Change and Confusion in Catholicism

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A Historical Perspective on Today's Liminal Church

By

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To Rudolph, Eleanor, Rudy, and Judy, who now live in the time before the end of it all.

To Sharon, Todd, David, Carrie, Laura, and Camille, who live in these liminal times – may your resources of an inquisitive mind and the sensitive embrace of loving friends and family provide you with the necessary sustenance to make it during and through these times.

To Jean, who gives me the strength and provides me the stability to survive and prosper.

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INTRODUCTION

We have not allowed ourselves to comprehend what failure might mean–for how we remember the past, for how we think about the future.[1] Nathaniel Rich

These people see only ruin and calamity in the present conditions of human society. They keep repeating that our times, if compared to past centuries, have been getting worse. And they act as if they have nothing to learn from history, which is the teacher of life, and as if at the time of past Councils everything went favorably and correctly with respect to Christian doctrine, morality, and the Church's proper freedom. We must quite disagree with these prophets of doom who are always forecasting disaster, as if the end of the world were at hand.[2] Pope John XXIII

I understood that, in my 40s, I was already part of history. Those certain things I knew didn't need to be known anymore.[3] Nathan Englander

Can the Catholic Church change? The obvious answer is yes since everything that lives changes until it dies. The history of anything, alive or inert, is always the story of some sort of change. Aside from a two-thousand-year history of the Catholic Church that documents these changes,[4] the

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[1] Nathaniel Rich, photographs and videos by George Steinmetz, "Losing Earth: The decade we almost stopped climate change or tragedy in two acts" at https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/08/01/magazine/climate-change-losing-earth.html.

[2] *Gaudet mater ecclesia*. This is a translation of Pope John XXIII's speech at the solemn inauguration of the Second Vatican Council, October 11, 1962. https://scalar.usc.edu/works/god-man-and-the-universe-week-two/gaudet-mater-ecclesia.

[3] Nathan Englander, "What Jewish Children Learned from Charlottesville" in *New York Times*, Aug. 15, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/15/opinion/jewish-charlottesville-anti-semitism.html.

[4] These three histories, as all histories, reflect the author's professional background and current audience, Steve Weidenkopf, *Timeless: A History of the Catholic Church*: Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 2018. Hans Kung, *The Catholic Church: A Short History* (NY: Modern Library, 2003 Chronicles). Diarmaid

Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) confirmed by its words and actions that the Church is always capable of change in structure and substance. Whether the pre-Vatican II changes or those initiated by the bishops at Vatican II made it a better Church, is open to historical argument and God's judgment. But the fact of change is obvious, and so is the need to define the kind of change we will be reviewing.[5]

The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines change as *making or becoming different; to exchange one thing for another, especially of a similar type*.[6] So we will be dealing with similarities and differences when we claim that Catholic words, ideas, stories, rituals, morals, and organizations change.

Chris Mortensen, in his superb article "Change and Inconsistency," provides us with an elaboration on this dictionary definition.[7] He does this by first reminding us that central to making a claim of "change" is demonstrating the consistency between what the changed reality was before and after the change. When we claim that something has changed at a certain moment of history, we must be clear as to what has changed and what it has changed to, as well as the transitioning moments between. We will demonstrate change in the Church using the metaphor "way of life" to show how the Catholic way of life has changed from its beginnings in Judea around 33 to how it is today, approximately nineteen hundred and eighty years later.

Anyone who has read books or seen movies about time travel realizes the challenges to recognizing what has changed because we see the past through our present eyes. Common words we use today may easily cloud our understanding of the past. "Religion" is one of those words. We will seek to clarify it, when necessary, by describing certain changes in the Catholic way of life. For now, I would only remind you that its current usage is a result of societal changes over the last four hundred years. The meaning of words

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MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (NY: Viking Penguin, 2010).

[5] A detailed analysis of change as applied to Catholic belief, worship, morals, and government may be found in my https://www.academia.edu/44485840/Liminality_Encore_A_Case_Study_of_Change_in_Roman_Catholicism

[6] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/change.

[7] Chris Mortensen, "Change and Inconsistency", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/change/>.

changes over time. Words are an essential part of Catholic life and identity. The essential words of Catholic identity, as well as the chaos resulting from their misunderstanding during liminal periods, will be a necessary part of our review of change in the Church.

This book accepts and demonstrates that the Church changes.[8] We will review how ordinary Catholics, clergy, religious, bishops, and popes changed their way of living over time. We will also suggest that certain aspects of their lives provide signposts as to how to live a Catholic way of life during the time period under review. These religious beliefs, rituals, morals, and governance (polity) change over the centuries.

I presuppose that what we today call "religion" affects the whole person: mind, body, and spirit. Material life and bodily survival are foundational to any religion. Discussions about war, plague, education, economics, and governmental leadership are also discussions about religion. In the context of Christian history, it can never be forgotten that the story of Jesus is more than a story of brilliant ethical and social relationships; it is also a story of miracles associated with food, drink, sickness, and mental illness. Jesus revealed many things about God. He also revealed the necessary care for the poor, the sick, and those abandoned by society. This revelation is summed up by the phrase "the Kingdom of God," which is central to Jesus' teaching and the way of life that he advocated. We will delve into its complex meaning in chapter two, but part of that complexity is the claim that God's kingdom is now and is coming.[9] Change!

