same basic pattern

CHAPTER 1

of historical periods as the predecessors he critiques, albeit with his own interpretive slant. He depicts Catholicism in the United States as evolving from modest beginnings as a “minority church” in the first decades of the new republic to a period of nearly a century and a half in which mass immigration and effective episcopal leadership enabled Catholics to forge a subculture that “successfully propagated” the faith. In his view the zenith of Catholic subculture and its defense against “a then Protestant and a mostly unsympathetic civilization” was the period following World War II. But upward mobility, progressive interpretations of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), and secularization in society at large significantly diminished the countercultural edge of the subculture and the vitality of Catholic faith. While Varacalli diverges from previous authors in his addition of a fourth historical era he calls the Catholic “restorationist” movement under the pontificates of popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI, he does not depart from the dominant schema. Instead he critiques the process of Americanization that others depict in a more positive light.⁶

Some scholars question whether the immigrant-to-Americanization paradigm is the best lens through which to examine the U.S. Catholic experience, even for the experience of European Catholic immigrants and their descendants. Others critique the language of “coming of age,” noting that whatever their level of formal education and status, European immigrants did not sojourn in a perpetual state of childhood immaturity, nor did adopting the English language and U.S. social norms indicate that their descendants had advanced to the age of adulthood.⁷ Nonetheless, the contention that U.S. Catholics have become “Americanized” to a significant degree remains an important interpretive lens through which most scholars, pastoral leaders, and other observers examine Catholicism in the United States.

The core question about the Americanization paradigm is this: in the long view, will the undeniably profound assimilation that transpired in the period from roughly 1920 to 1980 end up appearing more as an anomaly in U.S. Catholic history, or as the norm? Are there interpretive lenses that illuminate important alternative understandings of the historical trajectories of U.S. Catholicism? From the perspective of many ecclesial leaders, for example, a more pressing concern is the loosening of attachment to the institutional church in recent decades as reflected in data such as the relatively fewer vocations to the priesthood and religious life and the lower rates of Catholic school enrollment and Sunday Mass attendance, trends that are evident to varying but significant degrees among both immigrant and U.S.-born “Americanized” Catholics. How will future historians assess trends such as these, their interrelation with the Americanization paradigm, and the relative

REMAPPING AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

explanatory significance of each for understanding Catholicism in the United States? Are there other interpretive lenses no one has yet articulated that will rise to the fore in analyses of the U.S. Catholic past? At this juncture the most tenable conclusion about the Americanization paradigm is that it offers considerable insight into the experience of European immigrants' descendants from the interwar period until the two decades following the Second Vatican Council, as well as into the subsequent contentious debates about the stance Catholics should take vis-à-vis the wider U.S. society. To presume that the Americanization paradigm is the best or even the sole organizational schema for U.S. Catholic history, and in particular for examining the place of groups such as African Americans and Latinos within that history, remains unsubstantiated.

Thus a decisive challenge is to construct a history of U.S. Catholicism that incorporates Latinos, and other non-European groups, but is not modeled exclusively on European Catholic immigrants and their descendants' societal ascent and assimilation during the middle six decades of the twentieth century. Indeed, in broad strokes the history of Latino Catholics inverts the standard depiction of their counterparts from nations such as Ireland, Germany, Poland, and Italy. While Catholics were a small minority in the British colonies, in lands from Florida to California they comprised a more substantial population under Catholic Spain. The first mass group of Catholics to settle in the United States was nineteenth-century European immigrants, but the first large group of Hispanic Catholics became part of the nation during that same era without ever leaving home, as they were incorporated into its boundaries during U.S. territorial expansion into Florida and then westward. Just as European immigration diminished to relatively minuscule numbers as a result of 1920s restrictive immigration legislation, Hispanic immigration began in earnest with the Mexican Revolution. The counter trajectory of Latino Catholic history in the United States in relation to that of their European-descent coreligionists necessitates a reanalysis of each epoch delineated in the standard historiography, particularly the period since World War II, as waves of Hispanic immigrants have comprised an increasingly significant portion of what was purportedly an established, Americanized, post-immigrant church.

A Latino perspective on U.S. Catholic history also necessitates sharper attention to its international dimensions, especially the intersections of U.S. and Latin American history. Following the Spanish colonial presence in lands that are now part of the United States, U.S. political and economic expansionism led to the conquest of nearly half of Mexico's national territory at the midpoint of the nineteenth century, consolidated U.S. occupation of Puerto

CHAPTER 1

Rico five decades later, fueled economic shifts that led to the origins of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century immigration from Mexico, resulted in a U.S. presence throughout the Caribbean and Central America that helped induce migrations from those regions, and has driven the globalization process that in recent decades fed an immigration explosion from throughout Latin America. This latter process blurred the border between Latin and North America, accelerating the development of previous links between Catholicism in the United States and Catholicism in the rest of the Americas. It also produced an unprecedented degree of diversification of national origin groups among Latinos in U.S. Catholicism. Examining the U.S. Catholic past through the lens of this diverse Hispanic experience—as well as through the experience of Europeans and other groups—expands on a unilateral Americanization paradigm with a hemispheric perspective that is essential for understanding the current demographic Hispanicization of Catholicism in the United States.

Colonial Origins

Jay Dolan's introduction to the U.S. history survey course exemplifies a fundamental revision that a number of contemporary scholars have adopted for U.S. Catholic historiography. Dolan's custom on the first day of class was to ask his students the significance of three years in North American history: 1607, 1608, and 1610. At least one student was always able to recognize 1607 as the date for the founding of the first British colony, Jamestown. But rarely could anyone identify 1608 as the founding date for Québec, and 1610 for Santa Fe. Dolan attests that "the reasoning behind my pedagogical cunning is to impress upon the students the French and Spanish dimension of American history as well as the more familiar English aspect." Colonial U.S. historians like Alan Taylor have expanded on Dolan's treatment, noting even less-acknowledged developments within territories that later became part of the United States, such as the Dutch colonies, Russian settlement in Alaska, and British incursions into Hawaii.⁸ Implicitly, this approach answers an essential question for any overview of U.S. history: does the subject matter encompass solely the British colonists and other peoples and territories *only when* they become part of the U.S. nation, or does it encompass the inhabitants of regions that are now part of the United States both *before and after* their incorporation? Rather than a story of thirteen original colonies and their westward expansion, the latter perspective accentuates the encounter and conflict of peoples, primarily the southward-moving French, the northward-moving Spanish, the westward-moving British, the natives

REMAPPING AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

who already lived on the land, and the slaves and immigrants who settled among them. Given that both the French and Spanish colonists were from Catholic countries, any comprehensive analysis of U.S. Catholic history must examine their foundational presence and the extent of their influence on subsequent developments.

Spanish-speaking Catholics have lived in what is now the United States for twice as long as the nation has existed. The first diocese in the New World was established in 1511 at San Juan, Puerto Rico, now a commonwealth associated with the United States. Subjects of the Spanish Crown founded the first permanent European settlement within the current borders of the fifty states at St. Augustine, Florida, in 1565, four decades before the establishment of Jamestown, and around 1620 established at that settlement the first Marian shrine in what is now the continental United States, Nuestra Señora de la Leche y Buen Parto (Our Nursing Mother of Happy Delivery). Before the end of the sixteenth century, Spanish Jesuits and Franciscans initiated missionary activities in present-day Georgia and even as far north as Virginia. In 1598 Spanish subjects traversed present-day El Paso, Texas, and proceeded north to establish the permanent foundation of Catholicism in what is now the Southwest.

Catholics in the thirteen British colonies were a repressed minority in a Protestant land, eventually even losing the elective franchise in Maryland, the only British colony that Catholics founded. They comprised scarcely 1 percent of the population at the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Meanwhile, in Hispanic settlements from Florida to California, Catholicism was the established religion under Spain and, in the Southwest, under Mexico after it won independence in 1821. This prescription led newcomers to the region—such as escaped slaves from Georgia who were granted freedom in Spanish Florida, famed Alamo defender James Bowie in Texas, and renowned scout Kit Carson in New Mexico—to accept Catholic baptism and at least nominal practice of the faith. From the standpoints of original settlement, societal influence, and institutional presence, the origins of Catholicism in what is now the United States were decidedly Hispanic.

Contemporary Latinos acclaim the foundational role of their ancestors in various ways. El Paso residents maintain that members of the Juan de Oñate expedition celebrated the “first Thanksgiving” in the United States on April 30, 1598, in gratitude for surviving their trek across the Chihuahuan Desert. The Oñate expedition festivities included a Catholic Mass and a meal for which the Spaniards provided game and natives from the region supplied fish. Since 1989 the El Paso Mission Trail Association has commemorated the event annually with a community picnic and festivities and Mass in historic

CHAPTER 1

sites like the San Elizario Presidio Chapel. Costumed participants and members of the local Tigua Indians reenact the Oñate expedition's day of thanks. In 1991 a delegation from El Paso visited Plymouth Rock dressed as Spanish conquistadores and, according to an El Paso Mission Trail Association press release, was amicably "arrested and charged with blasphemy and spreading malicious rumors for stating that the real First Thanksgiving took place in Texas." Though this staged confrontation was aimed at drawing publicity to both parties involved, the same press release also proudly noted, "The Plymouth trial judge ordered a delegation of Pilgrims to travel to El Paso the following year to observe the Texas Thanksgiving."⁹

Yet, on the whole, popular perceptions have frequently relegated the historical significance of Hispanic Catholicism in the colonial period to a romanticized and bygone day of the Spanish missions. Such depictions appeared in print immediately after the U.S. takeover of northern Mexico in the U.S.-Mexican War (1846–1848), such as Francis Baylies's eyewitness account of the U.S. Army's overland advance from San Antonio down to the heart of Mexico, which encompassed his laudatory observations about the missionary efforts of Spanish friars among the native peoples of Texas. Baylies marveled at the "magnificent traces" of the missionaries' labors during the Spanish colonial era that were noteworthy in the ruins of the mission compounds near San Antonio. He also bemoaned the general decline in local conditions since Mexican independence, including the deterioration of the "magnificent churches [and] monasteries," which "once the outposts of christianity [*sic*], were now moss-covered ruins." According to Baylies, after Mexico won independence, "everything went to decay. Agriculture, learning, the mechanic arts, shared the common fate; and when the banners of the United States were unfurled in these distant and desolate places, the descendants of the noble and chivalric Castilians had sunk to the level, perhaps beneath it, of the aboriginal savages."¹⁰