The history of change in Catholicism is the history of putting together a puzzle which seems complete until you find new pieces that lead you to continue and, in the process, create a new completed puzzle—until you find more pieces. Each of these completions may be described as the Catholic Church. And it was such at the time it occurred. Our challenge is to visualize that completed Church as we move on to the next incomplete one during a liminal time.

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[8] "Church" is a word with a long history. As with many words with a long history, it has different meanings and shades of meanings. It is not used in this book with the ideological baggage declaring that it is the only Christian church. When capitalized, it is used in reference to the Roman Catholic church, which is being used here as the basis of a case study of how a liminal church is affected by its culture.

[9] Bruce D. Chilton, "Kingdom of God," in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, Bruce Metzger & Michael D. Coogan, eds (NY: Oxford, 1993).

This book deals with a special kind of change that occurs throughout history, which we will call "liminal" change. The word is derived from the anthropological scholarship of Victor Turner. This is a chaotic kind of social change that occurs between historical eras, such as between Jesus' death and the Council of Nicaea (325 CE), between the destruction of the Western Roman Empire and the growth of Christendom, between the degradation of Christendom, the growth of the modern, and its contemporary end. Today, the modern era has come to an end and we are now living in the chaos introducing a new era, which has not been named. Like the times of liminality in the past, ours is a time of change and chaos that is bringing about a new vision of church and society. It will be both continuous with and strikingly different from the societies and churches of the past.

Church architecture is an obvious example of the events during the Church's history. The early Jewish Christians gathered beside the temple and the synagogue to pray together, remember (anamnesis) Jesus, and discuss their way of life in light of what Jesus did and said. As they grew beyond Jerusalem and Judea, they included common words that were part of the dominant Greek language of the time. So, they began to talk less about "the Way" and more about Christianity, or Christians, to refer to their religion.[10] Their gatherings began to be referred to as the Christian "*ecclesia*"; our word "church." When Greek language speakers used the word "*ecclesia,*" it meant "a political assembly of citizens of ancient Greek states," especially "the periodic meeting of the Athenian citizens for conducting public business and for considering affairs proposed by the council."[11] Within the first two centuries, Christians in the Roman Empire called themselves a Christian ecclesia (Church). You might wonder what those first Jewish followers of "the Way" felt about this newer, "secular" title for their community.

By the Edict of Milan in 313, Christians were generally free from persecution and could own Church (ecclesia) property. Public recognition by the emperor Constantine (306–337) resulted in a massive increase of members and the need for a place where they could gather for prayer and worship. The emperor had edifices built for this purpose that were in imitation of large public buildings (basilica) of the time. Whereas the Christians of the first few centuries used the houses of their local members,

[10] For the Christian community as "The Way," see Acts 9:2; for the first reference to Christians as the name of the community, see Acts 11:26.

[11] Church: Definition of Church by *Merriam-Webster* https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Church

from the fourth century onward, it was taken for granted that the Church could own and build its own buildings to be used for Sunday Eucharist, formerly "Lord's Supper," and other Church affairs. These buildings were usually constructed from local materials, by local craftsman in local styles. The basilica became a style often imitated.[12] Originally, however, it was secular, without any religious connotation.

A contemporary Catholic might recognize a building as a Catholic church. Intuitively it would be recognized as such because of the centuries of development. They might feel strongly that a Catholic church should only look a certain way from the outside, and when entering accept church pews and their accompanying kneelers as essential to being Catholic, even though none existed in church buildings for the first thirteen centuries; the same could be said of modern Confessionals, which did not exist before the sixteenth century. Certainly, there would be no need to genuflect when entering the church pew because the tabernacle housing the consecrated bread only appeared on the main altar in the sixteenth century and was mandated in the nineteenth century. Because of past experience, it might easily be that a Catholic three hundred years from now would be uncomfortable with most things seen as necessary for and in a Catholic church building today. Maybe, even, because of some unforeseen circumstance, Catholic churches will no longer exist. Or exist as they did in the first three hundred years, as part of someone's home. The slow disappearance of nineteenth-century rituals surrounding the sacrament of Reconciliation may be a precursor of such developments during our present liminal time.

The changes that have occurred in the church building reflect how changes have come about in the Catholicism of the people, the ecclesia occupying those buildings. Five Churches in particular will be the focus of this book: the Jewish, the Constantinian or Imperial, the Medieval (Christendom), the Modern European, which includes the United States, and today's gradually developing Universal Church. The history of these churches, and the eras they dominated, not only produced a variety of buildings for prayer and

[12] See https://dailyhistory.org/How_did_Christian_Church_Architecture_evolve_in_the_West%3F. For its setting within the cultures of the world, see Mitchell Beazley, *The World Atlas of Architecture* (NY: Portland House, 1988). For explanations of the relationship between a culture and its architecture, see the above but especially the classic Siegfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition*, fifth revised and enlarged edition (Harvard University Press, 1982).

worship but also written documents stating their beliefs, rituals, morals, laws, and organizational procedures. The religious atmosphere of each of these Churches will be reviewed with the purpose of making the reader aware of not only the psycho-social conditions of its peoples but also the changes in the meaning of religion, its role in people's lives, and the means through which Catholicism enlivened their everyday existence and sustained their hope for the future.

When we talk about Catholicism today, we talk about both the institution and the people. Over time, institutional change may be observed in what is tangible, such as its writings, art, buildings, and laws. While institutional change is static and lasting over the centuries, its signposts will vary. For example, the words of an ecumenical council in the 4th century may be read today in their original Greek, yet many of those words are not spoken the same way as when first written, nor are their meanings understood in the way that was intended by their authors.[13] The reason for this well-recognized phenomenon is that churches and their cultures are in a constant state of change.

Today's Catholic Church is a work in progress, reflecting the tribalism and anti-authoritarianism of the deeply divided culture in which it exists. These divisions result in and are caused by a distrust among citizens, including Catholics.[14] As part of this society, Catholics in the United States are not only distrustful but also religiously illiterate,[15] and strongly Republican.[16]

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[13] See especially John McWhorter, *Words on the Move* (NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2016). While many chapters of the following book would be relevant to this topic, the following is especially noteworthy for Catholics today: David A. Stosur, "Ritual Revision and Human Division: Ecumenical and Interfaith Implications of the Current English Translation of the Roman Missal" in N. Kollar & J. Shafiq, eds, *Sacred Texts & Human Contexts* (Rochester, NY: Hickey Center for Interfaith Studies, 2014), 186–205.

[14] For a review of the literature and historical perspective see David Brooks, "Our Pathetic Herd Immunity Failure," *The New York Times* (May 6, 2021). https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/06/opinion/herd-immunity-us.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage.

[15] Stephen Prothero, *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—and Doesn't* (NY: Harper and Row, 2007).

[16] Robert D. Putnam, David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 2010)

The Catholic Institutional leadership and Catholic people reflect the American society they are part of.

As global colonialism fades, the Roman Catholic Church is becoming more catholic and less Roman. As that charismatic gathering of bishops known as Vatican II declared the need for changing the Church that had developed since the Council of Trent (1545–1563), so contemporary Catholics and clergy are beginning to experience the obvious and not-so-obvious changes to the Church and cultures of the twentieth century, both globally and regionally (North American). These experiences are producing deep divisions among all its members, both the laity and clergy. The divisions both reflect and cause the abandonment of its schools, church buildings, and hospitals because the contemporary Church no longer has sufficient membership to support these institutions, nor does it have the dedicated men and women religious to work at nominal salaries to sustain them. It is quickly losing membership, especially among whites and those younger than thirty. Catholicism shares its decline of membership with all American religious institutions (70 percent of Americans belonged to a religious institution in 1960; 47 percent do today); Catholicism's 22 percent is a minority in the United States. The divisions within contemporary Catholicism are so deep that unity is seldom found within the Church, even among the core elements of its way of life: belief, ritual, morality, government. The declarations of the current pope are a source of vitriol for many powerful Republican American Catholics, who look to the modern and medieval Churches as their model of authentic Catholicism. Because of these divisions, a book such as this, which accepts the declarations of popes and bishops, along with facts generally accepted among the social sciences, will be rejected by various sects with strongly held opinions now present in the Catholic Church. What this book intends is to bring together present and past data describing times of intense change and chaos in the Catholic Church in order to demonstrate how the Church has come out of these times renewed and ready to face the present chaotic times as well as shape a coherent institutional future for dealing with life beyond current liminality.

Victor Turner used the term liminality to describe the betweenness of the puberty rites leading to adulthood for aboriginal peoples.[17] The children in a tribe live according to the expectations associated with their role in society. They are comfortable with the mode of speaking, acting, and relating to those around them that are appropriate to the role of being a child.

[17] See "Passages, Margins, Poverty," in his *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human So*ciety (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974).

At a certain time, the pubescent are suddenly taken from the general group of children and through a ritual are transformed into adults. This "between time" of the puberty rite is the time of "liminality," of disorientation. All the former signposts of a child's way of life are gone. The child often has a sense that they have died.[18] The rites themselves often include a portrayal of dying to one's old self and coming alive to one's new self. Once the children become aware of this new self, they re-enter society with a new role and new language, actions, and relationships that correspond to it.

The concept of liminality has been used by many scholars to describe the struggles individuals face when facing difficult transitional moments in the life cycle or movements within one's social hierarchy. This concept can also be used to describe what happens in a culture. A culture, of course, is people. People responding to postmodern change will experience individual liminality with a corresponding transition of identity and self. When they look back, they will be able to see deep cultural changes that affected their beliefs, how they conceived of right and wrong, and what they wanted to achieve in life. They live now, post liminality, as a new self with a new identity. When I use the term liminality as a metaphor here, it is done conscious of Turner's usage.