Baylies's justification of the U.S. conquest as a redemption of Mexican backwardness and corruption induced his sharp, Eurocentric contrast between the decline of the missions under Mexico and the previous "golden age" of the missions, in which Spanish friars selflessly taught Christianity, Spanish culture, and European civilization to native peoples. Writer Helen Hunt Jackson extended this view to a national audience through a series of 1883 *Century Magazine* articles on Fray Junípero Serra, the founder of the California missions. Though Jackson was the daughter of a strict Massachusetts Congregationalist family, she found spiritual inspiration in her hagiographic perception of Serra and his fellow Franciscans, even considering their labors superior to those of the Puritans, whom, she claimed, "drove the Indians farther

REMAPPING AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

and farther into the wilderness every year, fighting and killing them,” while the Spanish friars “were gathering the Indians by thousands into communities and feeding and teaching them.” Jackson’s best-selling novel *Ramona*, first published in 1884, solidified this idealized view of the missions in the popular mind-set. A love story set against her presentation of the social upheaval after the passing of the missions, Jackson’s literary success cast a long shadow of “Ramonamania”: rail tours of the California missions, a 1919 D. W. Griffith film starring Mary Pickford as Ramona, an annual Ramona theatrical pageant that continues to this day, initiatives to restore Spanish missions, and, most conspicuously, the development of Mission and Spanish Revival architectural styles that mark the landscape of towns and cities across the Southwest and beyond.¹¹

A number of scholars and other commentators have noted that many restored missions and writings about them fail to account for indigenous perspectives on the mission system, including the cultural shock, harsh treatment, and death from European diseases that many Native Americans endured in mission communities. Yet even professional historians often fall into the false presumptions that the missions were the only Catholic religious institutions in the Spanish colonies and Mexican territories and that *all* the missions underwent a period of abandonment and decline. In fact, parishes, military chapels, private shrines, and some missions have been the homes of active Catholic faith communities from colonial times until the present day.¹²

The “arrival” of Christianity in lands that are now part of the continental United States began with Spanish expeditions into the area, such as Juan Ponce de León’s famous excursions into Florida and the fated Pánfilo de Narváez expedition, from which only Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and a handful of companions survived after an eight-year ordeal of hunger, captivity, and an overland trek from Florida to New Spain (present-day Mexico).¹³ Later, Spanish subjects established settlements to stake territorial claims for the Spanish Crown, pursue economic gain, and propagate Catholicism among native populations. *Villas* (towns) with formal civil and church institutions, military garrisons, and missions provided historically tested structures around which Hispanic frontier communities emerged.¹⁴

Catholic missionaries, usually Franciscan friars, with the major exception being Eusebio Kino and his fellow Jesuits in Arizona, accompanied exploratory expeditions and then were an integral part of Spanish efforts to establish settlements. Sometimes the friars founded missions within or near settled indigenous communities. In other cases they induced nomadic peoples to settle down at newly established missions, usually in the vicinity of Spanish

CHAPTER 1

towns and military garrisons. Since they typically had but a single or small group of friars and perhaps a few Spanish military personnel, the mission settlements were in effect missionary-led Indian towns. Initially the prospect of entering the missions to stave off enemies, starvation, and harsh winters seemed attractive to some Native Americans, but a number of them eventually found mission life too alien and coercive. They were not accustomed to the Spanish work routines and religious lifestyles, and they also found unacceptable the friars' demands that they shed their traditional ways. Many became resentful and left the missions. In some cases outright rebellion ensued, most famously in 1680 when New Mexico's Pueblo Indians exploded into open violence under the leadership of a shaman or spiritual leader named Popé, driving the Spaniards and their loyal indigenous subjects from the region and seeking to purge their communities of Catholic symbols and everything Spanish.¹⁵ Though the Spanish reconquered them beginning in 1692 and Franciscan missionary efforts resumed, the revolt highlighted the potential clash of civilizations in mission life.

On the other hand, a number of Native Americans remained within the world of the missions, accepted Christianity, and took on Hispanic and Catholic identities. In various locales the native peoples revered missionaries for their faith, dedication, and willingness to advocate for them within the Spanish colonial system. Julio César, who identified himself as a "pure-blooded Indian" of California, recalled with fondness that as a resident of Mission San Luís Rey (near San Diego) during his youth, a Padre Francisco was the priest in charge of the mission, and "the Indians called him 'Tequedeuma,' an Indian word which signified that the padre was very sympathetic and considerate toward the Indians; in fact, he was very loving and good."¹⁶ For the missionaries, Hispanicizing the natives entailed creating living spaces for their charges around impressive churches that became centers of everyday life. The missionaries worked diligently to inculcate Catholicism, define work regimes, establish predictable daily life routines, teach the Spanish language, oversee social interactions, enforce Christian-appropriate gender relations, and strive to modify cultural practices among the natives that they believed were contrary to Christianity.

At the same time, even as natives were incorporated into Catholicism and Hispanic society, to varying degrees they exerted their own cultural influence on the Hispanic newcomers. For example, archeological research reveals the presence of Coahuiltecan artifacts such as pottery, tools, and blankets in San Antonio's Hispanic households during the colonial period. Coahuiltecan and other native peoples also brought to Catholic worship some of the spirit and elements of their communal rituals called *mitotes*, which included singing,

REMAPPING AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

dancing, and feasting to mark occasions like the summer harvest, hunting or fishing expeditions, or the return of the full moon.¹⁷

The Spanish Crown viewed the missions as temporary institutions whose role was to prepare Native Americans to become good Spanish subjects. Officially, from their inception the missions were destined for secularization—that is, transference from missionary to civil authorities and diocesan clergy once the friars completed the work of Hispanicizing the natives. But in fact secularization varied from region to region, depending on socioeconomic realities, central government policies, the level of cooperation among Native Americans, and the often competing interests of missionaries and local officials.

In theory, the indigenous converts at the missions were to receive individual land allotments and other assets in the secularization process to aid them in their transition to a new status as Hispanicized Catholics. But in numerous cases this did not occur: the Native Americans simply lost everything to unscrupulous officials or other Hispanic residents, often moving into Hispanic towns where they occupied the bottom of the social structure. However the mission residents fared, the secularization process transformed their communities from corporate entities under the authority and protection of specific missionary orders to independent communities that became another element of Hispanic civil society. In the process many missions no longer had resident clergy. A large number fell into disrepair, many of them later rebuilt. Nonetheless, the church structures at locales like Santa Barbara, California; Ysleta, Texas (near El Paso); and San Xavier del Bac, south of Tucson, Arizona, among others, continued to function as Catholic houses of worship and do so even today.

Male friars produced the vast majority of extant mission records, which consequently tend to accentuate their perspectives, accomplishments, and struggles. Nonetheless, the missions reveal a long-standing, significant element of Latino Catholicism: the faith and leadership of women like Eulalia Pérez, who became a prominent figure at Mission San Gabriel (near Los Angeles). A native of Loreto, Baja California, Pérez moved to the mission in the early nineteenth century with her husband, who was assigned there as a guard. After her husband's death, Pérez and her son and five daughters lived at the mission, where she became the head housekeeper, a leadership position in the mission community that grew increasingly significant as the number of friars decreased. Her duties included managing supplies and their distribution, as well as supervising Native American workers. The elderly Eulalia noted modestly in a memoir she dictated to an interviewer that as the mission's "mistress of the keys" (*llavera*), she "was responsible for a variety of duties." In fact she was the lay overseer of the mission community's daily life.¹⁸

CHAPTER 1

Though missions were numerically the predominant Catholic institution in the northern stretches of New Spain, parishes, military chaplaincies, and private chapels also played a crucial role in establishing and maintaining Catholicism. Unlike the missions in which the population consisted exclusively of Native Americans, save for a few friars and Hispanic military personnel, these other religious foundations provided for the spiritual welfare of Hispanic civilian and military settlers and their descendants, as well as some natives who eventually joined their communities. Parishes first appeared with the establishment of formal towns and grew in number as some missions were secularized and became ordinary parishes. Local residents built the churches and sought to obtain the services of clergy, either religious-order priests like the Franciscans, or diocesan priests, who were primarily trained to serve existing Spanish-speaking Catholic communities rather than to work for the conversion of Native Americans. In Spanish colonial times, Hispanic Catholics established parishes in places like St. Augustine, San Antonio, Laredo, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Los Angeles, along with military chapels in other locales, such as Santa Barbara and Monterey, California, where the current Catholic cathedral has its origins in a colonial military chapel.

The construction of the first church edifice in San José, California, demonstrates local initiative in establishing parishes. In 1802 settlers at San José, which had been founded in 1777, petitioned for permission to build a chapel. From its foundation the community had relied on Mission Santa Clara, about four miles away, for their spiritual needs. When they received the required permission, the 217 settlers immediately began building their church. In 1804 an earthquake destroyed their newly completed chapel, but the community persisted and rebuilt it, at one juncture receiving help from the military commander at nearby Monterey, who sent individuals under judicial sanction to work on the church building. Once built, the settlers took it upon themselves to negotiate with the Franciscans at Mission Santa Clara for their spiritual services.¹⁹

Private chapels and pilgrimage sites also reveal local initiative and the origins of contemporary Hispanic Catholicism in the colonial past, most famously the sanctuary of Chimayó in New Mexico. Tewa Indians acclaimed the healing properties of Chimayó's sacred earth long before Catholic settlers arrived at this locale on the western side of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Spanish subjects completed the first chapel at the site in 1816 and dedicated the Santuario de Chimayó to Nuestro Señor de Esquipulas (Our Lord of Esquipulas), a Guatemalan representation of the crucifixion associated with a Mayan sacred place of healing earth. During the 1850s, however, devotees of the Santuario de Chimayó added a statue of the Santo Niño de Atocha (Holy

REMAPPING AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

Child of Atocha) in response to a new local shrine dedicated to the Santo Niño. Subsequently the Santo Niño and the miraculous dirt became the focal points for most Santuario devotees. They remain so today for thousands of pilgrims who visit Chimayó annually.²⁰

Though Louisiana was under Spanish control from 1766 to 1803 and Spain controlled Florida for well over two centuries until 1821 (with one hiatus of British rule from 1763 to 1783), most Hispanic Catholics in what is now the United States resided in the Southwest. During the Spanish colonial era and the subsequent period after Mexican independence in 1821, New Mexico was in their most populous territory and thus the one with the largest number of Catholics. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the diocesan clergy in New Mexico had begun the process of slowly displacing the Franciscan missionaries who had served in the region since the late sixteenth century. This was, of course, a natural and predictable course of events, since the missions had always been viewed as temporary institutions dedicated to preparing the indigenous communities for parish life as Hispanic citizens. In 1798 the diocese of Durango, which encompassed New Mexico, introduced the first diocesan pastors to the region, one for the parish at Santa Fe and the other at Santa Cruz. As the Franciscan numbers declined, particularly after Mexican independence, when many Spanish friars were forcibly exiled or left the new republic out of loyalty to their native Spain, the diocesan priests increased thanks to recruitment of local youth who went to seminary in Durango. Between 1823 and 1826 four New Mexicans completed their training and returned home to begin their ministries. By the end of the 1840s the Franciscans had all left or died, and some seventeen or eighteen diocesan priests, most of them recruited locally, served the spiritual needs of New Mexico's parish communities. In the end, the church's viability in New Mexico depended on the communities themselves, including their ability to recruit their youth into the priesthood.²¹