These deep changes in a liminal epoch are found in pivotal events marking politics, ideas, technology, and religion. Such a change, in politics for example, is first seen in a culture's inability to find common ground in the face of a common enemy—even to agree on who or what the enemy is. A revolution or an election marks the change. But the change is liminal because the revolution or election only serves as a brief interim before another revolution or election that is as radical as the previous one occurs. The same kind of deep change may be seen within religious institutions as people begin to have deep disagreements with the central elements of the religion, such as attending to the leaders' commands, the interpretation of foundational writings, the inability to sense the fulfillment of the religion's

[18] Many mystics also have this time of betweenness when it seems all of the past has been for nothing and the future holds no promise. The God they have been so close to is no more. In the words of Jesus on the cross: "My God my God, why have you forsaken me." It is called *Noche obscura del alma*, "the dark night of the soul." See St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul* (NY: Image Books, 1990); Allison Peers, translator and editor.

promises in this life or the next or experience a sense of belonging with all Catholics. During these times new religions begin to multiply.[19]

I love the Catholic Church. I am who I am because of it. I could never imagine its disappearance. Yet one day, while doing research in the province of Quebec, Canada, reality challenged my imagination. I was visiting parishes in Montreal, seeking to understand how they had adapted to the challenges of Vatican II (1962–1965). As I went from parish to parish, I noticed how often the church yards had become playgrounds for the local youth. One day, after visiting several churches and experiencing the same youthful vigor echoing off the church buildings, I was overwhelmed with the realization that many of these churches were closed, some were already sold, and more than likely the children playing there never attended church, knew none of its basic prayers, and did not recognize the Ten Commandments. Perhaps these children were no longer Catholic. I asked them if they were Catholic. "Certainly," they replied. I followed with "Which parish do you belong to?" "What do you mean?" They replied. I tried to explain. Then, foolishly, I asked where they went to Mass. As they uncomfortably backed away, I realized I was asking too many, or the wrong, questions. As they left, I stood there, overcome by the realization that the Church, as I knew it, was disappearing before my eyes. These children claimed to be Catholic but remembered little of what that means. Certainly, the institutions of the Church I knew (school, convent, church building, Sunday Mass, confession, and people) were disappearing. In the United States, 13% of all U.S. adults are former Catholics. There are 6.5 former Catholics in the U.S. for every convert to it.[20] The quickest growing religious category is "nones"—those who have no religion. They now make up at least 23% of the American population.[21] Add to these numbers the experience of parishes closing, insufficient funds to support the diverse diocesan ministries, and the deep political divisions at all levels within the institutional church, and it doesn't take much to begin to mourn for the Church I loved.

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[19] We see this cultural liminality in the Coronavirus epidemic and will experience an intensification of the liminality experience in its aftermath.

[20] See https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/10/7-facts-about-american-catholics. and https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/09/14/a-closer-look-at-catholic-america.

[21] https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/13/a-closer-look-at-americas-rapidly-growing-religious-nones.

Long ago, I realized that you only get the answers to the questions you ask. Our questions are like a flashlight shining in the dark—we only see what we shine the light on. So, if I believe that a person is a Catholic only if they are baptized, go to church on Sundays, obey the Ten Commandments, believe in God, and follow the pope, then I will count a lot of people as ex-Catholics. If I believe that a person is religious if they go to church on Sundays, pray before meals, and read the Bible regularly, then the number of "nones" is increasing. If I believe a person is religious if they believe in the supernatural realm, then, of course, there are fewer and fewer religious. You get the answer to the question you ask. Maybe I needed to ask those kids in the churchyards a different set of questions. Is what enabled me to call myself Catholic yesterday what I should use today? Have Catholics always understood their way of life the same since Jesus' time? If Catholic identity changes like everything else that is human, what constitutes that variety over time? I wrote this book to answer those questions. Reviewing the Catholic past may provide us with the freedom to discover the Catholic future.[22]

The church is people. When the people, like the Cheshire cat in *Alice in Wonderland*, begin to slowly disappear, so does the Church. If the contemporary Church's missionary activity is celebrated, so the disappearance of Catholics must be mourned, remembered, and understood by those who are still members of the Church community. The Church, as they knew it and now know it, is also disappearing and will be forgotten by the next generation. It has happened before. It will happen again, and again, and again until the world ends.

"Catholic Church," like any other phrase, changes its meaning over time. If, for example, I talk about Catholics in the United States in 1776, I would be referring to the rich plantation owners in Maryland, one of whom just had his priestly brother elected bishop of the United States. If I was a congressman in 1924 who had just voted to restrict immigrants from

[22] Derek Thompson provides us with an updated set of statistics for the "nones" and reasons why they dropped out of institutional religion: https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/09/atheism-fastest-growing-religion-us/598843. Reginal Bibby, a prominent Canadian sociologist provides a refined analysis of the "nones" phenomenon in a Canadian context. Reginald W. Bibby and Angus Reid, *Canada's Catholics: Vitality and Hope in a New Era* (Toronto: Novalis, 2016); Reginald W. Bibby, *Resilient Gods: Being Pro-Religious, Low Religious, or No Religious in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2017).

southern and eastern Europe, I would have believed Catholics were ignorant, superstitious, blindly obedient to the pope, and ate strange foods like pizza, pierogi, or tortillas. Yet, as this review will show, many Catholics today have forgotten the religion their great-grandparents grew up in and helped create—one with a little bit of the past, some of the present, and alive in what they were creating. There have been many religious ways of life in two thousand years of history. We all have much to learn by reading and thinking about them and looking to a future in continuity with them. We review some of them in this book.

The history of humankind is witness to the birth and death of many religions. Will Catholicism be one of them? Throughout its history, it has lost many things that were considered essential to its identity at a particular time and place while gaining many things considered secular or pagan to its identity at another time. The early Christians abandoned many of their Jewish rituals and norms, like circumcision and kosher eating. The thoughts and vocabulary of pagan thinkers became essential to Catholic theology and doctrine by saints such as Thomas (Aristotelianism) and Augustine (Platonism and Neo-Platonism). Pagan rituals were transformed into Catholic celebrations such as Halloween and Christmas. What will the Catholic Church look like in two thousand years? In this book we will review its two-thousand-year history in order to comprehend the changes that have shaped its current identity. Such a look is energizing for both individuals and institutions. It enables us to know who we were, who we are, and who we may become.

A Short Introduction to Remembering Change in Catholicism

The readers of this book live in the present era of liminality and the remnants of the past era of the modern Tridentine Church. Since our identity and point of view are shaped by our past and present, we begin this review in chapter one (1950–1970) with a description of the Church that many today consider their Catholic Church. That church exists only in people's memory even though some Catholics still repeat the words and actions that sustained it. American culture still lives in people's response to what happened during the sixties. One radical change that occurred in the recent Catholic Church is the Second Vatican Council. The entirety of that change, both religious and secular, marked the end of the Modern era and the beginning of the liminal times, leading to what comes next—what that will be we do not know because we are not there yet. But we do know the individual emotions

and the societal consequences of life in liminal times. They are found in chapter one, and they set the stage for discovering liminality throughout history.

Chapter two (33–410) begins the Church's history with a description of its origins. The death of any charismatic leader is a challenge to their followers. The death of Jesus is no different. His resurrection and expected return to earth add to the difficulty. Such beginnings are, in their own way, liminal since the tangible presence of the leader is absent. There are many accounts of Jesus' life and message, but few of these accounts are recognized by his followers as accurate renditions of who he was and what he said and did. This recognition is found in the Bible. This chapter describes the development of what came to be the Christian Bible, the early Christian creeds, manner of worship, and accepted community mores. More importantly, for our purposes, it describes the changes and controversies surrounding the change from the Jewish Christian community living on the edge of the Roman Empire to the Greco-Roman Church, which became identified with the empire itself. Within four hundred years, Christianity went from a small community of about twenty people to thirty-five million.[23] It did so despite the initial persecution by both Jews and Romans. Jesus, the peasant crucified as a political enemy of the empire, was recognized as the Christ and *Pantocrator*, the ruler of the universe. The small group begun by Jesus on the edges of the empire was now the Church of that empire, with recognized rituals of worship and entry, official creeds to be professed by all, lists of deadly sins and moral commandments, and leaders, clergy, who ruled this church. Their way of life was the official way of life of the Roman Empire. Those who opposed this way of life were traitors, false Christians, and purveyors of evil doctrine, worship, and morals. Ripped from its Jewish roots, Christianity was grafted onto those of Greece and Rome. To be a Christian now was to be a member of the empire. Those communities that still saw themselves as Christian in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere were rejected by this Church. They did not offer the way of life Jesus announced and the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea affirmed. Theirs was a false memory. By the time Christianity became the Empire's Church, only a few Jewish words such as amen, alleluia, and messiah would remind it of its Jewish roots. Its words now were Greek and Latin. Jesus was the Christ and Christians were a church (*ekklesia*). Within a few generations, the martyrs were saints and only bishops could forgive sins. Christians now became the persecutors of non-Christians. Bible, Creed, and

[23] Bart D. Ehrman, *The Triumph of Christianity: How a Forbidden Religion Swept the World* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 2018), 294.

bishop were seen as essential to the Church's identity. Those who retained circumcision, Torah, and synagogue customs were not Catholic. Although they may have suffered persecution during this era's liminal times (180–324).

The third chapter (410–1453) reviews the origins and development of what came to be called Christian civilization, Christendom. Its liminal epoch (814–1216), pivoting around the iconic year of 1000, witnessed not only the preaching of wandering prophets declaring the end of the world but also the clash of the earthly powers struggling to dominate that world. The prominent symbols, with different meanings, of the liminal church that developed after 1959 are found in this era: Private confession, seven sacraments, a powerful pope, regal dress for celebrating the sacraments, and the use of Latin in those celebrations and in all official church matters. The language of the institutional church slowly separated from the language of the people; the officials who spoke and wrote that language lived apart from the slaves and citizens of the countryside; and the Catholic way of life broke into a division marked by the altar rail in their churches, with the clergy up around the altar and the people down below in the church.