One such local vocation, Father Ramón Ortiz (1814–1896), was born in Santa Fe, attended seminary at Durango, and was ordained there in 1837. Within a matter of months he began a parochial assignment in the El Paso district that lasted nearly sixty years. An activist priest, Ortiz was a staunch defender of Mexican sovereignty. As U.S. troops prepared to occupy his local area during the U.S.-Mexican War, Ortiz wrote his bishop, vowing that the local populace would defend their nation at all costs. The curate later served as an elected delegate to the national congress in Mexico City, where he opposed the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the war and ceded nearly half of Mexico's territory to the United States. When New Mexican territorial governor William Carr Lane sought to occupy Mexican territory in

CHAPTER 1

1853 (land later ceded to the United States through the 1854 Gadsden Purchase), Ortiz rode out to confront the governor. The curate then returned to El Paso and alerted local authorities, who mounted a force of eight hundred men to defend their borders. Until his death in 1896, Ortiz offered dedicated pastoral service on both sides of the river that formed the new international boundary between Mexico and the United States.²²

Priests and their lay parishioners enacted cultural ways and traditions that included Catholic religious expressions. Communities drew on rituals, devotions, and celebrations of their ancestors such as the celebration of saint days and other feasts, processions, Mass, initiation rites, *compadrazgo* (godparentage), and dramatic proclamations of Christ's death and removal from the cross, among others. One ritual practiced during the Spanish colonial era at the parish church of San Francisco de Asís in Santa Fe was a Good Friday service in which devotees symbolically removed Jesus's body from the cross, placed it in the arms of his grieving mother, and then accompanied the corpse through the streets in a solemn procession. The church sanctuary served as the hill of Calvary for this occasion, with the statue of Our Lady of Solitude placed prominently to depict Mary at the foot of the cross. A priest's *Sermón de la Soledad* (Sermon of Solitude) accompanied the ritual, inviting congregants to "travel by meditation and contemplation to Golgatha, also called Mount Calvary," and then dramatizing in great detail what "our eyes see in this sad, ill-fated, and mournful place."²³

The intensity of Catholic devotion and commitment is difficult to assess precisely, but it undoubtedly varied from place to place, from household to household, and from person to person. Michael Carroll has noted the unfortunate tendency of commentators' "taking the sort of Hispano Catholicism that existed in New Mexico during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and projecting it onto the colonial past." At the same time, Carroll's contention that colonial New Mexicans were only nominally Catholic is unconvincing. He alleges that widely documented religious practices in colonial New Mexico, such as feast days, initiation rites, and the like primarily reflected social norms and not religious sensibilities. Carroll bases his conclusion on the argument that primary sources do not reveal New Mexicans engaged extensively in practices evident in other locales of Latin America and Spain: apparitions, cults for sacred images, painted ex-votos, and the ecclesial reforms that church leaders promoted after the Council of Trent, such as increased Mass attendance and knowledge of doctrine. Yet Carroll did not consider that difficult economic conditions, lower population density, and isolation mitigated against a broad manifestation of these particular religious expressions in New Mexico, as well as against the influence of ecclesial au-

REMAPPING AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

thority more prevalent elsewhere among Spanish-speaking populations. Nor does Carroll offer comparisons to settlements in Texas, California, and other areas of New Spain's northern frontier, which in fact evidenced patterns of religious practice similar to those in New Mexico. In the end he does not offer compelling evidence to sustain his argument that widespread Catholic practices constituted an overwhelmingly social phenomenon largely devoid of religious significance. Nonetheless, Carroll's cautionary note about not presuming a uniformly fervent Hispanic Catholicism is well taken. The Hispanic colonial enterprise differs from subsequent eras in that Catholicism was the prescribed religion, but romanticized views of a pristine and unvarying Catholic faith among all residents are unfounded.²⁴

Latino Catholicism in places from St. Augustine, Florida, to Sonoma, California, originated with communities planted during the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries. As the United States expanded from the original thirteen colonies to span the North American continent during the first half of the nineteenth century, Hispanic Catholic places of worship and some eighty thousand Spanish-speaking Catholics were incorporated into the growing nation. Extant faith communities, religious traditions, and clergy in various locales belie presuppositions of a radical break with the Spanish colonial past that dismiss Hispanic foundations of Catholicism in what became the United States.

Enduring Communities of Faith

Famine in Ireland and revolution in the German states accelerated Catholic immigration during the mid-nineteenth century, making Catholicism the largest denomination in the United States by the 1850 census. Commenting on these and subsequent waves of immigrants, Pulitzer Prize winner Oscar Handlin would later famously remark, "Once I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America. Then I discovered that the immigrants *were* American history."²⁵ His sweeping thesis does not account for the experience of mid-nineteenth-century Mexican Catholics in the Southwest who, as a common quip puts it, did not cross the border but had the border cross them during U.S. territorial expansion. Unlike the saga of their contemporary European coreligionists, who as émigrés sought haven in a new land, the story of the first large group of Hispanic Catholics in the United States is primarily a tale of faith, struggle, and endurance in places where their Spanish and Mexican forebears had already created a homeland. In one often-repeated phrase, they were "foreigners in our native land" who survived the U.S. takeover of northern Mexico.²⁶ German immigrants and their descendants

CHAPTER 1

recalled 1848 as a year of revolution; the Irish remembered it as a moment at the height of the potato famine. But the same date is etched in the consciousness of Mexicans and Mexican Americans as the pivotal juncture when military defeat led Mexico's president to cede nearly half his nation's territory to the United States. While historians, immigrant descendants, and national symbols like the Statue of Liberty enshrine immigrant ascendancy as a quintessential American story, Hispanics who were incorporated into the United States underwent the disestablishment of their religion along with widespread loss of their lands, economic well-being, political clout, and cultural hegemony. Their *aguante* (unyielding endurance) and faith during this time of social upheaval is one of the most frequently overlooked chapters in U.S. Catholic history.

The conquest of northern Mexico began with the war between Texas and Mexico (1835–1836), which resulted in the establishment of an independent Texas Republic. Nine years later the United States annexed Texas and another war erupted in disputed territory along the Rio Grande near present-day Brownsville, Texas. The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo brought an official end to this war; established new borders between Mexico and the United States; and purportedly guaranteed the citizenship, property, and religious rights of Mexican citizens who chose to remain in the conquered territories. Mexico lost the present-day states of Texas, Nevada, California, Utah, and parts of New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Wyoming. Six years later the Gadsden Purchase—or, as Mexicans call it, the *Tratado de Mesilla* (Treaty of Mesilla)—completed the U.S. takeover of former Mexican territories. With the threat of another U.S. invasion as the backdrop for negotiations, James Gadsden “purchased” the southern sections of present-day Arizona and New Mexico for \$10 million. This land acquisition enabled U.S. entrepreneurs to expropriate the profits from this territory's rich mine deposits and its suitability as a route for expanding rail transportation networks.

The futility of direct resistance to U.S. occupation was painfully evident in events like the 1847 Taos Rebellion, an uprising in which Hispanic and Native American allies attempted to overthrow U.S. rule that had been established in New Mexico the previous year. Insurrectionists assassinated territorial governor Charles Bent and at least fifteen other Anglo-Americans, but U.S. forces quickly suppressed the rebellion and publicly hanged its leaders. Military defeat merely initiated the process of U.S. conquest and expansion, as law enforcement personnel, judicial and political officials, occupying troops, and a growing Anglo-American populace imposed U.S. rule. Violence against Mexicans at times reached extreme proportions, but the judicial system afforded little if any protection for them despite their U.S. citizenship. The fre-

REMAPPING AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

quent lynching of Mexican residents even included the hanging of a woman. In California a vigilante mob of Anglo-Americans condemned a woman named Josefa to avenge the death of their fellow miner Fred Cannon, whom Josefa had killed with a knife after he broke down her door in a drunken rage. Anglo-American newcomers further consolidated the conquest by asserting their dominion over political and economic life. When Texas became a state in 1845, for example, Mexican San Antonians lost control of the city council their ancestors had established and led for more than a century. They also lost most of their land holdings, often in biased legal proceedings and in some cases through outright criminal removal from their homes and property. Increasingly Mexicans became a working underclass.²⁷ Demographic shifts facilitated the diminishment of their political and economic influence. Nowhere was this shift more dramatic than in Northern California, where the Gold Rush altered the demographic profile almost overnight.

Hispanic hegemony in religious life and public celebrations also dissipated in the half century after the U.S. takeover of the Southwest. By 1890 in the formerly "Catholic" town of Los Angeles there were seventy-eight religious organizations, including groups such as Congregationalists, Jews, Buddhists, Baptists, Unitarians, and an African Methodist Episcopal congregation. In various locales Anglo-Americans promoted the participation of Mexican-descent residents in the parades and ceremonies of newly organized U.S. holidays like the Fourth of July. As one report of an 1851 celebration in San Antonio stated: "We have many foreigners among us who know nothing of our government, who have no national feeling in common with us. . . . Let us induce them to partake with us in our festivities, they will soon partake our feelings, and when so, they will be citizens indeed."²⁸

Parishes and other elements of Catholic life were not immune to change during the turbulent period of transition. Dioceses were established at places like Galveston (1847), Santa Fe (1853), San Francisco (1853), Denver (1887), and Tucson (1897). European clergy served in many areas of the Southwest, with the French predominating in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona; the Irish in Northern California; and the Spanish in Southern California. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the appointment of Catholic bishops in the region reflected this same pattern, with the exception of a Spaniard in Northern California. Scores of religious sisters and some religious brothers also crossed the Atlantic or came from the eastern United States and began schools, hospitals, orphanages, and other apostolic work in the Southwest.