At one time the Roman Empire provided peace within its borders. By the fifth century, this was no longer possible. The terror of invasion from those outside its borders was matched by the terror of the wandering marauders within. Peace, order, and security disappeared; terror, lawlessness, and insecurity increased. The Visigoths' sack of Rome in 410 loudly proclaimed that Rome was powerless; the death of the Western emperor Flavius Romulus Augustus in 476 assured its burial. However, it was resurrected as the Holy Roman Empire with Charlemagne's coronation as emperor in 800. The memories of the ancient empire shaped and formed the use of power, law, hierarchy, and images of God into the Roman Catholic Church. The Holy Roman Empire, in time, was identified with Christendom, with the Roman Catholic Church as its heart.

While subject to many of the same terrors as the West, the Eastern Empire survived until 1453, when it was replaced by the Ottoman Empire. In time, Constantinople became Istanbul; Constantine's Christianity became both Western Latin, Catholic Christianity, and Eastern Orthodox Christianity. The mutual excommunications between these two churches in 1054 was a formal recognition of how each part of the Imperial Church differed significantly from each other. Much like when my sister and I talk about our father, she remembers things I do not or differently than I do, so the Eastern and Western churches, originally shaped by the Greco-Roman culture,

cherished the memories of the Imperial Church—such as the church-state relationship, the understanding of sacraments/mysteries and the relationship between the persons in the Holy Trinity—differently because of their differing cultural circumstances. Today they may seem like two different religions or churches when members of one of these engages with those of the other; both, however, are a Catholic way of life.

The bishops of the Western dioceses and the abbots of the monasteries in the Western Church brought the organization of the Church and the power of its way of life to the aid of dispirited and weakened villages, towns, and cities. The administrators of the Church became the administrators of the civil society because they were the only ones with the experience, knowledge, and will to guide their society: there was no distinction between secular and sacred, church and state. Actually, there was no word "religion" as we use it today. Church, state, secular, and sacred were, to the ordinary person, united in their power over them and the expression of God's power in daily life.

The symbols of the former Roman Empire were everywhere in its gradually disintegrating roads, fortifications, and cities. As the invading tribes settled on the lands of the former empire, they became converts to its religion. And with that change among both the original inhabitants as well as among the newer settlers to Christianity, there developed the memories of a Christianity that helped shape today's Roman Catholicism. The hierarchy of the feudal culture is reflected in the mosaics of many churches with the Lord Jesus in all his glory sitting at the head of his court of angels, saints, and sinners. These were times of deep sinful decay as well as overwhelming saintliness. The reform movements were many and have left us with evidence of reform in church structure as well as programs for individual and communal holiness. These were also times of both deep ignorance among the multitude and innovations in learning and writing among the elite that are the foundations for many of our current educational systems. By the end of what many call the Middle Ages, and this book titles Christendom, the Imperial Church of Constantinople was long past and its Christian civilization was beginning to crumble. The Bible, for example, was brought under the microscope of rational thought and the developing tools of philology and scholastic theology. The many copies of the Bible over the centuries were the result of the addition and subtraction of many words and phrases to and from the original. The new academic discipline of philology enabled the scholars to choose what the "best" Bible was by correcting what words and phrases had been added or subtracted over the centuries. At the same time the Bible was being corrected to match the original, it was also

being translated into the developing vernacular languages: German, French, Italian, and English. Now anyone who could read could read the Bible in their own language with some assurance it was like the original,[24] an event never before possible, and which had church-shattering consequences. The Bible, understood as God's word, was now open to all who could read—not only monks, nuns, priests, and bishops but also the educated laity. This was not only a personal challenge but a societal one. Church theologians argued for an ontological difference between those with "only" a character resultant from baptism and confirmation and those consecrated as bishops, priests, and deacons. Holy Orders, it was argued, provided another level of ontological existence that enabled its possessor to have a clearer understanding of God's will, biblical interpretation, and leadership of the non-ordained thus sustaining the medieval hierarchy as being of divine origin, not societal necessity.

History always evidences change. Chapter four describes what happened between 1453–1712, with examples of technological, economic, and social changes that still impact contemporary Catholicism and the beginning of the modern world. They mark the further division of Christianity with the rise of movements that initially rejected much of the medieval hierarchy and its culture. These Christians were convinced that their renewed reading of the Bible provided them with an accurate reading of who Jesus was and what the early church desired to be. When they looked at medieval Catholicism, they did not see Jesus' way of life. Instead, they saw greed, sexual promiscuity, extreme materialism, simony, nepotism, and selfishness among the elite clergy and nobles. They did not see the Christian way of life they found in the New Testament. Some of the leaders of these movements said living the Catholic way of life meant living like Jesus and his disciples; for others you were a Christian if you did nothing contrary to the way of life advocated by Jesus; and still others said a true Christian lived as the Holy Ghost (Spirit) guided them. Knowing the words of one's Bible was part of seeking that guidance. At the Council of Trent (1545–1563), the Catholic bishops agreed that the many evils condemned by these reformers must be eradicated but disagreed with what their replacement should be. The Catholic reformers proclaimed that God directs the Church through both the Bible and tradition as read in the writings of the Apostles, the bishops, and the pope. They argued that further centralization of Church polity was the best instrument for such reform. The sacramental rituals must be performed in the same way throughout the Church; a common catechism must be

[24] The original copies of what became the Bible, of course, do not exist.

written and a condensed version of it must be available for all the laity; and canon law must be updated to reflect the clarifications of belief, rituals, morals, and polity decided at Trent. The Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Roman and Universal Inquisition, established by Paul III in 1542, was to centralize all the ecclesial inquisitions since the twelfth century.[25] It was to search out and destroy the thoughts and practices of Protestantism. Trent's anti-Protestantism, increased legalism, and centralization in the Catholic Church resulted in what historians label Tridentine Catholicism and many Church authorities call authentic Catholicism.

These movements became, through the terror of the religious wars, Protestantism and Catholicism. The multiplicity of independent religious institutions, especially when aligned with a monarchy, resulted in a new way of understanding the Catholic way of life as aligned with certain nations and monarchs. "Religion," for the first time, came to be understood as referring to a group of people with a coherent set of beliefs, rituals, moral imperatives, and polity.

Slowly, beginning with the Peace of Westphalia (1648), the pluralism of religions was recognized and refined by such ground-breaking documents as the *Bill of Rights*, *Article one* (1792), amended to the American Constitution, and the French *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen, (Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen, Article ten)* in 1789. Religious pluralism, and the freedom of religion it implies, became part of a uniform state policy.

The French Revolution (1789–1799) and its cry of *Unité, Indivisibilité de la République; Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité ou la mort* marks the end of one era and the beginning of another in the history of Catholicism. The French Revolution not only initiated deep change within one country but was also the symbol of strong movements within Western culture in general.

The church of chapter five (1712–1960) existed in a modern world with an identity inherited from the medieval one. In this world, Christendom was seen not as it was in the past—creative, enlightened, familial, loyalty-bound, and godly encompassed—but as irrational, oppressive, superstitious, and the enemy of freedom and truth. Galileo's cry to the inquisitors in the seventeenth century "Just look, it moves" prefigured the cry of other

[25] In 1908 the Inquisition was renamed Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office by Pope Pius X. In 1965 it was renamed the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF).

scholars, scientists, revolutionaries, and visionaries in the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. The French Revolution's demand for liberty, equality, and fraternity, and the formation of the Italian state's inclusion of the papal lands, left the Church with a choice between reproducing the nostalgic vision of past medieval glories and risking a future energized by a re-imagining of the entire Catholic way of life. Catholic authorities, especially the pope, reacted by condemning the modern views of truth, ritual, morals, and polity in Pius IX's Syllabus of Errors. The pope, devoid of the lands that were seen as his and the Church's identity since the fourth century, was now accepted by many Catholics as a saintly figure capable of singlehandedly interpreting the will of God. Outside of this perfect institution, Catholics saw error and materialism, abhorrent ways of life that threatened the message of Jesus and the Catholic way of life based on that message. Inside the Church, Catholics saw the family of God, with its saints and Mary, who interceded for each Catholic to bring them a healthy and secure life based upon the infallible truths of Catholicism. Inside the Church and its infallible authority was the holiness of its sacraments and its many devotions to the saints; outside the Church was the secular world, devoid of God's sacred presence. The ancient medieval traditions, especially the feudal vision of hierarchy, were proclaimed as essential to Catholic identity. That world was bombed out of existence with World Wars I and II.

The trail of terror and wars that marked Catholic life over twenty centuries left not only millions dead but also the destruction of many towns and cities and much of the earth's vegetation. As the Church entered the 1960s, it came to realize, and its intellectuals argued strongly, that the division between outside and inside the Church could no longer be accepted. The memories of Jesus' cry for love of all and his demand to care especially for the poor seemed to shake the foundations of the modern Church. People became conscious of the fact that such care and love were essential to Catholic identity not only on the one-on-one individual level but also on the systemic, social, and governmental levels. What use is the perfect institutional Tridentine Church of the modern era when the judgment scene in Matthew 25 is not clear and constant evidence of that institution? If Catholics do not feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, and clothe those who are naked––are they Catholic?

As Catholicism gained a global presence unequaled in the history of religions, it also became enmeshed in the violence present in every culture it entered. Doctrine may proclaim a holy people separate from secular realties but the realities of life thundered through such beliefs. A hungry

stomach is painful whether God wills the pain or not. Jesus did heal the sick, provide food for the hungry, and demand comfort for those who mourned the genocides committed by the powerful armies of his time. The Church learned from the experiences of World Wars I and II that it, as with Jesus, could not stand above the terrors of daily life and needed to abandon many traditions of the Middle Ages to encourage the development of the whole world, not only the Church. Vatican II was an attempt to face the challenges caused by the breakup of Christendom and the destruction of lived values and life itself.

To focus on heaven without looking at the ground on which one walked had led to hell on earth. Admitting that the Catholic way of life itself could cause suffering in the lives of many women, workers, soldiers, intellectuals, and families was the beginning of seeking to make life better for those it harmed and reform a way of life experienced as oppressive rather than freeing. Vatican II (1962–1965) attempted to begin the needed changes. Instead, it intensified divisions in the Catholic way of life between those quite comfortable with the status quo and those repulsed by it. The affirmation of such things as religious freedom,[26] salvation outside the Church, the necessity for the laity's active role in the Church, and the updating of all the sacramental rituals made public the demise of the Tridentine Church but intensified divisions within the Church at large.