Differences in culture and religious practice led some newly arrived Catholic leaders to misunderstand and criticize their Mexican coreligionists in some respects. The first resident bishop of Los Angeles, Thaddeus Amat, C.M.,

CHAPTER 1

oversaw an 1862 synod meeting that forbade Mexican Catholic faith expressions like *los pastores*, a festive proclamation of the shepherds who worshiped the newborn infant Jesus. Reflecting the nineteenth-century ultramontane posture that many European clergy brought with them to the United States, one that stressed loyalty to the pope and the standardization of Catholic ritual and devotion, Amat and the synod fathers repeatedly cited the decrees of the sixteenth-century Council of Trent as the authoritative source for their ecclesial legislation. They ordered priests to “carefully avoid introducing any practices or rites foreign to Roman [practices]” and bemoaned “the scandal which often arises” from Mexican traditions they found too boisterous and indecorous. Thus they demanded that public processions, funeral traditions, and religious feasts strictly adhere to the rubrics of the Roman Ritual and banned long-standing local practices such as festive displays of devotion during processions, cannon salutes as a form of religious devotion, and the fiestas and entertainment that accompanied religious celebrations.²⁹

A number of Protestants were utterly condemnatory in their assessment of Mexican Catholicism. After observing public devotion during the feast of the Mexican national patroness, Our Lady of Guadalupe, at Monterey, California, Congregationalist minister Walter Colton mockingly quipped that Guadalupe probably knew or cared little about such religious exhibitions. Baptist minister Lewis Smith wrote from Santa Fe that along with various other rituals, Mexicans reenacted the “farce” of Jesus’s crucifixion. Undoubtedly the most renowned of the attacks on Hispanic traditions was directed at Los Hermanos de Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno (Brothers of Our Father Jesus the Nazarene), or Penitentes, in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. Local residents frequently deemed outside observers of their rites “Penitente hunters” because of their intrusive presence and the sensationalistic reports they wrote about the brotherhoods’ religious practices.³⁰

Protestant leaders attributed U.S. expansion to divine providence and adopted a view of religious “manifest destiny.” They saw Hispanic Catholicism as inherently inferior and Protestantism as a force that would inevitably conquer all of the Americas. One minister wrote that the Anglo-American takeover of Texas was “an indication of Providence in relation to the propagation of divine truth in other parts of the Mexican dominions[.]. . . Guatemala and all South America” as well as “the beginning of the downfall of [the] Antichrist, and the spread of the Savior’s power of the gospel.” Three years before the outbreak of war with Mexico, William Hickling Prescott published his best-selling *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, a romanticized portrayal of Hernán Cortés and the sixteenth-century Spanish invasion of the Aztec empire. In the judgment of historian Jenny Franchot, this influential treatise “subtly modulates into a

REMAPPING AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

critique of the vitiated Hispanic civilization that results from the conquest, thus providing an ancestor narrative justifying Mexican subordination to an expansionist Protestant United States.”³¹

Explicitly or not, the presumed superiority of civilization and Christianity in the United States has been the most consistent justification for the nation’s history of expansionism. Willa Cather’s best-selling 1927 novel, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, played a large part in popularizing this justification. Set in nineteenth-century New Mexico, the novel sharply contrasts the life of Jean Baptiste Lamy (1814–1888), a French priest who became the first bishop (and later archbishop) of Santa Fe, with that of native New Mexican priest Antonio José Martínez (1793–1867). Fictionalized as Bishop Latour, Lamy is idealized as a saintly and civilizing force whose heroic efforts rescued deluded New Mexican Catholics from his antagonist, the allegedly decadent and despotic Martínez. Even Cather’s physical description of Martínez—“his mouth was the very assertion of violent, uncurbed passions and tyrannical self-will; the full lips thrust out and taut, like the flesh of animals distended by fear or desire”—evoke disdain and repulsion. Her plotline leaves no doubt that the imposition of U.S. rule and new religious leadership in New Mexico and the greater Southwest was both a sacred duty and a moral imperative.³²

Cather’s depiction of Father Martínez parallels the vitriol of earlier anti-Catholic literature such as Maria Monk’s *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery in Montreal* (1836), a slanderous and unfounded account of convent life that became the best-selling literary work of its day. Yet numerous European-descent Catholics were effusive in their praise of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. Their acclamation of Cather, who was raised Baptist and became an Episcopalian, coincided with a period of rising influence of the Ku Klux Klan and anti-Catholic nativism. Focusing on the laudatory depiction of Lamy as a holy priest and an Americanizing influence, rather than the derogatory figure of Martínez, a number of priests and nuns wrote Cather congratulatory letters. The editor of *Catholic Library World* regarded Cather as “the outstanding American woman novelist of the day” and *Death Comes for the Archbishop* as “her greatest book.” A columnist in the national lay Catholic opinion journal *Commonweal* extolled the book’s depiction of Lamy and his French clerical companions, who gave “all their powers, their endurance, their courage, their strength, their culture, their riches of European experience” to the task of “saving souls” among Native Americans and “the scanty and static Mexican population.” This writer went so far as to say it was “the duty of Catholics to buy and read and spread Willa Cather’s masterpiece.”³³ Cather’s clear-cut delineation between a normative Euro-American Catholicism and its purportedly deficient Hispanic counterpart clearly struck a chord with

CHAPTER 1

European-descent Catholics who were struggling to cast aside their stigmatization as foreigners and achieve social acceptability in the United States.

As renowned historian of the Southwest David Weber noted, “Even scholarly writers must reckon with Cather’s imagination.” Robert Wright and Gilberto Hinojosa concur that historians of the Southwest—both historians of religion and those who study other topics—have generally “adhered to the basic outline of the received historiographical tradition” reflected in Cather’s novel. In his 1981 work *American Catholics*, the distinguished U.S. Catholic historian James Hennesey states that in nineteenth-century New Mexico, the church under Mexican leadership was “decadent” and “sacramental life was virtually non-existent.” He argues that “Padre José Antonio [*sic*] Martínez of Taos, depicted under his own name in Willa Cather’s *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, was a classic case” of corrupt native priests who “extorted exorbitant fees” and neglected their pastoral duties, leaving local religious culture plagued by “ignorance, neglect, and permissiveness.” Regarding Lamy, Hennesey concludes that “the diocese and then the archdiocese of Santa Fe stand as a monument to [his] energy and organizing genius.” Though later he offers a more sympathetic overview of Mexican Catholic leaders in California, in his initial treatment of their legacy Hennesey contends that after the secularization of the California missions in 1834, “religion declined” and the Californios were “innocent of cultural influence” and spent their days in “a free and lazy life, riding madly about the countryside, enjoying brutal blood sports.”³⁴

Mexican Catholics have contested such scandalously deprecating portrayals from the first years of their incorporation into the United States. In December 1848 Bishop John Hughes of New York wrote José de la Guerra y Noriega of Santa Barbara seeking information about conditions in California for the Provincial Council of Baltimore held the following May. Hughes’s inquiry included the assertion that all Mexican clergy had abandoned California, leaving Catholics there “destitute of all spiritual aid.” In his response, De la Guerra politely but firmly insisted “with due respect to the Mexican priests, that the information which has been given to Your Illustrious Lordship regarding their conduct [abandoning their parishioners] during these latter times does not correspond with the facts.” He reported that there were still sixteen priests in California.³⁵

Mexican residents employed various strategies to accommodate the new regime. In many locales where ethnic Mexicans remained the majority, Anglo-Americans consolidated control by means of a “peace structure,” a “post-war arrangement that allows the victors to maintain law and order without the constant use of force.” The peace structure entailed an arrangement between Anglo-American newcomers and the elites of Mexican communities that did

REMAPPING AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

not alter traditional authority structures but placed Anglo-Americans atop the existing hierarchy. Often marriages between Anglo-American men and daughters from the elite families of a locale played a key role in this arrangement. These marriages offered Anglo-Americans the advantages of land, inherited wealth, and social status. At the same time, they offered Mexican residents allies to help protect familial interests and land holdings within the new political and economic structures. After the U.S. takeover, such allies were particularly useful, as many Mexicans did not speak English, were unfamiliar with the legal system, and were vulnerable to accusations of disloyalty toward the United States. It is not surprising, then, that during the time of transition, in places like San Antonio “at least one daughter from almost every *rico* [rich] family . . . married an Anglo.”³⁶

Some residents of the former Mexican territories survived the effects of the U.S. takeover through isolation. In places like northern New Mexico, some degree of autonomy was possible because of the physical distance from U.S. institutions and influence. While this isolation was often the result of circumstance as much as design, Hispanic communities embraced the opportunities for cultural continuity. Nonetheless, in the end, even the most isolated settlements did not fully escape U.S. influence. In the towns and the urban areas that expanded with the arrival of the railroads in the 1870s and 1880s, Mexican *barrios* (neighborhoods) resulted from forced segregation as well as the desire for separation from Anglo-American society. As an ethnic enclave, the barrio mediated a sense of split existence between the familiarity of Mexican home and neighborhood and the alienation of the Anglo-American world where barrio residents often worked and sometimes went to school. At the same time, however, the barrio provided a strong base for group survival, cultural retention, and ethnic pride. In this way it was a structure that enabled Mexicans to sustain themselves despite the social changes they endured.³⁷

Hispanic residents like New Mexican Rafael Romero drew on their heritage as natives of the region to defend themselves more directly against what they perceived as the impositions of newcomers. When the territorial governor blocked Jesuit attempts to establish the tax-exempt and degree-granting status of their new school in Las Vegas, New Mexico, in 1878, Romero made a spirited defense of Catholics’ rights. His public address during festivities for the close of the school’s first academic year acclaimed his audience as native New Mexicans whose “ancestors penetrated into these deserted and dangerous regions many years before the Mayflower floated over the dancing waves that washed Plymouth Rock.” He went on to remind his listeners that Jesus was also “tormented by a provincial governor,”

CHAPTER 1

claiming that the oppressive actions of their current territorial governor were worse than the misdeeds of Pontius Pilate, whose sin, according to Romero, was one of omission rather than direct persecution of the innocent. Defending himself against possible retorts that he spoke too harshly, he went on to ask rhetorically: "Am I not a Catholic citizen of a Catholic land, New Mexico? And have I not, as a New Mexican Catholic, been grossly insulted by a pathetic public official? What does it mean when a man sent to be the governor of a Catholic land, in an official message directed to Catholic legislators and to our Catholic people, piles insult upon insult against a religious order of the Catholic Church?"³⁸

Mexican resistance to the consolidation of U.S. rule was not limited to rhetoric. During the war between Mexico and the United States, some offered military resistance to the foreign invaders, such as Californians who defeated U.S. forces at battles in the Los Angeles area and at the hamlet of San Pasqual before peaceably coming to terms with their more numerous and heavily armed foes. Violent resistance erupted in various locales even after the U.S. conquest. In the decades following the U.S. Civil War, guerrilla leaders such as Tiburcio Vásquez in California and Juan Cortina in Texas led retaliatory movements protesting the endemic violence and injustice their people suffered at the hands of Anglo-Americans. Mexican residents also defended their rights in the political arena, as at the 1845 Texas Constitutional Convention when delegate José Antonio Navarro was able to prevent passage of a law that restricted voting rights to Anglo-American residents.³⁹

Conflicts between Mexicans and Catholic leaders at times resulted in public controversy and even open resistance, as in the infamous and frequently cited conflict between Padre Martínez and (Arch)bishop Lamy. In 1875 Bishop Dominic Manucy of Brownsville rejected a request that twenty-two exiled Mexican sisters reside in the area and serve Mexican-descent Catholics. Local Spanish-speaking Catholics were incensed at Manucy's decision, particularly since they offered to pay the living costs for the sisters. On the day the women religious were to board the train and depart from Brownsville, an angry crowd removed their train from its tracks and refused to let authorities replace it.⁴⁰

But a number of foreign Catholic clergy and religious became beloved among the Mexican Catholics they served and energetically supported and enhanced their people's faith life and religious practices. Bishop Jean Marie Odin offered ministrations in Spanish and insisted that other priests coming to Texas do the same. He participated in Mexican religious feasts and spoke enthusiastically of the religious zeal demonstrated in these celebrations. San Francisco's first archbishop, Joseph Alemany, O.P., enjoyed a similar rapport

REMAPPING AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

with Spanish-speaking Catholics under his care. Women religious led Catholic initiatives in numerous locales, such as Los Angeles, where the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul arrived in 1856 to establish a school and orphanage, but soon expanded their ministries to meet other needs such as health care, disaster relief, catechetical instruction, and job placement for women. Most of the sisters who served during the nineteenth century were of Irish descent, but their numbers included women from Mexico and Spain as well as several local Hispanic women who joined the order after receiving their education from the sisters. In Colorado, New Mexico, and the El Paso district, exiled Italian Jesuits served in parishes and as circuit riders to scores of mission stations. They also founded a college at Las Vegas, New Mexico, which they later moved to its current location in Denver and eventually renamed Regis University, and established *La Revista Católica*, the first Spanish-language Catholic newspaper in the United States.⁴¹

A number of local communities asserted their Mexican Catholic heritage in the public spaces of civic life through their long-standing rituals and devotions—sometimes on their own, as in the case of Nacogdoches after Father Díaz de León's murder or of Los Angeles after Bishop Amat's restrictive decrees, at other times with the support of sympathetic priests and religious. From Texas to California, various communities continued to enthusiastically celebrate established local traditions such as pilgrimages, *los pastores*, Holy Week, Corpus Christi, and established patronal feast days like that of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The persistence of religious traditions is particularly striking in light of some Catholic and Protestant leaders' attempts to ban, replace, and condemn them. In the face of such initiatives, as well as military conquest and occupation, violence and lawlessness, political and economic displacement, rapid demographic change, and the erosion of cultural hegemony, Hispanic Catholic feasts and devotions had a heightened significance. These religious traditions provided an ongoing means of public communal expression, affirmation, faith, and resistance to newcomers who criticized or attempted to suppress the heritage of Mexican-descent residents. Undoubtedly fear and anger at their subjugation intensified religious fervor among many devotees.

The most renowned lay group that served as the protectors of treasured local traditions was the aforementioned Penitentes of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. Penitente brotherhoods evolved in towns and villages well before the U.S. takeover of the area. Their most noticeable function was to commemorate Christ's passion and death, although they also provided community leadership and fostered social integration. Organized as separate local entities, Penitente brotherhoods had a leader named the

CHAPTER 1

Hermano Mayor (literally “older brother”) and a *morada* (literally “habitation”), or chapter house, where they held meetings and religious devotions. Despite the sharp criticism they often received from outsiders, the Penitentes continued providing leadership for prayer and social life in numerous local communities.⁴²

In more urban areas, which tended to have a greater presence of priests and religious, activist Mexican lay women and men continued traditional feast days and faith expressions in Catholic parishes. The annual series of celebrations for Tucson’s original patron saint, St. Augustine, lasted for an entire month at San Agustín parish. Similarly, San Fernando parishioners in San Antonio organized public rituals and festivities for Our Lady of Guadalupe, Christmas, San Fernando, San Antonio, San Juan, San Pedro, and other feasts. Most conspicuous among these rites was the annual Guadalupe feast, celebrated with a colorful outdoor procession, elaborate decorations adorning the Guadalupe image and their parish church, gun and cannon salutes, extended ringing of the church bells, and large crowds for services conducted in Spanish.⁴³

Women frequently played key leadership roles in public worship and devotion. Doña María Cornelia Salazar and Señora Juana Epifanía de Jesús Valdéz were *madrinas* (godmothers) for the solemn blessing of a new statue for the 1874 Guadalupe feast day at Our Lady of Guadalupe parish in Conejos, Colorado. Throughout the region young women served in processions as the immediate attendants for the Guadalupe image in her annual feast-day celebration.⁴⁴ They occupied similar places of prominence in processions for other Marian feast days, such as the Assumption.⁴⁵ Even when male Penitentes provided significant leadership for communal worship, women played vital roles in local traditions like the annual procession for the feast of St. John the Baptist.⁴⁶ Often these leadership roles did not significantly alter restrictions on women in other public functions, reinforced the notion that women were naturally more pious than men, and symbolically linked the purity of young girls dressed in white with icons like the Virgin Mary, a communal accentuation of feminine chastity that lacked a corresponding association between young boys and Jesus. Yet Mexican-descent women extended their familial efforts to transmit cultural and devotional traditions into a public role of community leadership that shaped Mexican Catholics’ ritual expressions. Their leadership demonstrates what Ana María Díaz-Stevens calls the “matriarchal core” of Latino Catholicism—that is, women’s exercise of autonomous authority in communal devotions despite the ongoing patriarchal limitations of institutional Catholicism and Latin American societies.⁴⁷

A number of communities in the Southwest struggled for their very survival. In the process their observance of long-standing traditions often abated

REMAPPING AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

or even ceased. Nonetheless, as Bishop Henry Granjon of Tucson noted in 1902 during his first pastoral visit to Las Cruces, New Mexico, many Mexican-descent Catholics in the Southwest continued to practice their own customs and traditions decades after the U.S. takeover of their lands. According to Bishop Granjon, in the Southwest these traditions served to “maintain the unity of the Mexican population and permit them to resist, to a certain extent, the invasions of the Anglo-Saxon race.”⁴⁸ The waves of newly arrived women religious and clergy like Granjon vastly increased the Catholic institutional presence and support structures in the region, enhancing leadership initiatives among Mexican Catholics that enabled a number of local populations to adapt and continue their traditional expressions of faith, defend their sense of dignity, collectively respond to the effects of conquest, and express their own ethnic legitimization.

New Immigrants

Israel Zangwill’s play *The Melting-Pot* opened on Broadway in 1908 and extended into popular parlance the term “melting pot,” a concept first articulated in a famous passage of French American writer Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur’s 1782 book, *Letters from an American Farmer*. The success of *The Melting-Pot* was rooted in an assimilationist perspective that many Americans endorsed, including President Theodore Roosevelt, who at the conclusion of the opening performance in the nation’s capital leaned over the edge of his box and shouted, “That’s a great play, Mr. Zangwill, that’s a great play.” In one of the play’s most memorable lines, its hero, a Russian Jewish immigrant named David Quixano, refers to the United States as “the great Melting-Pot” in which the “blood hatreds and rivalries” of Europe dissolve in the “fires of God,” the crucible through which “God is making the American.” As scholars like Philip Gleason have shown, even more than the dissipation of one’s native language and customs, at its core the ideology of the melting pot required the acceptance that the U.S. experiment in democracy represents a decisive break with the past and a new order and model for the future.⁴⁹ Zangwill’s success was somewhat ironic, given its bold proclamation of the power of a U.S. melting pot to assimilate newcomers and the national sentiment to restrict European immigration that arose concurrently with his play. By the 1920s new legislation severely curtailed the flow of European émigrés that had continued almost unabated over the previous century.

The consequent waning numbers of first-generation Catholics from Europe hastened their transition to monolingual English and the acceptance of U.S. cultural norms. John Tracy Ellis, widely regarded as the premier historian

CHAPTER 1

of U.S. Catholicism, observed in his influential general history of American Catholics that the 1920s immigration laws “made a direct contribution to the maturity of the Church in the sense that during the [following] generation its faithful for the first time had an opportunity to become more or less stabilized.” Assessing Ellis’s scholarly achievement, Daniel J. Boorstin, the editor of the Chicago History of American Civilization book series, in which the Ellis volume appeared, wrote in his 1969 editor’s preface to the second edition of the book that recent American Catholic history “is a peculiarly significant and inspiring chapter in the growth and fulfillment of American institutions.” More recently, Charles Morris has concluded that “except for the newest waves of Hispanic immigrants, American Catholics have long since made it in America. As much as any other religious body, they are middle-class, suburban, educated, affluent. They exercise control over their own lives in ways that their grandparents never did.”⁵⁰

U.S. Catholics had long argued that Boorstin’s and Morris’s affirmation was true: Catholics were no less American than their counterparts of other faiths. In a 1948 *New York Times* interview, Archbishop John T. McNicholas of Cincinnati, chairman of the administrative board of the U.S. bishops’ National Catholic Welfare Conference, contested accusations of Catholic disloyalty from the newly formed organization Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State. McNicholas avowed that he and his fellow bishops “deny absolutely and without any qualification that the Catholic bishops of the United States are seeking a union of church and state by any endeavors whatsoever” and that Catholics would not do so even if one day they constituted a majority in the country. Catholic political candidates also vigorously protested accusations that they were unable to uphold the Constitution because their first loyalty was to the Vatican, such as the 1960 indictment of Dr. Ramsey Pollard, president of the Southern Baptist Convention: “No matter what [John F.] Kennedy might say, he cannot separate himself from his church if he is a true Catholic. . . . All we ask is that Roman Catholicism lift its bloody hand from the throats of those that want to worship in the church of their choice.” Kennedy and the only previous Catholic national party nominee for president, Alfred E. Smith, famously stated their support for the separation of church and state and the U.S. Constitution, Smith in a 1927 article in the *Atlantic Monthly* and Kennedy in a speech to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association. Kennedy’s election was a watershed moment for Catholics, an electoral victory that, in the words of journalist William Shannon, “wiped away the bitterness and disappointment of Al Smith’s defeat in 1928; it removed any lingering sense of social inferiority and insecurity.”⁵¹