The changes advocated by Vatican II are amplified by the changes in the people who are the Church. The majority of Catholics today reside outside Europe, in the Third World countries. The geography and peoples who made up the Roman Catholic Church in the past were, for the most part, European. It took a while for the memory of the papal lands to recede; it will take longer for the memory of European Catholicism to recede as we move into the next two thousand years of Catholicism.

These divisions are common to both the Church and the cultures within which it exists. The divisions are multiple and easily demonstrable. Words shift meanings. Truth has become relative to the proclaimed falsities the disliked "other" spouts. The power of money, the sword, the national border, or the crowd are used to dominate both church and non-church communities. These are liminal times: an epoch between the clear symbols of the past and the not-yet evident signs of a coherent and healthy future. A review, such as this book, enables us to see what has happened in the past

[26] Religious freedom was declared an inviolable human right on 7 Dec. 1965 by the Ecumenical Council Vatican II in the document *Dignitatis Humanae.*

and provides us with the hope, inherent in memory, to look forward to the future. The danger is that in focusing on past memories, the nostalgic experience freezes us and, like Lot's wife (Genesis 19), we see it as *the* Catholic way, not the one in front of us. Chapter six leaves us with an itemization of past challenges and present uncertainties. Such memories easily lead to feelings of nostalgia, grief, and euphoria. Since such feelings may be part of this review, let us pause and think about them.

Remembering Past Failures and Successes: Personal and Institutional

Remembering ties everything together: past, present, and future. Memory, when re-membered, or tied together, helps make us who we are. It provides us with a unique identity.

Although remembering provides us with a unique self, it also is a communal self. Everyone with a belly button bears the mark of being connected: first to their parents, then their family and their community, both local and extended. One aspect of this collective memory is the symbols of the past that surround us, such as buildings, language, literature, and art. History provides us with a coherent picture of the memories of the past while acting as a means of current communal identity. Yet history itself has a history because only in the last few centuries have writers and readers of the past demanded an exact accounting of what happened—just the facts please; facts without personal bias.[27]

What ties the memories of the past to produce a communal memory are all the past and present societal forces of power. As we are socialized into the rituals, languages, beliefs, and morals of a community, we become representative of not only the memories of the community but also the powers that formed them. These powers are multiple and are both easily recognized as well as hidden deep within the psyche of the community. The power of the technologies associated first with writing and then printing are examples of the obvious;[28] gender and social class bias may be examples of the more deeply hidden.[29] Who I and society are today is the result of these

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[27] Nathan R., "Secular Fundamentalism and Secular Humanism: Value Sets for the Twenty-First Century" *in Studies in Formative Spirituality* XIX (May 1993), 233–46.
[28] Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Dea*th (NY: Viking, 1985).
[29] https://genderbiasbingo.com/gender-bias/#.XiB5uCNOm70: https://epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1425&context=edu_fac.

forces that remember our past and present. Who we will be in the future is the result of these forces and the choices we make in light of our knowledge of them.

When I say, "that's me" and affirm that is who I want to be, or "I am a Catholic" or "I am an American" and "that is what I want to be," remembrance is central to these affirmations. Central to these remembrances, and thus my identity, are the symbols of my past that surround me. The symbols I can touch such as photos, that I can hear such as songs and the voices of my children who tell me "What really happened," and those fleeting awarenesses that, unwarranted, pop up from the depths of my subconscious may make me cry, be afraid, or be exalted. These memories, and the symbols that harbor them, are who I am and will be.

A Systematic Way of Understanding the Past: Signposts, Symbols, and Change in a Way of Life

Every way of life lived over a prolonged period of time has signposts of beliefs, rituals, morals, and organization that symbolically express how to live that life and directly influence how it is lived. These signposts are stories of the group's origin that articulate their convictions about their uniqueness and the world they inhabit; songs that reflect these stories and these beliefs; for some, summaries of these *beliefs* that have been handed down in sacred slogans, creeds, books, and phrases used in worship; *rituals* that celebrate the uniqueness of the group, death, marriage, birth, dealing with disasters and threats to life, limb and future; *moral/ethical norms* of what actions are positive or negative influences their present and future life; and, finally, the *ways the group organizes* itself to get together over time, designates its leadership, and judges its health. These are sometimes summarized as belief, behavior, and belonging.

In a pluralistic culture, there are many ways of life being followed side by side. Many times, they provide an individual with diverse means of living their life. Religions provide a broader vision of a way to live one's life; they promise and promote a future of total change, when life will be better than it is right now.[30] If we follow their way of life, religions describe what life will be like and provide the means to achieve it through stories, rituals,

[30] A review of these categories and their application to classical religion may be found in N. Kollar, *Spiritualities: Past, Present, and Future: An Introduction* (North Charleston, NC: Create Space, 2012), parts one and two.