REMAPPING AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

Hispanics were a small part of the nineteenth-century immigration that gave rise to the Americanizing process of the twentieth century. Though an open border between the United States and Mexico allowed Mexican citizens to migrate even after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, their numbers were relatively low until the last three decades of the nineteenth century, when gradually a larger group of immigrants and refugees began to arrive. After the U.S. Civil War ended in 1865, mining, agriculture, and railroad construction in the regions from Texas to California, and then in Mexico itself, linked the regions economically, creating migration flows of Mexican labor north. The Porfirio Díaz regime (1876–1911) in Mexico promoted economic growth linked to foreign interests, leading to prosperity for some but displacement and migration for others, who went to the United States looking for work. U.S. interests in Caribbean products, particularly sugar and tobacco, also encouraged the movement of Puerto Ricans and Cubans to the United States. Intermittent struggles for independence in both Puerto Rico and Cuba led some political activists into U.S. exile. While many political exiles were skeptical if not antagonistic toward the Catholic Church and its leaders, who in their native lands consisted largely of Spaniards and others who supported Spanish colonial rule, Caribbean newcomers augmented the diversity of Hispanic Catholics in the United States.⁵²

Like European Catholic émigrés, many Hispanics advocated for national or ethnic parishes as a means to retain their language, cultural practices, sense of group identity, and Catholic faith. As early as 1871, Catholics at San Francisco proposed a national parish to serve the Spanish-speaking population in their growing city. Although most Spanish-speaking residents were of Mexican descent, representatives from the consulates of Chile, Peru, Nicaragua, Colombia, Bolivia, Costa Rica, and Spain were among the leaders in this effort, making it one of if not the first pan-Hispanic Catholic initiatives in the United States. Four years later, San Francisco archbishop Joseph Alemany established the national parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In 1879 Cuban lay Catholics in Key West, Florida, worked with church officials to establish a chapel named after *Nuestra Señora de la Caridad del Cobre* (Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre), the most prominent Marian icon and devotional tradition in Cuban Catholicism. Worshipers at the chapel organized the *Caridad del Cobre* feast, other Marian devotions, Christmas pageants, and even a celebrated pastoral visit from the archbishop of Santiago, Cuba.⁵³

One of the earliest Cuban exiles was the influential Father Félix Varela (1788–1853), who fled to New York in 1823 after the Spanish regime he opposed as a Cuban delegate to the Spanish Cortes (parliament) condemned him to death. In exile Varela worked as a parish priest and eventually rose to

CHAPTER 1

the position of vicar general for the diocese of New York. But even in the midst of a busy pastoral life among Irish and other New York Catholics, he continued to advocate for Cuban independence from Spain and the abolition of the slave trade, along with writing and thinking about politics, philosophy, and religion. He published an important exile newspaper, *El Habanero*, in which he promoted Cuban independence, and maintained active correspondence and intellectual exchange with his compatriots on the island. Although the Spanish government pardoned him in 1833, Varela refused to acknowledge that his support for constitutional rule represented criminal activity. He remained in exile and never returned to Cuba. Now a candidate for official canonization as a Catholic saint, Varela is also recognized as a precursor of Cuban pro-independence thought. Cubans often describe him as “the one who first taught us to think.”⁵⁴

As European immigration declined and the process of their incorporation into American life quickened over the course of the twentieth century, nascent Hispanic immigration accelerated. The expansion of cities and agribusiness in the Southwest, the enticement of railroad and industrial jobs in the Midwest, and exemption from the exclusionary 1920s legislation that curtailed European immigration were key factors attracting Mexican émigrés. Massive Mexican immigration began after the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, expanding the population of existing ethnic Mexican communities in the Southwest and establishing scores of new populations in that region and beyond. Intermittent periods of relative calm followed the enactment of the 1917 Mexican constitution, but violence erupted once again in central and western Mexico when President Plutarco Elías Calles (1924–1928) vigorously enforced anticlerical articles of that constitution. The resulting guerrilla war, known as the Cristero Rebellion (1926–1929), drove even more émigrés north to the United States, many fleeing religious persecution. During the Depression era of the 1930s Mexican migration all but came to a halt, and a wave of nativist fever led to the repatriation of numerous Mexicans and the illegal deportation of many native-born Mexican American citizens. But the northward flow resumed with growing work opportunities during World War II. The infamous *Bracero*, or guest worker, program (1942–1964) brought some five million contracted workers north from Mexico, a number of whom stayed or eventually returned to establish homes in the United States. A number of undocumented migrants also crossed into the United States. Many of them stayed permanently. After the Bracero program ended, the number of undocumented workers increased dramatically, a trend that continues into the twenty-first century. Today ethnic Mexicans in the United States comprise

REMAPPING AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

about two-thirds of the nearly 50 million Latinos in the country. Though the Latino population is widely dispersed across the nation, half of them live in California or Texas due primarily to the heavy concentration of ethnic Mexicans in those two states.⁵⁵

The Puerto Rican case illustrates economic dynamics that led migrants from the Caribbean and Latin America northward. Following the U.S. occupation of the island in 1898 after the Spanish-American War, Puerto Rico's subsistence farming and primarily agricultural economy increasingly became a single, cash crop enterprise. During the last decade of Spanish rule, the island produced 57,000 tons of sugar a year. Five years after the U.S. takeover that rate had increased to 200,000 tons per year. By 1930 it was 900,000 tons a year. This transition to a single export commodity subject to price fluctuations on international markets placed a great deal of pressure on the traditional subsistence economy. As owners concentrated their landholdings to facilitate productivity and growth, Puerto Rican farmers were displaced. Also problematic was that sugar production provided work only during the harvests, leaving workers unemployed or underemployed the rest of the year. Puerto Ricans left home in increasing numbers, searching for a more stable livelihood. The number of Puerto Ricans living on the mainland increased from 1,513 in 1910 to nearly 53,000 in 1930. Migratory pressures became even more dramatic after World War II when policymakers introduced incentives to create a manufacturing base, a program known as Operation Bootstrap. Industrialization initiated a new era in the island's economic history, producing a nascent middle class. At the same time, the urbanization of a primarily rural people and the uneven participation in the economic benefits of industrialization led many more to leave home in an unprecedented migration to the mainland. The first great waves of Puerto Rican migrants after World War II went to New York City, where more than 80 percent of the Puerto Rican population on the mainland lived in 1950. But over time Puerto Ricans increasingly moved beyond New York to other locales, including a growing number who gained higher education during the transformations of Puerto Rico's economy. Today approximately 10 percent of the Latino population on the U.S. mainland is Puerto Rican.⁵⁶

Thousands of Cubans also left their homeland, in their case largely as a result of Fidel Castro's 1959 rise to power in the Cuban Revolution, a struggle that a number of Catholics initially supported. Castro's radicalizing of the revolution led to confrontations between his government and Catholic Church leaders. In November 1959 they convened a National Catholic Congress that drew some one million supporters to Havana's Plaza Cívica—or Plaza de la Revolución, as it later became known—to reaffirm their Catholic

CHAPTER 1

allegiance and, implicitly, protest the country's political direction. The following year Cuban Catholic bishops and lay leaders publicly acknowledged the need for reforms to advance the well-being of the poor, but also called for human rights for all citizens and expressed alarm at the government's growing relations with Communist bloc nations. Thousands of Catholics subsequently fled the island, some joining exile counter-revolutionary groups like those that conducted the failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. Castro cited such actions as a rationale to repress church leaders. By 1963 some 200,000 Cubans had arrived in the United States, including the core of Cuba's Catholic militant laity and leadership. The majority of Cubans initially established themselves in the Miami area, but the federally run Cuban Refugee Program settled others in locales across the country. Though many of these first exiles were educated, professional, and Catholic, over the following decades as Castro's stance shifted back and forth between restrictive and more open immigration policies, those who abandoned the island encompassed a wider spectrum of Cuban society. The largest group after the initial exodus came in 1980 when the Cuban government opened the port of Mariel for exiles wishing to pick up family members. As the boats arrived from Florida, authorities filled them with people who wanted to leave but also with others who had been forcibly deported, about 125,000 Cubans in all. All told, more than a million Cubans arrived in the United States in the half century since the Cuban Revolution.⁵⁷

Countries from throughout the Western hemisphere were represented in the U.S. immigration flows by the 1990s, making the U.S. Latino population more complex and diverse than ever. Civil wars during the 1970s and 1980s in Central America, especially in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, were the catalyst for growing numbers of refugees from that region. In El Salvador, for example, a civil war ravaged between 1979 and 1992, claiming the lives of more than seventy-five thousand victims, until a 1992 peace accord brought some alleviation to hostilities. Refugees numbering in the hundreds of thousands fled the country. Economic dynamics, urbanization, increases in birth rates and life expectancies, growing aspirations for better lives, improved transportation, ties with family members already in the United States, and the communications revolution led people from across Latin America and the Caribbean to immigrate. The Dominican presence in the United States was fairly limited until the last years of dictator General Rafael Leónidas Trujillo, who ruled the Dominican Republic from 1930 to 1961 and severely restricted international migration. After Trujillo's 1961 assassination the migrant flow accelerated, with the majority of émigrés settling in New York and the environs. By 1990, Dominicans in New York numbered some seven hun-

REMAPPING AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

dred thousand and rivaled the local Puerto Rican population in size. Though South Americans comprise a relatively small minority of U.S. Hispanics, in recent decades their numbers have also increased, with Colombians, Peruvians, and Ecuadorians predominating, but with additional émigrés from nations such as Argentina, Chile, and Brazil. Given the distance involved in their migration, those who are able to make it to the United States tend to have a higher income and level of education. Consequently they are disproportionately represented among the clergy and lay leaders in dioceses and parishes, exercising an influence beyond their numbers.⁵⁸

The profound but vastly diverse formative experiences of émigrés from the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central and South America defy easy generalization. Church-state relations have a long history, as evidenced in the acrimonious episodes of conflict in Mexico and, in more recent decades, in the elections of a Catholic priest and bishop as presidents of Haiti and Paraguay, respectively, in both cases leading these clergy to desist from exercising their priestly functions at the behest of Vatican officials. Historically, the number of available clergy is another key factor shaping Catholic impact, in some cases a sufficient number of priests to wield significant influence but usually not enough to address large and dispersed Catholic populations. Devotional expressions of faith are widely practiced in a Catholicism that values direct—what theologians call sacramental—encounters with God, Mary, and the saints in everyday life. Every country in Latin America has at least one shrine dedicated to a Marian image that is a center of national veneration and identity. Yet the faith stance among local populations ranges from those who engage Catholicism as primarily a heritage of devotional traditions, as a means to struggle for justice, or as an institution with a defined body of doctrines and teachings. Not surprisingly, many Latin Americans believe Catholicism entails some combination of these or other elements, though a substantial number are involved with Catholicism only nominally or not at all. Protestantism, especially in its Pentecostal and evangelical forms, has expanded rapidly though unevenly throughout the continent. Mexico remains one of the most staunchly Catholic nations in terms of the preferred denominational allegiance of its population, while Puerto Rico, where the U.S. government and churches conducted an energetic program of Americanization and Protestant proselytizing after annexing the island in 1898, is among the most Protestant. Such historical and religious legacies mark in myriad ways the perceptions of any Latino émigré who spent his or her formative years at home before arriving in the United States.⁵⁹

Latin America's most direct influence on Catholicism in the United States is the formative experiences that immigrants carry with them. Nicaraguan

CHAPTER 1

refugee Sara García fled the civil war in her country with her husband and three children in 1984. Resettled as an undocumented resident in Newark, García noted in an interview that her fear of deportation to a native country where she would be punished or even killed led to a deepening of her trust in God: "All we can do is commend ourselves to God whenever we leave the house and, when we return, thank the Lord we made it safe and sound." Yet she also said that her Catholic faith was rooted in her childhood experiences in rural Nicaragua. García received only a first-grade education but remembered the nuns who came to offer the catechesis that prepared her for her first communion. Though her family's poverty was so acute that her mother worked day and night and had little time to take her children to church, the influence of her mother's example and the Catholic culture of her childhood were lasting. Regarding her faith, García echoed the sentiments of many Hispanic Catholics: "I was born a Catholic and, God willing, I will die a Catholic."⁶⁰

Catholic ministries to Hispanic newcomers expanded with the rising tide of immigration. Émigré clergy, women religious, and lay leaders ministered among their compatriots, as during the Mexican Revolution, the Cristero Rebellion, and their aftermath, when Mexican Catholics collaborated with U.S. church officials to establish new parishes in such diverse places as Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas, Kansas City, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Toledo. Twelve Mexican parishes opened in Los Angeles alone between 1923 and 1928, with the total number of predominantly Mexican parishes in the archdiocese increasing to sixty-four by 1947. In other instances U.S. Catholics engaged in outreach to the newcomers, such as the visionary lay apostolic endeavors of Mary Julia Workman in settlement house ministry in Los Angeles and Veronica Miriam Spellmire in establishing and fostering the phenomenal growth of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine in San Antonio, as well as the response of the New York archdiocese to Puerto Rican migration under the leadership of Cardinal Francis Spellman and priests such as Joseph Fitzpatrick, S.J.; Robert Fox, Ivan Illich, and Robert Stern. U.S.-born Hispanics also engaged in dedicated ecclesial service to their own communities, such as the Missionary Catechists of Divine Providence, the first and only religious order of Mexican American women founded in the United States, who have provided leadership in evangelization and catechesis in the Southwest and beyond for more than eighty years.⁶¹

Like European Catholic immigrants before them, each group of Latino newcomers fostered ministries and church structures that served the needs of their compatriots. None illustrate such initiatives more clearly than Cuban exiles. Historically, Catholicism had a relatively minor role in Cuban society.

REMAPPING AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

The church hierarchy never wielded the political influence it did in Latin American locales like Mexico. Practice of the faith was far stronger among the elite and more nominal among the masses of the working class, especially in the island's predominantly rural areas. Yet a Catholic renaissance gradually emerged during the first half of the twentieth century, which, while still largely focused on the middle and upper classes, led to an array of schools, lay movements, and social action initiatives that helped form strong cohorts of Catholic leaders. The strength and public activism of this leadership was sufficient enough that under Castro all foreign priests and a significant portion of Cuban priests were deported or left the island under duress. Proportionally these clergy provided exile communities with substantially more priests of their own than any other Latino group. Because the first exiles were drawn heavily from Cuba's middle and upper classes, lay Catholic leaders who had received substantial faith formation in Cuba were also well prepared to play a key role in organizing educational and pastoral initiatives once they arrived in the United States.⁶²

Cuban Catholics in Miami wasted little time creating a formal presence. Catholic schools opened to accommodate the demand among Cubans, including the continuation in exile of several academies that the Castro government had closed in Cuba, such as the highly regarded Belén and La Salle. These schools offered an English-language Catholic education within a Cuban cultural environment that promoted the Spanish language, Cuban identity, and an exile consciousness. By 1962 sixteen parishes in the Miami area had Spanish-speaking priests on staff. A year later a predominantly Cuban congregation, San Juan Bosco, was established in Miami's Little Havana district. Substantial numbers of Cuban Catholics helped found or participated in other parishes. Shortly after the 1965 closing of the Second Vatican Council and the enactment of its decrees that led to the celebration of the Eucharist in vernacular languages rather than Latin, Miami-area parishes had a combined total of thirty weekly Masses in Spanish. Nearly one hundred Cuban priests were serving in the Miami archdiocese by 1975.⁶³

Though Cubans found U.S. Catholicism more parish-based than had been the case in their homeland, where lay apostolic movements played a central role in their practice of the faith, Cuban lay initiatives helped nurture their Catholicism in exile. The "transplanting" of the *Agrupación Católica Universitaria* (ACU) exemplifies the dynamism of lay organizations. Spanish Jesuit Felipe Rey de Castro founded the ACU in 1931 to form select university students and professional men as Catholic leaders through the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. On the eve of the Cuban Revolution, the sodality had nearly six hundred members, or *agrupados*, as they refer to themselves. They

CHAPTER 1

had fostered from among their numbers the vocations of more than two dozen Jesuits and four diocesan priests, including Bishop Eduardo Boza Masvidal, who became the most influential Cuban bishop in exile. The ACU also engaged extensively in charitable works and in social reform efforts like its influential 1958 report on rural workers, *¿Por qué reforma agraria?* (Why Agrarian Reform?). Father Rey de Castro's successor as ACU spiritual director, his fellow Jesuit Amando Llorente, gathered ACU members for a retreat within a month of his exile to Miami. Shortly thereafter exiled ACU members began to publish the organization's newspaper, *Esto Vir*, and by 1963 they had convened an international ACU convention in Atlanta. These efforts enabled Cubans who had not settled in Miami to remain involved, as did Father Llorente's pastoral visits to dispersed ACU members and the distribution of his taped weekly homilies. Adapting to their new circumstances, by 1966 the ACU had accepted non-Cubans as members, a decision that enabled the group to grow in numbers and remain viable into the twenty-first century.⁶⁴

Cuba's Nuestra Señora de la Caridad del Cobre is the most important symbol of Cuban exile Catholicism. Though the original image of the patroness resides in a shrine at El Cobre in eastern Cuba, a replica from a parish church in Guanabo Beach near Havana arrived in Miami for the Virgin's feast-day celebration on September 8, 1961, and Cuban exiles continued to fervently commemorate the annual feast of their patroness. Their 1966 celebration inspired Miami bishop (later archbishop) Coleman Carroll to call for the construction of a sanctuary dedicated to her. At Bishop Carroll's invitation, the leader for this initiative was Msgr. Agustín Román, a highly regarded priest who later became the first Cuban to be named a bishop in the United States. Over the next seven years, exiles helped fund the construction of the sanctuary that Carroll consecrated upon its completion in 1973. The shrine quickly became a place of pilgrimage for Cubans who linked La Caridad to their sense of Cuban nationality.⁶⁵

Cuban Catholics expressed deep gratitude for Carroll's endorsement of La Caridad shrine and for the Miami (arch)diocese's outreach efforts to exiles through its Centro Hispano Católico. Msgr. Bryan Walsh was a tireless advocate for Cubans during their resettlement and led the famous Operation Peter Pan, which found accommodations for young Cubans whose parents sent them ahead out of fear they would be conscripted into Communist-led schools or military service. But there were also tensions between Cubans and U.S. church leaders. ACU members accused Archbishop Carroll and his assistants of being heavy-handed in their imposition of an assimilationist agenda on Cubans, arguing that the U.S. clergy "feared the cultural expression of Catholicism that Cubans brought with them would disrupt the ecclesial

REMAPPING AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

unity of the diocese of Miami.” *Agrupados* bemoaned what they perceived as “a thorough attempt to force Cubans to adhere to American patterns and to swiftly transform themselves into American Catholics.” Whether intended or not, many Cubans perceived that Miami church officials sought to purge their intense exile consciousness and anti-Communism, as when Archbishop Carroll prohibited popular Cuban priest Father Ramón O’Farrill from delivering an invocation at the 1972 Republican National Convention. A report in the Spanish-language Miami newspaper *Alerta* outlined the situation of Cuban priests like O’Farrill, concluding that “the Cuban Catholic priests of Miami are the object of a severe and unprecedented discrimination on the part of this city’s archbishop.” Not surprisingly, Archbishop Carroll disagreed with such charges, citing his considerable effort to welcome Cuban exiles in the archdiocese and make them part of its structures and life of faith. He avowed that Cuban initiatives conducted without diocesan approval and oversight weakened episcopal authority and ecclesial unity.⁶⁶

The Cuban case illustrates two parallel forces in motion within U.S. Catholicism since World War II. Latino Catholics, previously a largely Mexican and Puerto Rican population concentrated in New York, the Southwest, and various Midwestern cities and towns, now encompass expanded contingents from every nation of Latin America and the Caribbean and extend from Seattle to Boston, from Miami to Alaska. The growth of their population occurred contiguously with European-descent Catholics’ rise to respectability as full-fledged Americans. Many Euro-American Catholics have only vague memories of their immigrant heritage. Today there are more Catholic millionaires and more Catholics in Congress than any other denomination. Six of nine justices on the Supreme Court are Catholic. As Allan Figueroa Deck, S.J., has noted, the Hispanic “second wave” of Catholic immigration to the United States has occurred just as “U.S. Catholics have become comfortable with their hard-earned [U.S. American] identity” and “achieved acceptance in a predominantly Protestant and rather anti-Catholic country.”⁶⁷ The relations between early Cuban exiles and officials of the Miami (arch)diocese—a mix of compassionate outreach, misunderstanding, frustration, and collaboration—illustrate the varied exchanges occurring between Latinos and their coreligionists in parishes and dioceses throughout the country.

Catholicism in America

The Cuban exile experience is but one example of the myriad ways that, for good and for ill, Catholics throughout the American hemisphere mutually influence their fellow Catholics in other locales. Recognizing this reality,

CHAPTER 1

contemporary church officials have promoted vital links they believe are conducive to stronger Catholic faith and evangelization in the hemisphere. The Latin American episcopal conferences at Medellín, Puebla, Santo Domingo, and Aparecida, as well as the 1999 Synod on America, have increasingly taken a more hemispheric focus. In a homily at Yankee Stadium on his first visit to the United States, Pope John Paul II boldly likened the split between the richer and more powerful nations and the more economically impoverished nations of the world to the rich man and Lazarus of Luke 16. He avowed that one of the great challenges in the American hemisphere and in our world today is to see that the destinies of the richer northern and poorer southern halves of the planet are intimately conjoined. Significantly, in subsequent teachings John Paul did not speak of “America” in the plural, but in the singular. In his apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, the title of which itself denotes the interconnectedness of the hemisphere, he noted explicitly that his “decision to speak of *America* in the singular was an attempt to express not only the unity which in some way already exists, but also to point to that closer bond that the peoples of the continent seek and that the church wishes to foster as part of her own mission.”⁶⁸

Interpreters of the past do well to adopt such a vision of the hemisphere, reimagining national histories within the context of an international American Catholicism and social reality. In this approach the term “American” itself, usually employed in the United States to designate the national ethos, connotes historical links and the need for solidarity across international borders. Without discounting the interpretive contribution of the Americanization paradigm, particularly for understanding the experience of European-descent Catholics, a hemispheric American perspective enhances the effort to construct a narrative of the U.S. Catholic past that encompasses the struggles and contributions of Father Díaz de León, his Nacogdoches parishioners, and Bishop Odin, as well as their East Coast contemporaries and numerous other Catholics.

One implication of this broader perspective is the need to articulate the multiple origins of Catholicism in what is now the United States. The first French Catholic settlement within the current U.S. borders was on Ste. Croix (De Monts) Island in present-day Maine and, like early Hispanic settlements, also preceded the first British colony. Escaped slaves from the Carolinas and Georgia, whom Spanish officials in Florida welcomed as free persons on the condition that they converted to Catholicism, were the first people of African descent to establish a settlement in territories that are now part of the United States. They founded Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose near St. Augustine in 1738. Afro-Latino Catholic influence was also evident in places like Los

REMAPPING AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

Angeles, where more than half of the *primer pobladores* (first settlers) in 1781 were at least partially African. Native peoples became Catholic in response to colonial missionary efforts, most notably Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha (1656–1680), a child of Algonquin and Mohawk parents born in what is now Auriesville, New York. Tekakwitha was baptized when she was twenty and, though weakened with various physical complications from a bout with smallpox, inspired many through her life of prayer, fasting, and service.⁶⁹ Historical studies of the United States usually focus on the British and then U.S. ascent over French, native, and Spanish rivals in the formation of a new nation. But the story of U.S. Catholicism must treat the various peoples who first lived the Catholic faith and established Catholic institutional presence in places that are now part of the United States, and then examine the contact and conflict between these groups as the European powers, the natives, and the nascent U.S. nation vied for territorial control.

The subsequent growth and development of Catholicism in the United States during the great century of European immigration (1820–1920) cannot be fully explicated without due attention to nonimmigrant Catholics. Like Mexicans in the Southwest, Native Americans struggled to endure—some in communities that Spanish and French missionaries had previously sought to evangelize, others within the new system of U.S. laws, Indian reservations, and government-sanctioned Christianization efforts. The travails of African Americans were no less traumatic. Catholic laity, priests, and religious orders had slaves, a number of whom were baptized Catholic and instructed in the faith. When President Abraham Lincoln signed into law a military draft to support the northern Civil War cause in 1863, New Yorkers, many of them immigrant Irish Catholics who vied with African Americans for unskilled labor jobs, assaulted black residents in one of the bloodiest riots in the history of the city. Yet both African and Native Americans exhibited uncommon steadfastness in their faith against all odds. Venerable Pierre Toussaint (1766–1853), born a slave in the French colony of Santo Domingo (Haiti), resettled with his master in New York. There he became a successful hairdresser among the city's aristocratic women, obtained his freedom, and was renowned for his devotion to daily Mass and his remarkable life of charity. Henriette Delille (c. 1813–1862) accomplished the amazing feat of founding an African American order of women religious in antebellum New Orleans. She is acclaimed as a “servant of slaves” and “witness to the poor.” As with Delille, the cause for sainthood of Augustus Tolton (1854–1897) has been introduced in the Vatican. A former slave who became the first African American priest, Tolton had to study in Rome because segregated U.S. seminaries would not admit him. He endured racism and ridicule as the first African American to breach the

CHAPTER 1

“color line” of the priesthood in the United States. Nicholas Black Elk (c. 1863–1950) was celebrated both as a medicine man among the Lakota Sioux of the Northern Plains and as a lay Catholic catechist.⁷⁰ Historically, Catholics such as these cannot be subsumed into a saga of immigrants. The conquered, the enslaved, and freed former slaves—along with the more numerous and influential immigrants—necessitate examining more deeply how the distinct experiences of entry into the United States shaped participation in church and society and thus to varying degrees the formation of U.S. Catholicism.

The Americanization of émigrés’ descendants in the course of the twentieth century occurred simultaneously with another crucial historical trend: the significant new immigration of Catholics to the United States. Demographic growth in U.S. Catholicism over the past half century is heavily rooted in immigration from Asia, the Pacific Islands, Africa, and particularly Latin America. Officials of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops estimate that more than half the Catholics in the United States today are not of Euro-American ancestry. In the archdiocese of Los Angeles alone, the Eucharist is regularly celebrated in forty-two languages. The Roman Catholic Church in the United States is the most ethnically and racially diverse national ecclesial body in the world. Historical analyses must explore the implications of this striking phenomenon.

Today the international and especially the hemispheric connections of Catholicism in the United States are more extensive than ever. Interaction between émigrés and their fellow U.S. residents is the most common means through which church and society in the United States and various other nations shape one another. Immigrants also exert influence on their ancestral homelands, particularly Hispanics who live in greater proximity to their native countries. Certainly their major economic influence is the remittances immigrant workers send home, which in some years has averaged as much as \$2 billion per month to Mexico alone. Remittances do not solely support family members; they also fund community projects such as the sponsorship of feast-day celebrations and the construction and upkeep of churches, religious shrines, and schools. The conspicuous flow of fiscal resources reflects less often noted cultural and religious exchanges, such as the experiences immigrants have in parishes, prayer groups, and church renewal movements in the United States that they carry with them when they return home to visit or resettle. Mexican parishioners from Nuestra Señora del Rosario parish in Coeneo, Michoacán, illustrate the capacity of immigrants to transform religious practice in their native land. The numerous baptisms and marriages which émigrés return home to celebrate, especially during the weeks surrounding the Christmas holiday, has notably shifted the ritual calendar of

REMAPPING AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

parish life from a cycle of traditional devotions and feast days to a cycle of sacraments and family gatherings that revolve around the schedules of returning immigrants. Hispanic Catholics in the United States have also initiated outreach efforts to Latin America, such as the *Amor en Acción* lay missionary community in the archdiocese of Miami, which was formally established in 1976 under the inspiration of Alicia Marill and Adriano Garcia to foster ministerial collaboration in the Dominican Republic and Haiti.⁷¹

A hemispheric perspective on Catholicism requires attention to migratory flows in all directions, which in the last half century have encompassed a relatively small but influential group of U.S. Catholics who have visited Latin America or served in church ministries there. Often their experiences transform their understanding of Catholicism, as well as their attitudes toward the foreign policy of the United States. Catholics from the United States have received ministerial training at centers such as the Institute of Intercultural Communication, which Father Ivan Illich founded in Puerto Rico in 1957. During its fifteen years in operation the institute staff trained numerous priests, seminarians, and other pastoral workers for the archdiocese of New York. Women religious, priests, and lay missionaries have also established significant and vital links between the United States and the rest of the Americas through missionary institutes, most notably Maryknoll. Other Latin American links include U.S. Catholics' awareness and involvement with liberation theology; the civil wars in Central America during the 1970s and 1980s; well-known incidents like the 1980 murders of Archbishop Oscar Romero and four U.S. church women serving in El Salvador; and the numerous delegations of students, scholars, and church leaders who have visited and established contacts in Central and South America and the Caribbean.

The ambitious project of a hemispheric approach holds great promise for studies of U.S. Catholicism, first and foremost through placing those investigations within the broad context of one of the most momentous events of Christianity's second millennium: the encounter and clash of the Old and the New Worlds. Conquest, settlement, enslavement, immigration, and exile were the human—and too often inhuman—experiences that constituted this massive intermingling of diverse peoples. Wars to establish nation-states independent of European rule and struggles to this day for life, dignity, and self-determination are part of the painful legacy of violence and conquest that gave birth to the hemisphere Europeans named America. Despite rampant injustices, Native Americans, Africans, Europeans, their mixed-race offspring, and to a lesser extent Asians have all contributed to the formation of new societies, cultures, and traditions. Interpreters of U.S. Catholic history need to address all of these peoples and experiences within

CHAPTER 1

the current borders of the United States but against the backdrop and comparative framework of the American continent. This entails the recognition that the U.S. Catholic Church was never exclusively an immigrant church, nor is it solely an “Americanized” church today. Rather, it is a church built on the founding faith of migratory, conquered, and enslaved peoples that currently is largely run by middle-class, European-descent Catholics with growing numbers of Latino, Asian, and African immigrants, along with sizable contingents of U.S.-born Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, and some Native Americans.

Consciously or not, on the practical level the long-standing links between Latin and North America already lead many Latinos to adopt a more hemispheric perspective to Catholicism in the United States. Though the number of Hispanic Catholics in the regions from Florida to California at the time of their U.S. incorporation was comparatively small, the memory that Hispanics established faith communities in Spanish and Mexican territories before the United States expanded into them shaped the historical development of those communities as they, their descendants, and even later immigrants became part of the United States. Marking the landscape with hundreds of Spanish place-names and churches like San Antonio’s San Fernando Cathedral—which has remained a predominantly Hispanic congregation under the flags of Spain, Mexico, the Republic of Texas, the United States, the Confederate States of America, and then the United States again—enduring communities of faith provided a foundation on which Mexicans and other Latinos later built. More importantly, they fostered a sense among these subsequent émigrés that places to which they came were not entirely foreign, but an extension of home. As a Mexican immigrant to San Antonio commented after experiencing the ambiance and public worship of the cathedral congregation, San Fernando “is the one place in San Antonio that’s still part of Mexico.”⁷²

Such perceptions conflict with the presumption that European immigrants and their descendants set a unilateral paradigm for assimilating newcomers into church and society. Since the early 1990s the geographic dispersion of Latinos across the United States and the growing diversity of their national backgrounds, a number of them immigrants whose Catholicism is rooted in formative years spent in their native lands, have brought the historical perspectives of Catholics from Latin America and the United States into unprecedented levels of daily contact. In numerous dioceses and parishes where a significant Hispanic presence has arisen for the first time—and in many others where the Hispanic presence is long-standing—Latinos and their fellow Catholics encounter in the quotidian relations of ecclesial life not

REMAPPING AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

just unfamiliar customs and languages, but also the intersection of different histories. The profound historical convergences underlying these encounters intensify the potency of everyday experiences to cause trust or apprehension, collaboration or isolation. These convergences also shape the dynamics of Hispanic integration into church and society that are crucial for the next chapter in U.S. Catholic history.